WORTH WAITING FOR

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CHAPTER I.

SHERWOOD—SOLICITOR.

EVER since Law took possession of those once fashionable streets called John and James, and made the grand, gloomy houses darker and gloomier by the sorrows and trials worked out therein, the name of Sherwood had been conspicuous above a bell-handle at the door of 129, John Street. In the great drawing-rooms of that house a Sherwood had sat for more than a century, son, grandson, great-grandson, but

ever a Sherwood, descendant of that old Sherwood who had first moved his quarters from the Temple precincts.

On the opposite bell on the entrance to No. 129, John Street, was another door-plate, but the name it carried had been altered many times, had been alternately Jones, Smith, Brown, Johnson, in letters sometimes black, sometimes white, sometimes red, letters in every known type, and often in type so fanciful and difficult to decipher, they might baffle even the ingenious eyes of a bailiff as to their real meaning, while the name of Sherwood, in old-fashioned, uncoloured type, deeply graven in solid brass, seemed a silent rebuke to its varying opposite neighbours, just as the owner of the name, with his solid, respectable, prosperous business, was a rebuke to the easy-conscienced gentlemen who were ever trying and ever failing to make ill deeds triumphant in their offices in the dining-room.

Sherwood, lawyer, old, middle-aged, or young, took no heed of the changes in the rooms below. Day after day, week after week, year after year, as regularly as the clock struck ten, he seated himself in the lesser drawing-room, with its dull look-out on the paved court-yard, once gay with blooming flowers, in the days when rich merchants' wives lived there, but now bare and damp-stained, and unweariedly arbitrated for friends and foes, settled rights and wrongs, accumulated family secrets, joys and sorrows, and papers and boxes, caring no more for the changes beneath than he cared for the expostulations of unreasonable clients, who loved going to war more than paying the costs thereof.

The small practitioners of the dining-rooms listened to any case without heed of soiled hands, without heed of anything, in point of fact, but fees. To them the red-handed

murderer was as interesting as the heart-broken next-of-kin to the murdered, but Mr. Sherwood, steady at his post in the drawing-room, was no less a Christian gentleman than a first class attorney. He worked for right quite as much as for gain, and scorned to use his pen or his tongue in aid of *villainy*. Many a poor man's cause had he righted without asking for one penny in payment; many a good deed had he done whereof was no record in his fire-proof boxes. But no doubt Prosperity is the best cultivator of grace, and had the lesser practitioners down-stairs possessed the cream of the law, as did Mr. Sherwood, who had two or three titled clients who knew less of their property than did he, their man of business, they, too, might have shown hands as clean, and boasted morals as righteous.

In two or three lordly mansions, two or three cosy sets of rooms were known as Mr.

Sherwood's, and there his pleasant manners always made him welcome, whether he was there solitary, to debit the bailiff's account, or to attend the audit dinner, or when the house was full of my lord and my lord's peers, on the occasion of a will to be read, or a marriage settlement to be signed.

The fattest "four tooth," and the finest trout were willingly placed before him, and many a basket of blooming grapes and golden pines, many a hamper of game, and baron of prize beef found their way to his London larder. Next to "my lord," Mr. Sherwood was regarded with favour by my lord's servants; he was a gentleman, and no class is more quick to espy the charm that makes a gentleman, than the class of domestic servants.

Of all his race, no one member of it had been more respected than the present possessor of the time-honoured name of Sher-

wood, both in the law courts for his probity and ability, and in private life for his mental accomplishments and domestic virtues.

At this period he was well on towards the age of fifty years, in appearance manly, healthy, clean-shaved, clear-eyed, well dressed in the prevailing fashion, with due regard to his time of life and profession; his voice was low, but perfectly distinct, and he had a habit of speech that exhausted the subject matter in so terse but all-sufficient a manner, as to leave but little scope for after question and debate. It was the general opinion that had he gone to the Bar, this peculiar gift of rapid condensation of thought into words alone would have won him the highest honours; but he had been too sensible or too unambitious to forsake the certain, if less brilliant business bequeathed to him by his father, and when one of his sons showed a very decided preference for the wigged

branch of the law, Mr. Sherwood did his best to keep him in his own well-beaten track.

The lawyer's marriage was the weakest act of his life, a fact of which he was quickly aware, although he never allowed it to be a fact, nor ever resented the folly of the woman whose pretty face had blinded his better judgment. Her nervous fancies and her trivial habits, which would have embittered the days of an ordinary husband, were regarded by his generous and gracious mind as pitiable, and certainly not to be resented; to him they appeared the results of ill health and a faulty education. Even when his little daughter died, owing to the folly of the doting mother, in allowing sweets and cakes to be eaten, and the medicine to be thrown away during an attack of bilious fever; even then, though the child had wound herself round his heart, and his home seemed desolate to him for many a day after her merry voice had

ceased to shout her baby pleasure at his approach, he felt no anger towards her. Had she not sinned through intense love? and did not her sorrow and agony now more than punish her for her folly? And when, at last, the poor weary body was quiet in death, he was more convinced than ever that physical, and not mental weakness had made her what she was. The two boys she left were henceforth their father's sole care, and to them he carefully represented the dead mother as almost a saint in suffering and sweetness.

Perhaps in time he really believed her to have been what he said. The shadows that darken a character in life, often are buried for ever with the dead, and only the fair lights play round the tender memories of those who remain. His ardent courtship of the beautiful girl, her youthful charms, and the pleasant luxury of the home from which he took her,

were the pictures most frequently before him when he thought of her now.

He brought up his boys on a hardy, generous plan, let them rough it at a public school, encouraged them to tell him all their troubles and aspirations, and during the holidays treated them as companions, not snubbing their youthful fancies, nor rebuffing their youthful arrogance, but by a judicious blending of firmness and indulgence, gradually converting their childish fondness into matured respect and lasting affection. To educate them to follow his own profession was a matter of course, and all his plans gravitated to the time when he should be able to resign his solitary sceptre into the hands of "Sherwood Brothers," and spend his old age basking in the sunshine of their prosperity.

Both boys grew up without giving him anxiety as to their mental qualities. Arthur, the eldest, covered his aunt's drawing-room

table with the elaborate prizes he brought home every Midsummer, and William, though he had nothing to show, was believed by masters and fellow pupils to have the ability to do all things, and only to lack the industry. William was four years his brother's junior, and Arthur had passed his preliminary examination, and was articled in his father's office, while the younger brother was yet a schoolboy.

Besides the father and sons and Mrs. Williams, a widowed aunt of Mr. Sherwood's, who superintended domestic matters, an orphan ward of the lawyer's shared the home in Porchester Terrace.

It was during breakfast one morning, the day before that on which William Sherwood was to return to Harrow, that the boy astonished his father by saying he wished to go to Cambridge as soon as he was old enough.

"Anything else?" cried Arthur, while the

father merely ejaculated "Eh?" as if he fancied he had not heard aright.

"I want to go in for the higher branch, dad," William continued.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head," Arthur said. "Higher branch, indeed. You think you'd look well in a wig, I suppose."

"Be quiet, Arthur," said the father. "You are not serious, Billy, surely? No, no; your features are not sufficiently classical, my boy!"

"Now, father, I *am* serious. I'd like to have the legal right to stand up and bully the court."

"Then I certainly shall refuse to help you to degrade your name, if that is your only object."

"Now, listen to him!" cried the boy, appealing to an imaginary audience; "he flies off at a tangent at once. If my real feelings are so deep that their utterance would

cause an emotion that would stem my eloquence and frustrate the success of the cause I stood forth to plead, may I not be excused veiling them in pleasantry without incurring the suspicion and resentment of a tyrannical parent? Gentlemen of the jury, are the cruel upbraidings of a prejudiced relation to be suffered to stifle the glowing fires of genius?"

Little Ellie Longley, sitting beside Mrs. Williams, considered this speech a triumph of wit, and applauded it with a hearty laugh.

Mr. Sherwood turned and pinched her ear. "Ellie," he said, "you encourage that lad's impudence."

"You've got one qualification for the bar," Arthur exclaimed to his brother; "you always talk everybody down, but I don't see why you should go to college when I'm not going."

"You shut up," William rejoined, "the debate is between me and my dad."

"Arthur says right, though," Mr. Sherwood said, gravely. "Why should I give you a more expensive education than I have given him?"

"No, dad, that's not logic; you might as well refuse me twice to that ham. I want a lot more now; you give a fellow such shavings—a big hunk, please, dad. You might as well say I mustn't eat more than another because I'm his junior. His talents luckily lie in a less expensive direction; with me it is just the opposite, don't you see? Besides, I should soon make the extra outlay pay."

"Perhaps you would succeed at the bar in time," Mr. Sherwood continued; "but under the most favourable circumstances you would be some years before age and experience brought you into celebrity, before good briefs could be given you, in fact. What do you propose to live on till that happy period arrives?"

"A small allowance from my good dad," William replied, no whit abashed; "who would also give me the first important case to bring me before a quickly-appreciating public; and, more valuable than brief or allowance, would be the reputation of his paternal name and character. Gentlemen of the jury, can inference go farther?" As he spoke he arranged his table-napkin into the semblance of a wig, and placed his napkin ring in one eye, and standing up, he looked across at his father with an expression so absurdly old and piercing, that the latter could only join in Ellie's renewed merriment.

"You'd best go on the stage," Arthur said, dryly; "you'd make a fortune as a mountebank."

Mr. Sherwood shook his head at both boys.

"Meantime," he said, "it is possible the public might not mistake impudence for wit,

and rapid utterance for eloquence. Industry is required in all professions, more especially to become a celebrated barrister. I don't know of any tokens of your possessing *that* talent, at all events. Arthur's prizes are visible; yours I have not yet seen."

"Oh, unjust dad! Look at that galvanic battery there; it is in your own room. Most ungrateful recipient of handsome gifts!"

Mr. Sherwood raised his hand.

"Yes, that was a prize of yours, I admit," he answered, "but a prize for what?"

"Why," cried William, breathlessly, "the highest jump of the season. Any fellow would be proud of such a feat!"

"A nimble cow could do as much, and a clown at a circus more," his father exclaimed, quietly.

William sat down rather posed, and Ellen Longley pushed the muffin to him, her pretty face clouded, because he was ridiculed.

A shy smile came over the boy's downcast face as he accepted the cake as silently as it was offered. The father smiled too; and presently he also offered a peace-offering.

"Never mind, my boy," he exclaimed, "work well this half, and I will see what can be done. Six months hence, when you are older and more experienced, we will discuss the matter fully. You know I do my utmost to encourage real earnestness, but hitherto you have seemed to think more of play than work."

William crossed the room, and kissed a little bald place on his father's head as tenderly as if it had been a blooming cheek.

"You are a well-meaning old dad," he said, returning to his seat, "and not often crusty with a fellow. Your William freely forgives you. Don't forget to bring the wherewithal home with you to-night, it will take a deal of toffee to silence the pangs of home-sickness to-morrow."

Six months later circumstances enabled the lad's wish to be gratified. His godfather died and left him fifteen thousand pounds.

"Now you can afford to be a briefless barrister," Mr. Sherwood exclaimed, in the presence of both his sons. "We ought to invest the capital well enough to bring in a tidy income."

"But you are not a trustee," Arthur said. "Turner seems determined to have it all his own way, and he's not a particularly good hand at managing his own affairs."

"Suppose he loses it all, then?" cried William. "Why ever did old Hawkins leave him trustee?"

"He was his brother-in-law," Mr. Sherwood replied. "He's a sensible man, Arthur. I think he will listen to our suggestions if need be. Besides, trusts have limitations. Turner is bound down in regard to William, as I am bound in regard to the Longleys' property."

"Well," Arthur rejoined, "only, if I were William, I wouldn't crow till I had the money in my own hands, that's all."

But William saw no cloud in the horizon, the wish of his heart was about to be gratified, and Arthur's insinuations had no power to wound. Mr. Turner became a very friendly trustee, showed great interest in the boy's plans, treated him as a young man, and made him a handsome allowance. At eighteen William went to Cambridge, and it was then his father told him how he had disposed of his property.

"I hoped you would have been Arthur's partner," he said; "and I had made a will planning for my business to be carried on by you both, and had divided my property equally between you."

"Good old dad," William interrupted; adding, with the generous independence of his age, "but Arthur and I would rather be

clerks all our lives than be masters in your stead."

Mr. Sherwood's face flushed with pleasure.

"I believe you," he said, with a tremor in his voice. "You are good lads—as lads go," he added, smilingly; "however, a higher Will than ours luckily rules our destinies, and in the course of Nature the parent goes first, and most assuredly it is the parent's duty to set his house in timely order; but though I had, as I said, made an equal distribution of my property, I see now I ought, in fairness, to alter this intention in favour of Arthur, as you are otherwise handsomely provided for."

"Of course, dad—of course," William quietly responded. "Why, by the time I'm of age I shall be quite a catch; and between you and me I don't think our young relative, Arthur, will make his fortune by his unassisted genius, as *I* should, you know."

"Arthur is a steady man," Mr. Sherwood

exclaimed; "he doesn't *talk* much, but he knows his work."

William winked at vacancy as he cried, "That's an unkind stab at your William's one little weakness inherited from his father; but go on with the matter in hand, dad."

"Well, my present intention is to leave my business solely and entirely to Arthur, for as he will be sole manager, it is but fair he should have the sole profits, and you will be moderately rich, even should your bright hopes at the bar disappoint you. I am not wealthy——"

"*I* know," William interposed, "you are too charitable, dad; a lawyer shouldn't have feelings. *I'll* never talk the court down without making sure of my fees first."

"Be serious, William, for a few moments; I want you to understand this matter thoroughly. I am not rich enough to leave a large capital,

but had you two young men been of one mind the business could have supported you both comfortably; as it is, I can in justice leave you no more than the little fortune your dear mother brought me—not quite four thousand pounds; it will at least serve to remind you of your parents. Besides, your brother will, as a matter of course, employ you, and my business is no mean addition to a barrister's income."

"All right, father; but you needn't be in such a violent hurry to shut yourself up. You'll see us both snuffed out, I bet; Arthur is rapidly destroying himself with patent leathers and tight waistcoats, and the keenness of my intellect will soon destroy this frail body."

"It is well to be prepared, my boy," Mr. Sherwood said, soberly.

A few days afterwards he called both his sons to hear a will read, drawn up in ac-

cordance with what he had stated, and in their presence it was duly signed and witnessed, and then forgotten, at least by William.

CHAPTER II.

AT Cambridge William's career was simply creditable, by no means brilliant. There were too many other attractions for a lad who was not obliged to work for his living, too many kindred spirits to tempt him to a row or a ride. Having been a first-rate cricketer at school, he felt obliged to keep up his character for that noble art at college. Then, too, he had that really unfortunate quickness of perception and tenacity of memory that enabled him to make a fair show in class and lecture-room, that raised his tutor's expectations merely to

disappoint when the steady examination came on. As his masters had said at school, so said his tutors at college, all he wanted, to become a man of note in the world, was "application." Without application, as we all know, the most brilliant intellects fail to retain their fame, and though William's wits at that time fell short of brilliancy, he yet had a sagacious, inquiring mind, that quickly proved him to be no common character. Yet lacking that most serviceable virtue of application, a plodding, commonplace character might in the long run eclipse all his shining qualifications.

During his first term he was marked out as likely to do great things, and even after he had proved himself shallow where he was supposed to have been impregnable, his supporters did not lose faith in him. "He can if he will," they cried; but William cut a joke at their anxiety, and, as I have said, con-

tented himself with taking his bachelor's degree, being merely a creditable prizeman.

Yet he was by no means without ambition. He meant to set the Thames a-fire some day; he meant to make his father's face beam proudly on him some day. At present a fellow must have his fling, he said. His fling was harmless enough; he hated vicious pursuits; no one ever saw him at a low amusement, neither did he admit to his friendship those who formed the low, fast set of his college. A gallop after the hounds, with the free fresh air blowing in his face, was surely unobjectionable. A long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together, was much healthier than slouching over books in a stuffy room; nevertheless, sometimes a working fit came over him, and while it lasted admiring friends, won over by his unselfish, sunny temper, his flights of fun and fancy, and his thoroughly reliable kindness of heart, firmly believed he

would yet prove himself the Admirable Crichton they were all so sure he could be "an' he would."

But when his college career was ended, his name did not yet glitter on the college roll of fame. He left behind him troops of friends; from the oldest and strictest Doctor in the University to the pert pilfering gip, one and all lamented his departure, and the loss of his cheery voice and generous hand. "No young man ever disappointed *and* pleased me more," said old Dr. Sharpe, who was a member of all the most learned societies all over the world. "Had he been a poor man, his powers would have blazed out; it's all that cursed independency—the spur of poverty was what he needed."

But that was, to all earthly appearance, the very spur that could never prick him on to action. When he reached his majority, Mr. William Sherwood was able to keep his horse

and cabriolet, his miniature groom, and to enter a fashionable club. Furthermore, he soon discovered himself to be an eligible in the matrimonial market, and began to enjoy the smiles of mammas and the frowns of less luckily dowered men of his own age.

His father watched him anxiously; Arthur smiled sarcastically, and declined William's constant offer of a "lift." Arthur himself kept a showy-paced, but thoroughly quiet, park hack, and sneered at the idea of sitting in "a ladylike position" by his brother's side.

But William did not keep his smooth-trotting chestnut and double-springed cabriolet entirely for himself. His father had given up riding on horseback, he was getting nervous, he said, and could no longer guide a horse in and out the London thoroughfares. He kept a small brougham for Mrs. Williams

and Ellen Longley, but seldom entered it himself by day.

Like William, he liked free fresh air, so the son chose a carriage that met this liking, and quite as a matter of course he insisted on picking up Mr. Sherwood at the office almost daily, and driving him amidst the fashionable world.

In this way the father and son became more and more united; the son, with the experience gained at college, discovered and appreciated qualities in his father he had never guessed at during his thoughtless boyhood, and the father's anxiety was lessened and his regard heightened as he recognized in the son, powers and high principle only wanting time and circumstances to develop.

Old Mr. Sherwood, as he began to be called, to distinguish him from the two young men, would go in to dinner after these afternoons spent amongst William's friends "as

light-hearted as a kitten," Mrs. Williams used to say, and Arthur would politely inquire what good news his father had heard. The eldest son was by no means so youthful in his manner as his father was at this time.

"I've a great respect for Arthur, he's a good lad, a gentlemanly, sound-principled lad," Mr. Sherwood said to an old friend who was complimenting him on his family, and the father was loyal to his eldest born in thought as well as in word; but though he would not acknowledge it even in the secrecy of his own heart, it was none the less true, respect and loyalty were the warmest sentiments Arthur could inspire in his father's breast, while for William the tender love he had always called forth was increased constantly as their intercourse grew.

Yet Arthur and William were very good friends. Arthur teased his "rich relation,"

as he persisted in calling William, and William retaliated by telling him his—Arthur's—face was his fortune; but the brothers had separate friends, separate tastes, separate pursuits. They met in harmony at their father's table day by day, but save then they rarely crossed each other's paths, and even when William took chambers, and made a show of reading for the bar, he chose his father in preference to his brother, so near his own age, to help him through legal technicalities.

Both sons were accustomed to bring their friends to their father's house. Mr. Sherwood wisely considered he had no right to tie young men down to the society of his own old friends only; to make home happy to the young, he believed he ought to open his doors to the young. It is the privilege of youth to be gay and thoughtless. Make their gaiety innocent at home, and they will not seek feverish and vicious excitement abroad.

The majority of our English middle-class homes are simply abodes of dulness, to be quitted by ennuied sons and daughters whenever there is an excuse for escape. A dull routine that must never be broken summer and winter reigns in them. The parents are custodians, who cannot understand their grown-up children should have the liberty of their years. Their feasts are solemn banquets, given to elderly persons who are of like opinions with themselves. One style of literature only is admitted, one fashion only prevails. Year by year the parent's groove narrows, as the child's impatiently widens. The daughters—if they do not marry—are old before their years, and settle down from mere force of habit into machines. The sons —unless they are specially gifted with intellect and patience beyond the common—grow wild from the very satiety of decorum. "Such excellent people," says the world, when it

hears of wrong-doing attached to an honoured name—"such excellent people to have such bad children; it is inexplicable!"

"Two such good sons," said the world of Arthur and William Sherwood. "They really seem quite content to stay at home with that tiresome old Mrs. Williams."

The world always judges from the surface; it has too many irons in the fire to take time to look for reasons and particulars. In the one case it called the parents of faulty children excellent, because they lead outwardly blameless lives, without considering that the father and mother who make the holiest and sweetest ties appear wearisome, and ugly, and unbearable, are as much to blame and really cause as much sin and sorrow as they who go into an opposite extreme, and bring vice and folly familiarly to their hearths.

Mrs. Williams was the best old lady that ever lived; but she was tiresome in her so-

licitude, her affection, and her fear of giving offence; to have lived with her day after day alone, would have been insupportable; but seeing her dispense hospitable kindnesses, having her, generally, as one amongst many, hearing her quaint, long-suffering, old-world speeches only as a foil to the quick-witted, go-ahead style of many visitors, made the young men look upon her as "a dear old thing," to be petted and teased, and hoaxed, and loved, without fear of ever being blamed or misunderstood. She was some one to fly to in sickness or doubt. It was not a dignified post to occupy; but we cannot all be patterns of dignity; some of us must be content to be cushions to the weary, instead of being goads and guide-posts to the lazy and inquiring. And she was content to be able to order her best friend's household to his mind, and to act a motherly part to Ellen Longley.

Mr. Sherwood, therefore, did not reckon upon his good old friend as an attraction to keep his sons happy at home. He gave her credit for doing her duty well in the state to which it had pleased God to call her, but he did not foolishly suppose inexperienced youth would content itself with the unrelieved society of an old age tired with the battle of life, or a middle age worn and pre-occupied with past and present struggles.

So Arthur and William were content with their home; but it was because with home affection, and home comfort, outside changes were allowed, progress was admitted; argument was not perforce strife; circumstances were permitted to alter household rules, and each member of Mr. Sherwood's family was allowed the right of a reasonable human being. In his boys' childhood the father had governed unquestioningly. In their

manhood he treated them on equal terms, and he found his reward.

In the investing of William's money, Mr. Turner had acted without taking Mr. Sherwood's advice, and when on William's obtaining his majority, the lawyer saw exactly how the investments were made, he was rather afraid of their security.

"My dear fellow!" Mr. Turner had exclaimed, "if I could, I would put every farthing of my own in the same thing. I was particularly cautious about these, because—well, because as you know, I had made so lately a bad spec. on my own account, and I was determined to be right this time."

"I warned you, sir," Arthur had said when his father expressed his uneasiness to his eldest son, afterwards. "No one would trust Mr. Turner on business matters."

"You've hardly right to say so," Mr. Sherwood answered.

"I've made inquiries," Arthur replied. "I wouldn't say so much without foundation. Mr. Turner would speculate with his last farthing—but for his wife."

"Ah, she's a woman of business!" Mr. Sherwood cried admiringly; "she's got the upper hand, though, a little too glaringly," he added, laughing, "but she'll keep him straight."

"I believe," Arthur continued gravely, "I believe they live entirely on her money, which he luckily can't touch. He's dabbled in everything with his own, and almost always been a loser."

"A victim, Arthur! he means well enough."

Arthur smiled. "He may do what he likes with his own," he said; "but he has no right to risk that of others."

"The concerns look a little risky," Mr. Sherwood continued, after a pause; "but they've proved safe all this time. A tricky affair couldn't go on steadily paying heavy dividends all these years. Turner is weak, but he's no rogue; it may be all right enough —and—if William likes, we can sell at once, as Turner himself says; there may be loss, though he says there won't be; but the first loss is the best."

In talking with William on this subject, all the papers were again looked carefully over, and even to legal eyes bore the inspection well —and all possible inquiries made, too. But for once, Mr. Turner seemed to have done prudently; the interest was high, but not alarmingly high—it seldom varied, which was a great and almost convincing proof of the stability of the concern.

Thus the momentary dread was lulled,

no sale was made, and for three years after this all went on smoothly, and the wary lawyer forgot he had ever mistrusted the investment.

CHAPTER III.

A STRONG-MINDED WIFE.

ALL, and more than Arthur Sherwood had said concerning Mr. Turner's lack of business knowledge, was the truth. In his youth he had been duped by his schoolfellows, in his early manhood he had been fleeced by every needy adventurer he came across.

"You never did a wise thing in your life but once," his wife told him, "and that was when you married me."

Mrs. Turner made this somewhat self-laudatory speech on the occasion of her hus-

band's expressing a not extraordinary wish that he had a thousand pounds to do what he chose with.

"A man may do wrong once, or even twice," he replied, not in reference to his marriage, but more in reply to what he guessed was in his wife's memory concerning former feats of his when he did possess money of his own, "and yet prove himself right in the end. If I could put my hand on money at this moment I could realize a fortune."

"Ph—ff," Mrs. Turner rejoined; "I'm very glad you haven't the power of throwing away more good money after bad, then."

"I've spoken to young William Sherwood," he continued, as if her words had been unspoken. "That fellow hasn't a spark of business faculty. I'm afraid he's close-fisted, like his father—like all lawyers, you know. Dreadful tight hands the lot of them."

"I wish you'd been bred a lawyer."

"I showed the fellow," he continued, "the surest and most straightforward way of doubling his miserable nest-egg at once. I declare one might have thought *I* wanted his money, he was so cool and persistent in refusing to be convinced."

"I dare say he did think so."

"But I like the fellow. I should like him for our Agnes," he added, lowering his voice and nodding sagaciously, "so I shall try and reason his stupidity away. I've a regard for him, for I'm sure he means well enough, and I should like to heap coals of fire on his father's head for his unkindness in preventing you selling out for me the other day."

"Now, John, don't you try to deceive yourself in this absurd way. Sherwood never prevented me; no power on earth would have made me diminish my income by one penny to serve your pie-crust schemes."

"You use such unlady-like strong language, Anna."

"All my life long I've tried to be truthful, to call things by familiar names, John. If people would speak out—speak plainly—speak their minds, to their families at least—the world would soon cease to be so disagreeable. There's more mischief made, more trouble, more misunderstandings caused by what fools call *delicacy*, than fools can imagine. If you hadn't been my husband you'd have been in the workhouse, or, worse, in the colonies, years ago; but, thank God, I'd too much respect for the man I had married to let him go quite to the dogs."

"Anna, Anna! you are so impetuous, so impulsive; you've no consideration for anyone but yourself. The reason I never succeeded in my speculations was just because I *always* lacked the few hundreds more that would have ensured success. You are like

all clever people, unable to see ability in others."

Mrs. Turner laughed softly.

"Well, well," she said, "you and I will never agree on this subject: you take one view of yourself and I take another. I tell you plainly, though, I shall warn that poor lad William not to give in to you. Now, let's have no more; you always want the last word. Here comes Agnes."

Out of seven children born to them only three—two daughters and a son—survived to grow up. Ethel, the eldest, was already married and settled in India; John, the son, was preparing to enter the army; and Agnes, Ellen Longley's special friend and companion, had but lately entered society as one of its members.

It is said strong-minded managing mothers have always weak-minded, helpless children, because the mother will not delegate any of

her authority to her children. An energetic person prefers acting for herself to teaching others to act for or with her; and children who are not early taught self-help and self-dependence, rarely develop either sense in after life. A patient, gentle woman, generally turns out the best children; it is the slow and silent course of time that hardens the rock and ripens the hidden gems of the earth, while the violent heat and resistless storm-wind destroy by their very strength.

Mrs. Turner, with her quick wits, her energetic wiry little body, her impatience, and that unfortunate superiority of purse, could neither understand nor appreciate delicacy of body nor sensitiveness of mind. Her babies had been ruled by one unchanging law; they were to be hungry at stated hours, satisfied with stated quantities, clothed in certain ways, varying only with what the calendar declared should be spring, summer, autumn, or winter.

If the calendar called it Midsummer-day, though the season persisted in behaving like December, the babies must still shiver in their clothing, feed on light cooling food, and sleep in healthy airy rooms.

To be hungry between meals was to evince a fractious temper, to want more than was provided was greediness, to appear cold and weak was a sign of a constitution that must be hardened forthwith. So four inconsistent little mortals perished at different periods of their infancy, perversely refusing to be treated like machines, and Mrs. Turner wept over their remains with a love that was tender, though it had shown itself so strangely, and characteristically deplored that her offspring should have inherited their poor weak father's constitution instead of her own.

"No one else could have kept them alive so long as I did," she said, and she persevered in the nursery laws she had laid down, more

especially convinced they were right by the thriving condition of Ethel, her eldest born, who took after herself in strength of body and will. John struggled up to two years—a sickly, melancholy, undersized baby, when he too began to show symptoms of following his innocent little brothers and sisters to a better home; and baby Agnes, puny and more delicate still, seemed likely to make as early an exit as any of the others, when a kinder Providence than nature had given them interfered to save their lives.

Mrs. Turner's mother, who lived in Yorkshire, had a paralytic stroke, and Mrs. Turner was kept in close attendance on her, almost daily expecting her death for nearly two years. It was impossible to have the children in the house where death was brooding day and night; and it was equally impossible for an affectionate only child to leave an aged mother in her last extremity.

Mrs. Turner was an affectionate child; she dearly loved her mother, though she certainly shortened her mother's hours by the determined way in which she stuffed her. Her maxim was that old age could not be fed too highly, and the poor sick lady vainly protested against her daughter's over care. Mrs. Turner did her duty to the utmost of her ability, and when she returned home and found her children round-limbed and bright-eyed, she felt God had blest her filial attention, and thus rewarded her for her long trial.

The fact was the weak father and the pitying servants had combined forces in her absence, and plenty of suitable food and judicious coaxing treatment had set disease at defiance.

Mrs. Turner was by no means obstinate; she could not deny the wonderful improvement in the children. Nurse had evidently carried out *her* plans so honestly, that she

had proved herself trustworthy; for the future, therefore, nurse might reign in the nursery without the former strict surveillance. Thus the babies continued to flourish, while Mrs. Turner was able to devote herself to the superintendence of Ethel's education, and the control of her husband.

Miss Ethel had so much of her mother's spirit as to engross that mother so entirely, that Agnes grew out of childhood before Mrs. Turner began to think of her education.

Ethel's determined will carried her off to India at last, with the husband of her own, but not her mother's choice, and when this ungrateful child, as her mother henceforth called her, was out of sight, Agnes was taken in hand.

Here was a very different nature to work upon. Ethel had been as marble, while Agnes was as clay. Mrs. Turner turned to this new pupil as a weary rider of a stubborn,

hard-mouthed horse, throws himself into his easy chair, with feelings of delight and relief, flattered by the admiring awe with which the girl regarded her, and pleased with her sweetness and beauty.

By-and-by, when the sweetness began to pall upon the mother's opposite nature, she looked round for a reason for this hitherto foreign element in the family disposition, and as she could not accuse her husband of giving it, she naturally blamed "that silly old Mrs. Williams," who had encouraged Agnes and Ellen in their intimacy.

"Ellen Longley has been allowed to run wild," she said; "who could expect anything else from that weak old woman? and poor Agnes has caught her easy, yielding, nervous manner from her."

At nineteen years of age, Agnes Turner was the type of a lovely, gentle Madonna; her face startled the passer-by by its

dazzling fairness and sweetness; the intense blue of her child-like eyes, with their earnest and serene expression, the fairness of the soft hair, the quiet grace of her movements, of her rounded, well-grown figure, made her conspicuous wherever she went as a model of loveliness.

She was one of those rarely beautiful girls one sees but once in a lifetime, and whose beauty remains in the memory of both sexes as long as memory lasts. The face of "Pleasure" in Noel Paton's celebrated picture comes nearest to any idea I can give of Agnes Turner, but the latter's lacked the sparkling buoyancy of the painted face; she was of purer or colder beauty, but if there was more sweetness in the face, there was less intelligence. It was a face like a sheet of fair, unwritten-on paper, to be soiled or ennobled as Fate willed.

She kissed her father and mother when she

entered the room, and then sat down between them to the breakfast before her, like a good little girl, taking what her mother had given her unquestioningly.

"Do you know your song for the Signorina?" her mother inquired. "She is to be here at ten o'clock, remember."

"Yes, mamma, I've practised two hours."

"Good girl," cried her father. "I do like industry."

"So do I," said Mrs. Turner, emphatically. "I'm glad you can recognize that virtue, John."

"I hate to be idle myself," Mr. Turner began, "and——"

"Oh, here's the post!" his wife interrupted. "It's mail day; we shall have our Indian letter, I suppose." And as she spoke the servant brought an Indian letter in. "Yes," she added, "Ethel is regular, I must say;

but then she can't have much to do at a place with such a name as Hazaritiaro."

"Any chance of their coming home?" Mr. Turner exclaimed. "I can't understand people going on year after year in such luxurious idleness."

"James being in the prime of life, and with a large district to look after, can't be expected to be even thinking of coming home yet, I should think," and Mrs. Turner went on reading to herself.

"Oh, but I know what a large district in India means," Mr. Turner cried. "James Steele does nothing all day but lie on a sofa smoking under a palm tree, while his niggers do the work. *I* know India pretty well, though of course only from books. Civilians and officers lead lives of the most selfish idleness, Anna, while the black men do their work. They are literally paid for doing nothing."

"Ethel's letters don't give one an idea of an idle life, John, either for herself or her husband, but then Ethel loves a bustle, and would create one for herself, rather than be at peace. Oh, here's a bit of news! she says: 'Young Longley marched through here last week on his way with his regiment to Doolie-juldi. He reminded me so much of Ellen, and is so handsome; he said he meant to go home on leave. We had him here to Khāna, of course,'" ("Some Indian national dish, no doubt," Mrs. Turner interposed) "'and lent him the Tonga to go on in a little way next day.'"

"Tonga," said Mr. Turner, "it sounds like a Roman cloak, doesn't it?"

"'A Tonga,'" continued his wife, reading on, "'is a sort of dog-cart drawn by ponies, curricle fashion, a rough and ready vehicle without springs, and to enjoy it, its occupants should be without bones. It is warranted

to go over the roughest road without danger.'"

"Poor Ethel writes as if we knew nothing of India," her mother explained, "but I am glad she explained what a Tonga is. She should have also told us what Khāna means. It is bad taste to interlard a letter or conversation with foreign words. Now, Agnes, you can have some honey if you like. Your sister sends her love, and hopes you practise your music well."

So Agnes felt herself dismissed, and went off to the drawing-room to prepare for her singing lesson.

"Now I'm going across to the Sherwoods," Mrs. Turner explained. "I shall not be easy till I've put William on his guard, John; you can read Ethel's letter again while I'm away, and see the flowers watered. I shan't be gone long."

"Anna," cried her husband, jumping up

and assuming an attitude of imposing integrity, "I beg you won't interfere in business matters. You will do an injury instead of a benefit to William's prospects if you——"

She interrupted him with an indulgent laugh.

"My dear old man, there, give me a kiss, and read this. I don't think William will make his fortune through the man who has marred his own. I always speak out plain."

Then she kissed him as one would kiss an erring child. Her hard features softened with the real affection she bore him, and with a sigh as from a heart bursting with suffering in the cause of virtue, he took the letter mildly, and let her go without further protest.

The Turners and Sherwoods lived on opposite sides of Porchester Terrace, the

Sherwoods' house being towards the middle, while the Turners' was nearer the Westbourne Grove end.

Mrs. Turner daintily raised her handsome gown, and stepped lightly across the freshly-watered road. In front of her a great tall woman was striding with a gaudy cotton skirt trailing behind her, through the pools of muddy water. She carried a child in her arms, and had a little boy dragging at her gown, and perpetually tripping as he stepped upon it. Mrs. Turner's temper was easily roused, never more easily than in the presence of dirt and untidiness.

"You very dirty woman!" she cried, suddenly darting in front of the unconscious offender. "Are you not ashamed of yourself, sweeping the dirty streets in this disgusting way? What will your house be like with that skirt trailing through it? What must your *legs* be like? As for that poor

child, he will presently fall and break his bones, and will have to thank your folly for making him a cripple for life."

Like most overgrown, ungainly women, the one addressed had a large, stupid face, whose expression betrayed unmitigated surprise and alarm, when at last she understood the fierce little body before her. Then, quick as thought, and without a word in vindication, she caught up the boy by her side under her arm, and so burdened with both children, she rapidly turned and re-crossed the road, as if to fly from a great danger.

Mrs. Turner watched the mud splashing up around the heavy, hasty footsteps, herself taken aback by the unexpected victory and retreat of the foe. Then, unable to keep from laughing at the ludicrous adventure, she arrived at Mr. Sherwood's gate just as that gentleman and his eldest son were coming out.

"Of course she thought you were mad," Mr. Sherwood said, when she had explained the cause of her amusement and excitement. "Come in, come in, we are all in a state of excitement here too; Eddy Longley is coming home. Here, Ellen, Ellen!" he cried, raising his voice as they ascended the steps to the front door, "here's a visitor."

The house looked very pretty as they stood before it; the little garden between it and the high wall that enclosed it from the road, was full of summer flowers. The hall, too, was decorated with stands of flowers; and every window—all now, like the door, open to let in the soft morning air—had its sill full of fragrant geraniums and mignonette.

"One moment," Mrs. Turner said, turning to Mr. Sherwood as he was about to pass into the house, "this visit is to you and William more than to the ladies. I only want to say a few words—you know me, that

I speak to the point plainly—at whatever cost to myself. Is William in ?"

"William !" cried his father, for answer.

"Here we are again," cried William's voice in reply, and he appeared leaping down the stairs that took up the opposite end of the entrance hall, but instantly slackened speed as he saw who was there, for the young people of Mrs. Turner's acquaintance held her more in awe than admiration.

Mrs. Turner always exacted the greatest deference from young people—they were her natural enemies, because they were the natural enemies to general order and rules, at least she so considered them to be. Then Mr. Sherwood led the way into a little room on the other side of the house, looking over the small square lawn and flower-borders, termed "the" garden.

"No, I don't want to sit," Mrs. Turner said, declining the offered easy-chair; "and I

never use a low chair. Look here, Mr. William, I find my husband is trying to induce you to re-invest your money. I've come to say, don't do it. My husband is not a man of business; be content, and don't move your capital."

"I was telling you, father, you know, last night," William said, "Mr. Turner was good enough to wish me to get higher interest."

"I recollect," Mr. Sherwood replied. "Well, Turner isn't far out this time; the thing is weighty and well reputed, but I agree with you—William had best rest content as he is; there is always risk in these new concerns, though I once disliked the very investment I am now upholding."

"My dear old friend," Mrs. Turner interrupted, "look how John has been taken in; *don't* have anything to do with his schemes; this present investment has proved itself secure."

"I never thought seriously of entertaining his proposal," William exclaimed. "You are very kind."

"Then I'm content," she said.

Like many another well-intentioned person she thus caused what she was doing her best to avert—William's ruin.

CHAPTER IV.

AS Mrs. Turner left the room a girl came quickly towards her.

"How do you do, Mrs. Turner; will you please take this note to Agnes, and will you let her spend this evening with us? I've had a letter from Eddy, and he's coming home!"

Her voice went up into little trills of happiness as she talked—a sweet clear voice it was, with no metallic ring or monotonous level, a voice one seldom hears, and which returns to one afterwards again and again like the music of a pleasant song. Every

word came clear and distinct; it was almost enough happiness to hear its sound without heeding the sense it uttered. The three gentlemen in attendance—for Arthur had come into the hall to wait for his father—watched her as she spoke. Mr. Sherwood, with the proud loving expression of a delighted father, joying in his child's joy—Arthur with critical eyes, William with friendly interest.

Mrs. Turner was disposed to consider Ellen Longley as a spoilt girl, a wilful girl, a girl who needed tight and skilful training, and she often expressed a hope, in Agnes's hearing, that her daughter would not learn boisterous manners and unfeminine assurance from so much familiarity with her. But just then Mrs. Turner was not captious; she had reason to be pleased with the effect of her plain speaking this morning, having frightened a natural enemy out of her wits, and saved her

husband from causing harm and suffering. So she smiled graciously, said she was sure "Agnes would be delighted," and "hoped Mr. Longley's return was not owing to ill-health."

"Unfortunately it was partly on that account," Ellen said; "he had been working hard for the adjutancy, and now that he had got it he couldn't stay to hold it, that horrid fever had knocked him down; but he is only coming for six months," she added.

Mrs. Turner was able to say Ethel had pronounced him charming; "but then you know," Mrs. Turner continued, "Ethel is so foolishly positive in her opinions, she may have said so merely to annoy Steele. I think he is foolish to go to such expense," she added, gratuitously expressing her opinion. "Fancy coming so far for six months. Why can't he go to the hills for fresh air?"

"He prefers coming to see his friends," Arthur put in.

"Young men are so thoughtless," Mrs. Turner continued, without noticing the sarcasm. "Let me see, he's only been away seven years; what can he want here again? In the days when fortunes were made in India men were content to remain steadily at their work twenty and thirty years at a stretch, and I suppose fever was as rife then as now!"

No one spoke. Mrs. Turner had such really sterling good qualities that those who knew her let her irritating remarks pass without comment. Ellen had a high spirit, and could express her distaste pretty strongly —behind her back, but in her presence she could only *look* her dislike. Perhaps the elder lady guessed at, and liked, the impression she made on young people. She laughed now, as if pleased *she* could tame Miss

Longley, and with a patronizing "Good-morning, dear!" she left the house with the business-bound gentlemen.

"How do you feel, shut up?" William cried, mockingly, as, now that the lady was out of sight, Ellen raised her eyes, and looked defiantly at him.

"If she were not Agnes's mother I'd never speak to her! she's so rude, so overbearing, so irritating," she exclaimed; then breaking into a laugh all girlish glee, she added, "Confess the truth; wouldn't you like to box her ears sometimes?"

"Ellen, my dear Ellen," cried a voice coming up the kitchen stairs, "I want you and William particularly."

"Well, dear?" Ellen exclaimed, as Mrs. Williams gradually came panting to the top, "here we are, both of us."

Mrs. Williams was a stout lady of sixty years, with a sweet, unwrinkled face, and

soft bright eyes of that pretty Devonshire brown at once beautiful and feeble. Though it was summer, and the housekeeper's room, where she went daily to give her orders, was carpeted and warm, she always dressed as if going to market in bad weather. Goloshes covered her velvet house-boots, a warm knitted shawl fell over her ample figure, and one of those old-fashioned quilted silk head-dresses, once known as "calashes," surmounted her pretty old-lady's cap; but Ellen and William were both too well used to her peculiarities to notice them.

"Well, dear," Ellen repeated, as Mrs. Williams seated herself on the nearest chair; "what is it?"

"I have quite forgotten," was the reply, "what pudding you and William chose at breakfast. Cook wanted me to order an open tart and currant dumpling; but I said, 'No, cook, I won't have things hap-hazard in that

way. Supposing they hadn't asked me to order open tart, and they ate it and suffered from indigestion—paste is so bad at night, you know—or, supposing they hadn't wanted dumpling, and got cholera accidentally from eating too much fruit, how should I ever lift up my head again ?'"

"What *did* we say ?" said Ellen, her face all alight with repressed fun.

"May I have what I like ?" William asked, gravely.

"My darling boy, what a question."

"Then I vote for ice pudding—Nesselrode."

"My dear boy, I hardly think—I don't like to seem unkind—but ice—Nesselrode—it is— Why, my dear William, couldn't you fancy a less expensive one till it's somebody's birthday ?"

"Ellen, can you eat grosser food ?" he said.

"It's all his nonsense, dear," Ellen said to the old lady, who was waiting with deep concern on her kindly face for having ventured to thwart her darling boy. "You know he was always called 'Tenpenny-nail' at school. Of course we mustn't have ice-pudding, unless, indeed, he chooses to pay for it!"

When this question was happily done with, Mrs. Williams proceeded to discuss their plans for the day. William was, of course, going to chambers. Ellen required her duenna's company for a drive before dinner; Agnes would come in time to accompany them. So day by day was Ellen Longley wont to decide matters for herself. In a household that loved and humoured her slightest wish, surrounded with brightness and comfort, no wonder she felt life to be pleasant and desirable, and accepted her idle lot without for an instant thinking there was a serious and a dark side in every life.

She was nineteen years old, and had never yet known sorrow or anxiety. Her parents died before she could remember them. Mr. Sherwood had acted more than a parent's part to her; he loved her sincerely, and as he watched her grow up into her lovely sparkling womanhood, his great desire was that one of his sons should marry her, and thus make her his daughter in reality; but up to the present time neither son had shown other than a brotherly regard for her. To be sure their intercourse savoured of a mixture of ease and admiration which is not always visible in brotherly regard; but Mr. Sherwood was young enough yet to know this was very far from the admiration that leads to courtship and matrimony.

Captain Longley and his wife had both died of cholera in India. Edward and Ellen were their only children. Edward was at home at the time of their death, under the

care of an aunt of his mother's; and Ellen, quite a baby, had been brought home by a relation of Mrs. Williams, into whose charge the child was given. In the family of his great-aunt Edward had been brought up, paying only occasional visits to his guardian, Mr. Sherwood, so that Ellen knew little of his character, and remembered him only as a noisy, handsome schoolboy, for he had been little more than a schoolboy when he left England for India.

The orphans had no other relation who noticed them; their patrimony was too slender to make their guardianship a bone of contention. Each child had about two hundred a year, and of Ellen's share Mr. Sherwood only took the expenses of her education; in all other outlay his purse was hers.

Once or twice since she had grown old enough to understand his great liberality, she

had remonstrated and begged him to let her cease to be a burthen.

"A burthen, love?" he had answered, "it is my great happiness to fancy you are my little daughter. No, no, as long as you are under my roof you must not quarrel with your bread-and-butter."

"But, dear uncle," she had persisted—she called him uncle, though he was no relation, because she loved him too much to think of him as Mr. Sherwood, her guardian only—"my dress costs a great deal, I know it does; and I eat ever so much; you don't know what a difference I make in the weekly bills; if you would but spend my money for me, and just make me a little allowance out of it for sweeties, dear."

"Sweeties, dear," he said, mimicking her persuasive manner; "I shan't give you money to waste over sweeties. Be content; perhaps when you are twenty-one I'll let you control

your own, but till then I shall keep it tight. When I die, my dear," he continued, very gravely, "you'll find two hundred a year very little towards housekeeping, unless there's an accumulation to start with."

The quick tears came to the girl's eyes; she drew back that he should not see them, and kissed the head now grown so bare since the days William used to fondle it. She could not trust her voice to thank him nor to expostulate further, and but at very rare and thoughtful times did she consider how great was his kindness, and how terrible would be the loss that deprived her of this faithful, generous friend.

Generally it all came naturally to her—loving words, fond glances, her own way. Does any girl stop to consider how her gladness comes? No, she sings, and dances onward till the full stop comes to the harmony, and then she wonders at her blind egotism.

CHAPTER V.

TWO HEROINES.

AGNES TURNER, springing upstairs, and into Ellen's room, was a very different girl to the demure young lady she appeared to be in her mother's house; her blue eyes were full of excitement, her rosy lips wide with glee.

"Oh, I was so afraid it would rain, or that mamma would keep me at the last," she cried. "Oh, Ellen, is your brother really come home? Oh, you happy girl; everything delightful is always happening to you."

"Perhaps I shan't like him," said Ellen, slyly, as if the idea was too ridiculous.

"Not like him?—your only brother—coming all the way from India—an officer too! Oh, Ellen! he'll take you everywhere; and what *shall* I do?"

"Go with us," Ellen answered. "Yes," she added, no longer trying to hide her delight, "won't it be nice! With my brother of course I can go everywhere without the tiresome brougham, or a servant, or Mrs. Williams; and, of course, you can go too."

"But he's a young man," Agnes interrupted, "and perhaps mamma will say I can't go with him."

Ellen was posed at this probability.

"There's something in that," she answered, "and I dare say he's a flirt—all officers are flirts, and especially officers home on leave." And then Ellen stopped suddenly—how nice it would be if Eddy and Agnes fell in love; but it wouldn't do to put such an idea forward now, for it would be just the way to

make the girl awkward in his presence, so she only added: "But of course he wouldn't flirt with *my* friend, and he's sick, so perhaps will be as sober as a judge."

"Is he sick, poor fellow?" Agnes asked. "Oh, then I shan't mind him; but I was rather afraid of his coming and taking you away, and giving himself airs as all officers do, you know."

While Ellen dressed for the drive, Agnes busied herself in admiring, for the hundredth time, the pretty bedroom—a more luxurious apartment than any in her mother's house, fresher and prettier far than Mrs. Turner's drawing-room, which was furnished more with regard to service than appearance. Besides the gilt bed with its muslin curtains and daintily-frilled pillows, the soft-piled mossy carpet, the furniture all to match, of American ash-wood, the writing or work tables; the panelled white paper with its

border of delicate roses and forget-me-nots; the pretty prints on the panels; the hanging book-shelf full of gorgeous books—were scattered about on the white marble chimney-piece and furbelowed toilette-table, little ornaments of Indian work, sweet-smelling sandal wood, and wondrous ivory carving; hideous little figures of gods in lapis-lazuli and solid silver; relics that had come to England with the baby orphan; relics of her dead young father's foreign service.

Agnes sighed as she noted all these things.

"What a magnificent country India must be, dear!" she said at length. "I dare say all these beautiful things are as common there as our nasty cheap ugly things are here?"

"Of course they are," Ellen replied, with her superior knowledge. "That's why I think Teddy will not care to stay in England—it will all be so uncomfortable and nasty-

looking, after India—the gorgeous East, you know, as every one calls it."

"But then," Agnes continued, with a ring of doubt in her voice, "Ethel says we only know India from the accounts of grand people, who have plenty of money or influence to smoothe the way, and that we should hear what poor military people say."

"But, dear Agnes, you know Ethel is—"

Both the girls laughed.

"Peculiar," Agnes added, "and she doesn't like perpetual summer either. Now I think that must be delightful; fancy, always to wear a muslin gown, and never feel frozen."

"Ah, but the heat must be trying," Ellen answered, "because people *do* get so ill there; but no doubt they are stupid, and take long walks in the sun, instead of sitting quietly at home all day. How delightful the bungalows must be! Fancy marble floors,

and lovely feather fans waved over one by heaps of servants!"

"Ethel says there are rats in her bedroom," Agnes began.

"Oh, now, Agnes, don't quote her for ever. Look what lots of books there are about it, and does *one* of them mention such things? Why, you know, Mrs. Lomax is always talking about her delightful bungalow, with her bedroom, dressing-room and bath-room, besides, haven't people rats at home?—or why are there rat-traps?"

This was, of course, a clencher, and quite stopped a remark Agnes was going to make about snakes. Ellen knew best about most things, in the opinion of her loving friend, and as Ellen had been born in India, and her nearest relations had lived there, why, it stood to reason she must be a better authority on India than cantankerous Ethel, though the latter really lived there too.

Then they took a drive, stopping at Grainger's for strawberries and cream—Mrs. Williams' little treat to them—and went on home by Hyde Park, where they saw Mr. Sherwood and William sitting in their cabriolet, talking and laughing to a group of young men loungers, over the Row railings; and farther on, Arthur Sherwood escorting a young lady and her papa, all three on horseback.

"Look at Arthur's rosebud!" cried Ellen; "and who can *she* be?—she's not a bit pretty."

"Don't you know?" said Agnes, with awe. "That's Sir Roper Smith—he's—oh, ever so rich, and Miss Roper Smith is his only child. He's something to do with railways. I've spoken to him once."

"And survived it!" laughed Ellen. "Well, I don't care—they are both hideous-looking people."

"I dare say she's very good and clever," Mrs. Williams said mildly.

Ellen turned quickly to her with a blush.

"You dear aunty," she said, "I always forget the gift of charity. I dare say she is,—and she rides beautifully."

But when they all met at dinner, Arthur was teased about his new acquaintances.

"Made a large fortune by railways, has he?" William said. "Well, the young lady looks as if she had been fed upon old engines in her infancy. I call her a rigid young woman, especially about the nose; it would be dangerous to attempt to kiss her,—you'd be spiked to a certainty."

Arthur enjoyed the joke.

"One has so much beauty at home," he said gallantly, "that all other faces suffer."

"Ah," cried William, "thank you, Arthur. Well, I know I *am* very handsome, and I'm sure our father and Aunt Williams can't

complain of cruel nature. Still, we don't like such broad compliments to our faces."

"She'll be immensely rich," Arthur continued calmly, when the girls had done tittering. "I'll introduce you, if you like."

"I wouldn't cut you out for the world," responded his brother; "I daren't know her. I should always be expecting her to go off with a shriek and a snort, and run me down."

"Oh, how your tongue runs off with you!" Mr. Sherwood exclaimed.

But William knew he need only look across the table to find unqualified appreciation and approval of any nonsense he liked to utter in Ellen's violet eyes overflowing with mirth, so he rarely stopped to think before he spoke, in her presence.

"Here's Jane!" Agnes suddenly exclaimed, in quick alarm, as through the open window she saw her quondam nurse ascending the

steps. "Oh, I hope it's not to fetch me, now!"

A note was brought in, and Agnes coloured as she read it, though it was with a sigh of relief she explained, "No, I needn't go—it's only—" and then stopped.

"What, my dear?" Mrs. Williams asked.

"It's—it's—" Agnes stammered, "it's only —Mamma says she doesn't want me to eat uncooked fruit, for she's heard the cholera is at Alexandria—and you know I've had strawberries, Ellen—and mamma says it always comes here next."

"By Marseilles and Paris, direct," Mr. Sherwood laughed. "Never mind, Agnes; we'll pay the doctor and the undertaker."

"The idea of keeping that girl like a baby, yet," William said, when the ladies had gone to the drawing-room. "She's a regular child, still."

"A very beautiful one," Arthur added.

"Now Arthur, let me advise you to keep your eyes from beholding vanity, or you'll never be able to be Sir Roper Smith's son-in-law."

"I should not dream of being so lucky," rejoined the elder, a little impatiently.

"Come—light a cigar, Arthur," Mr. Sherwood interposed. "We'll make allowances for William; he's not old enough to see on which side his bread is buttered, yet; he'll look for more substantial charms than mere roses and lilies by-and-by."

But Arthur declined a cigar, and both the young men quickly followed the young ladies.

Arthur was by no means a silent or stupid man in society. He made himself very agreeable this evening, more, perhaps, to Agnes than to Ellen; but then Agnes was the guest. It was a merry evening to all—an enchanting one to Agnes.

"Oh, Ellen, how I envy you such a happy home!" Agnes said, as they went upstairs for Agnes's bonnet.

"Isn't William great fun?" Ellen said.

"Yes," the other replied; "but Mr. Arthur talks so cleverly, doesn't he?"

Other people thought well of Arthur beside this inexperienced girl. Sir Roper Smith told his daughter he considered him one of the most sensible men of the present day.

"You may ask him to dinner, Amelia," he added. "I've inquired about the father, and find they're very respectable, steady people. This man's the eldest son, and is to have the business. First rate business it is. I've no objection to visiting the family."

Now Sir Roper Smith owned no family of his own but his daughter, Amelia. It is to be supposed he had, like other people, other relations, but they never appeared in Sir Roper's aristocratic home circle. Lady Smith had

died recently, but even on that mournful occasion no condoling relatives came forward to support the bereaved widower at the funeral, nor to cheer and comfort the orphan girl.

Sir Roper's hall was decorated with painted ancestors, with falcons on wrist, and ancestral glades stretching behind their courtly farthingales, but Sir Roper—as no doubt beseemed a gentleman—never alluded to them as to beings who had once been alive, and had belongings in house and land.

"Queer old fogies," he would say, with a wave of the hand. "No, don't know their histories, no more will my descendants care to know mine, I dare say."

But Sir Roper's acquaintances cared more about his dinners than his relations, and owing to his title and his money, acquaintances were plentiful. He had the sense to know a well-educated, well-born gentleman

when he met him, and he sensibly considered that Mr. Arthur Sherwood's presence at his rather oppressive banquets, would add to their brilliancy. So Mr. Arthur Sherwood was entertained in Bedford Square, and saw what money can command of splendour and luxury, and gradually the young man—prudent beyond his years—began to do more than dream of becoming Sir Roper's lucky son-in-law.

If only those child-like, radiant blue eyes would not watch him so admiringly.

"Is she really considered pretty?" Miss Smith asked concerning the owner of the eyes in question.

"What—Miss Turner?" Arthur answered, with an air of as much surprise as his interlocutor, though with this difference, that his surprise was unfeigned, while hers was by no means genuine.

"Yes, little Agnes Turner. Really what

funny people you gentlemen are. I thought people admired intellect and play of feature, but really she is only like a wax doll to me, a well-behaved little nonentity."

Arthur laughed.

"Perhaps you have only seen her in her mother's presence," he said. "She is very lively and pleasing away from home. She is with Miss Longley constantly, so I see a good deal of her."

Miss Smith looked archly at her companion, and said no more, and Arthur felt obliged to devote himself yet more impressively to her to do away with the effect of his ill-judged partisanship.

"I do believe Arthur Sherwood is trying for Amelia Smith," Mrs. Turner said, the morning after a party at which the three families had met. "Well, if old Sir Roper likes it, and Mr. Sherwood has no objection, I don't see why they shouldn't make it up ; but

Sherwood had better *see* the marriage portion, *I* should say."

Mr. Turner laughed.

"You're right," he answered. "Smith has his irons in too many fires. If Arthur marries for money, he may chance to be disappointed. *She'll* be safe enough. Arthur Sherwood isn't a bad speculation, but I wonder Smith doesn't prefer William."

"I don't wonder at all," Mrs. Turner replied. "Arthur's steady business is better worth having than William's capital. Somehow I never feel that boy is safe."

Mr. Turner fidgeted and "pshawed."

"Why it was Smith who recommended that investment," he exclaimed; "he was a director."

"Was?" Mrs. Turner repeated. "You mean he had one of his irons in that fire, one of his smallest, most likely, and it is a very different thing risking a small portion to risking one's whole capital."

As Mr. Turner could not refute this, he tried to prove her wrong in another direction.

"Why do you talk of these things before that child," he exclaimed, "to have it all repeated to the Sherwoods?"

Now all Agnes had attended to had been the subject of Arthur's probable marriage, and she instantly turned an injured face towards her father, but her mother came in victoriously.

"You have been so used to the society of tricksters," she cried, "that you actually have become suspicious of your own flesh and blood. I hope no child of mine requires warning against tittle-tattling. If there is one petty vice more despicable than another, it is tittle-tattling. I believe Agnes's mind is more bent on her studies than on gossip. Go to your history, my dear."

With a smile and a blush, Agnes gladly

left the room; the smile came because she was beginning to be aware of the absurdity of being treated like a child, and knowing she was so treated without daring to assert her womanhood; and she blushed because her real thoughts were so different to those with which her mother had credited her.

"What a happy woman Arthur's wife will be!" she sighed, as she took up her distasteful history book, and then she fell a thinking of a home as bright and pretty as the Sherwoods', and wondered whether she should ever know any other life than her present monotonous subdued existence. She was not prone to put her thoughts into words, but once she and Ellen Longley had had a conversation, in which Agnes had hinted at some dissatisfaction with her subdued home-life.

"I wonder," Ellen answered, "why we are all yearning for something else than

what is really ours in the present? I wonder if you will ever look back and long for these days again?"

"Oh no, dear," Agnes had replied emphatically, "that is an impossibility."

Then the two girls had laughed gaily, and turned their talk to lighter subjects, but now, as Agnes sat in the ugly drawing-room, the ugliness of the years that had gone struck her anew.

"How happy Miss Smith must be," she thought, but her innocent heart happily did not know why Miss Smith's supposed lot must be so happy, because she was to be Arthur's wife. She did not know her own life seemed particularly tasteless just then, because Arthur had chosen another than herself. She did acknowledge to herself that he was the nicest man she had ever known, but she was as yet too ignorant of her own charms to imagine any man would dream of her as

his wife. Arthur's kind words and glances were but so many proofs of his good nature to her, nothing more.

That very morning, while she was thus musing, the brothers were standing in the portico of the opposite house, smoking their after-breakfast cigars. They had both dined at Sir Roper Smith's the night before, and were talking the party over. William had given it as his opinion that Amelia got up well by candlelight, and added slyly he "believed that fellow, Rogers, was making up to her."

"Pooh!" Arthur answered, "she wouldn't look at him."

"It strikes me she looks at you pretty often," the younger brother continued.

Arthur smiled complacently.

"Our father is very anxious to see one of us settled," he answered. "I should prefer a few introduceable relations in Sir Roper's family, but one can't have everything."

William turned sharply and faced his brother.

"Then you *are* making up to her!" he said.

"How could I do better?" Arthur exclaimed, quietly.

"I thought your real taste lay in an opposite direction," the other retorted, nodding across the way.

Arthur drew himself up.

"Men of capital can marry for love alone," he said, sententiously, "but we poor working bees must be prudent."

"There, there!" William cried, almost indignantly. "You of all men can afford well to please your heart and eyes. Why do you make such paltry excuses?"

Arthur buttoned his glove, pressed his hat more firmly on, and went down the steps.

"A man can be sensible without being

paltry, I take it," and with this parting fling at his brother, he went citywards.

That night after dinner, when William had left the table, Arthur said quietly to his father:

"I have proposed to Miss Smith, and been accepted—conditionally."

CHAPTER VI.

A PRUDENT SUITOR.

LIKE all men who work hard for their living, and have learned the full value of money, as measured by the world's requirements, Mr. Sherwood appreciated the power and position money gives; and yet, though he was unfeignedly astonished his son had secured such an heiress as Sir Roper's only child must be—and proud, too—his heart did not warm towards his son's choice. Instead of gaining another child, he felt as if about to lose one.

The Smiths' style of living—their tastes

and surroundings were all opposed to the lawyer's old-fashioned ideas of home seclusion and comfort.

Amelia Smith, with her ponderous jewellery, her decided features, and her showy manner, was totally unlike his beau ideal of maidenhood, Ellen Longley; but Arthur was doing well for himself, of his own accord, and though he might drift away with the noisy glittering stream his wife delighted to follow, it would be because he liked it best, and what more could the father desire than the son's happiness?

Arthur had anxiously observed his father during the short pause that had followed his announcement, and was inexpressibly cheered and relieved, when the latter exclaimed cordially—

"Accepted, eh? Well, I suppose you'll be considered an uncommonly lucky man."

"I was astonished enough, myself," Arthur

continued so encouraged, as to speak more openly than was his wont. "I thought I should have hard work to get old Sir Roper to listen to me; but he was very friendly, very complimentary to you—and—I think, you know, sir," Arthur said, confidentially, "he's up to so many dodges amongst his city friends, that he's glad to see Amelia settled in a steady-going family like ours."

"But with the fortune he can give her," the elder interrupted, "she might marry amongst the aristocracy."

"That wouldn't suit him," Arthur cried, with a sagacious shake of the head; "he might buy a titled son-in-law, but he couldn't buy a friendly one; he would lose his money and his daughter, too, if he looked too high. Believe me, he's a knowing old card."

It struck Mr. Sherwood that his son was a knowing young one. The tone, more than

the words, pained the father; William talked slang very often, but the tone and the manner compensated for the words. William's familiarity was always gentlemanly; his manner was ever unguarded, and never showed anything but what was honest, genial, and refined; but Arthur, whose very nature appeared to be calm propriety, now disclosed something that, if not absolutely vulgar, yet grated upon Mr. Sherwood's sense of what was usual when young lovers speak of their mistress and her relations.

"And are you to be married soon?" he asked, less cordially than before.

Arthur noticed the change, and quickly regained his usual manner.

"Nay, sir," he answered, "we did not go so far as to name the day. There was your consent necessary to be asked first, and—and you know, I told you our engagement is conditional."

"On what?"

"Don't you think you and Sir Roper had best talk the matter over. I don't like the idea of seeming to make terms with you, sir."

There was a dash of becoming modesty in Arthur's manner, that went far towards obliterating the disagreeable impression he had made so lately, and Mr. Sherwood was quick to be generous.

"Yes, my boy," he said, "you shall not have the unpleasantness of dispute about ways and means to take the brightness off your happiness, just now. I'll see Sir Roper when he likes."

Then they went into the drawing-room, and over the tea—Mrs. Williams always insisted on having it in old-fashioned style, made by herself in the room—the great news of Arthur's engagement was proclaimed.

William whistled softly, and then got up and patted his brother's head.

"Bless you, bless you, my cheeild!" he said.

"Oh, William! don't jest on such a subject," Mrs. Williams cried, wiping away genuine tears of loving sympathy. "My dear Arthur, God bless you and yours, now and for ever."

They were all touched by her tender, motherly manner, and Arthur, greatly softened, rose and kissed her. It is on such occasions as this the dead mother's or father's disinterested loving greetings are missed, and their loss freshened. The old lady had unwittingly reminded both father and sons how a mother's congratulations would have been given, and a sadness, not unhappy, fell upon them, and for that evening, at least, drew them all closer together.

When William drove to 129, John Street,

the afternoon of the day on which the interview between the two fathers came off, he found both Mr. Sherwood and Arthur in close conversation—conversation that made Arthur look glum and his father harassed. Both were relieved when William came gaily into the room.

"Well!" cried the latter, "have you seen the big Bashaw, father?"

"Shut the door," said Arthur, testily; "you always seem to think all the world may hear everything you have to say."

"Holloa!" said William, doing as he was bid. "Holloa! has the heiress declined partnership?"

"Sit down, and keep quiet, William!" Mr. Sherwood exclaimed. "These matters are always trying. Don't tease your brother with silly jokes, just now."

"Well, then, what's gone wrong?" William asked.

"My father thought, naturally enough," Arthur answered, "that by taking me into partnership with him, and promising I should succeed to the entire business ultimately, Sir Roper would consider he was doing all that could be expected, but he insists on a settlement being made beside—£5,000."

"And what does *he* give?"

"Ah," Mr. Sherwood interrupted, "that's just what *I* asked."

"Well, but it is true enough what he says, father," Arthur exclaimed. "Sir Roper's capital is all out in investments, and his expensive establishment takes up his whole income—of course he could call in his capital—but why should he be a loser? And he promises Amelia shall be his sole legatee, besides——"

"But he might marry again, or lose his capital," William interposed. "'Pon my word, I do think it isn't fair, considering his

circumstances, to bind you down, and keep himself free."

"Sir Roper thinks that by having the young people to share his house, and, in fact, making them his guests, he is giving a fair equivalent; but I should think Arthur would find such an arrangement very irksome, *I* should," Mr. Sherwood said.

"What?" William cried, "Arthur go and eat what's put before him like a good boy, apologize for interrupting Sir Roper by intruding in his drawing-room, be afraid to do as he likes because of interfering in established habits, obliged to conform to certain meal-times, and ever to be bored by Sir Roper's city friends! Why, Arthur, you never could stand it! I'd rather live in a sky-parlour, than on such terms in a palace."

"You are exaggerating so," Arthur replied. "You don't see all the benefit; we should have every luxury at no cost to ourselves.

I suppose it wouldn't hurt me to breakfast and dine at stated times? I believe we do so at home, don't we? We should keep up a home for Sir Roper, which would quite prevent him wishing to marry again, Amelia would have to go through no disagreeable changes of servants and habits, and I shall have my own snuggery, and of course *my* friends will be my wife's."

"All right," his brother exclaimed, "you are more amiable than I am, that's evident. Well, dad, what next?"

"I don't quite see your brother should make such a settlement; five thousand pounds taken from my small property will materially reduce my income; it would have been impossible for me to do it, had you been unprovided for. As it is, the partnership is more than Arthur, at his age, had any right to expect."

"I hope," Arthur exclaimed, "I hope,

father, you believe I am more than satisfied."

"I do believe so; but will you be satisfied to postpone your marriage until I can sell out this sum favourably?"

"Did Sir Roper say the marriage was to be soon?" Arthur asked.

"He said he wished it to be as soon as the articles of partnership are signed. I can quite allow the justice of his dislike to a long courtship, it would be an awkward affair as Miss Smith as no lady friend living with her."

"But of course there can be no marriage, perhaps he won't allow even an engagement, if there can be no settlement?" Arthur said, interrogatively.

"If your happiness really depends on it, I will try to make the settlement possible," Mr. Sherwood answered.

"Of course I should not have asked the

girl, if I hadn't felt she could make me happy."

"Very well. I will write to Sir Roper and promise, that is, if you consent to wait for a good opportunity for selling?"

Arthur jumped up with alacrity.

"To be sure, father," he answered, "and now there's that draft of Lord Linswood's to be looked over. I'd better go and see how it's getting on. There's nothing more to detain you here, and William's horse will be restive with waiting so long."

Driving along with his favourite son, Mr. Sherwood talked openly of his growing dislike to Arthur's proposed marriage.

"How a man can consent to walk into his wife's house, and be subservient to an old——" here he drew himself up, and smiled even in his deep chagrin — "well, well," he added, "perhaps, as you said, Arthur's more amiable than you and I, Billy—

but I should think Sir Roper is neither a literary nor a benevolent character—you'll see, if this scheme is carried out, Arthur will end in being chief butler, and clerk of the accounts to his father-in-law. I thought the lad had more spirit in him, I thought this settlement question would settle him, but he's bent upon having the girl."

"After all, father, it's a grand match for him, and many a man would jump at the prospect of living in such purple and fine linen, at his father-in-law's expense. After all, too, he'll be his own master at the office all day."

"I don't think it's just to you, though. I shall alter my will, and make your mother's little property up to five thousand, that at least will make you square."

"All right, dad," William said, "and I'll make my will, and make you monarch of all I possess, those Roper Smith's shall

not have the benefit of one single pin of mine."

If Mr. Sherwood had hopes Arthur would decline to take advantage of his generosity, and try to make better terms for himself with his bride-elect, he was disappointed. The greed of future gold was strong on the young man. The foolish envy of the young idlers who had long worshipped at Amelia's golden shrine were tough links to fetter him. The openly expressed longings to have his good luck were delicious to his ears, and rather than have it publicly stated he had failed, because the paltry settlement of five thousand pounds on a bride who would ultimately confer untold wealth, was beyond his and his father's power to make, Arthur would have eaten any amount of humble pie in private. Mr. Sherwood was a cautious man, he made many and strict inquiries concerning Sir Roper

Smith, before he committed himself to promise the settlement; but the worst that could be said of Sir Roper was, that he was a self-made man, and a speculative man, but a man with such keen business powers, that he knew exactly when to risk and when to sell, and was rarely, if ever, bitten to any large amount. Mr. Sherwood knew that without some risk and without speculation, no city man could gain a fortune, and he was fain to be content at last, and try and feel, as every one else seemed to feel, that his eldest son was baiting with a very small venture, considering the greatness of the fish to be netted.

So the promise was given, and Sir Roper and Arthur agreed to wait till Mr. Sherwood could sell without disadvantage. Then the families tried to be sociable. Miss Smith and Miss Longley were exhorted to be as sisters together. Mr. Sherwood was

made free of Sir Roper's table whenever he chose to visit it. William was inducted as guardian of his brother's choice, whenever Arthur was unable to be her escort, and Mrs. Williams gladly undertook to be the motherless girl's authority on household mysteries, but Mrs. Williams was the only one who cordially and diligently carried out her rôle. The young ladies were friendly but not familiar. Mr. Sherwood could not help continually drawing comparisons between the girls, greatly to the exaltation of Ellen Longley, and William used to feel dreadfully bored by Amelia's small-talk, and deference to what people in her set did and said. Yet she was a handsome and an accomplished girl, and so far as was known, a well-behaved, good girl; but she was tiresome in her etiquette, and tiresome in her speech, and to be tiresome is, we all know,

nearly as great a misfortune as to be deaf and dumb.

Pretty Agnes Turner admired her because she was Arthur's choice, and Arthur's choice must be correct, but she could not open out, and talk and laugh unrestrainedly in her presence, even when they three girls only were together.

"How fond she must be of Mr. Arthur," she often said to Ellen, and then she would think sadly of the probability of Ellen soon becoming some happy man's choice, and wondered what she would do in her loneliness when that time came.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAIRY PRINCE.

IT was the anniversary of William's birth, and though he protested he was much too old for birthday cates, yet he was just as keen now, on the completion of his twenty-fourth year, to be made much of, as he was in his school-boy days. He expected a present from each member of his family, and smirked delightedly, when he caught sight of the heap of little parcels on his breakfast plate.

"What a baby you are!" cried Ellen. "What a pity I forgot it is your birthday.

I wouldn't have minded spending sixpence over a 'Polite Letter Writer,' or some other equally improving little souvenir."

The sly smile deepened on his face, as he took up a parcel directed to him in her writing, and opened out an elaborately worked pair of braces, wondrous wreaths of roses and lilies on a waving blue ribbon, so neatly backed with white kid, and furnished with silver slides and buckles as to exhibit the perfection of taste, skill, and service.

"Who cares to have an Amelia when one can get an Ellen to do such work as this?" cried he, triumphantly, exhibiting them to Arthur. "Ellen, you deserve a kiss, and you shall have one. I say, dear dad, don't you envy your William?"

Ellen submitted to his kiss of thanks passively, while Mr. Sherwood approved and admired the beautiful gift.

"He'll want to drive me through the park without his coat," the father exclaimed. "But, my dear girl, what exquisite work; it's like painting!"

"Oh," Mrs. Williams chimed in, "she got up early for weeks past to do it unseen; no one else could do it so well I'm sure."

"Don't flatter yourself, William," Ellen retorted. "Of course I bought them ready made; you don't think I'd try my eyes to that extent for a small boy like you."

"I shall faint at church next Sunday," William exclaimed, "and only be able to gasp out 'Take off my coat directly.' That's a capital dodge, isn't it? I say, Arthur, you don't mind Amelia seeing me in my shirt sleeves, do you? I *must* show her these, and tell her that's how *my* young woman treats me. It will be such a good hit at her, won't it?"

"They are very jolly," Arthur said. "Will

you work me some for a wedding present, Ellen ?"

"No," she answered, but she smiled so as to take off the bluntness of her refusal. "The young shopwoman said they were so tiresome to work she wouldn't undertake any more."

"Ellen, my love!" Mrs. Williams' gentle voice broke in, "don't let dear William fancy you didn't do them yourself!"

Ellen and William caught each other's eyes, and laughed—a glance so full of mutual understanding, but also of perfect ease, that no onlooker could mistake it to mean anything but friendship; and Mr. Sherwood, who noticed it, shook his head quietly, as if in reply to his thoughts.

"Where's Agnes?" William asked; "I thought she was to come and spend the day with you, Ellen?"

"I've had a note; she can't come till eleven, and I shall be out," she added, speak-

ing to Mrs. Williams; "will you tell her, please, dear, I was obliged to go about the dessert. Ask her to practise that song till I come back."

After breakfast they all dispersed—Ellen, with Mr. Sherwood, to Covent Garden; William to chambers; and Arthur to the office, consequently when Agnes came across only Mrs. Williams received her, and after delivering Ellen's message, the old lady left her to herself.

Agnes sat down to the piano, and played a piece she knew without music, so as to let her admiring eyes survey the pretty rooms—the windows filled with sweet-smelling flowers, and draped with lace and rose-coloured satin; the stands of rare plants inside the rooms, with arches of real ivy growing over them; the tiny greenhouse built out of the back window, with its banks of ferns and mosses, and cool splashing miniature fountain; the great

mirrors and valuable china ornaments, and all the various things that form the furniture of a well-conceived present day drawing-room,—all were so many pictures of delight for the beautiful eyes that so yearned for beautiful surroundings, and were compelled to see only the dowdiest and ugliest objects in her own home.

She played beautifully when she fancied herself unheard, but her nervous sensitive nature refused to "perform" before strangers, and now as she passed from piece to piece gradually—soft, sweet harmonies, or delicate intricate movements—she seemed to have found an expression for her inmost feelings, and to forget everything but the music. The clock striking half-past twelve first recalled her senses, and she withdrew her hands quickly from the keys remembering the yet unpractised song, but before she could turn strong arms embraced her, a kiss was pressed

first on one cheek then on the other, and a strange voice uttering strange words broke on her alarmed ear—

"Upon my soul, Ellen, you play divinely, and you've grown up prettier than I ever expected."

In another instant she had guessed the truth, as, wrenching herself violently from his grasp, she turned and saw the decidedly handsome face so strange and yet so familiar to her from the photograph hanging in Ellen's room.

"Oh!" she cried, with tears and blushes as she recognized him, "Are you Eddy—I mean, Mr. Longley? I'm not Ellen; I'm only Agnes Turner!" and then flying to the farthest side of the room, blushing and weeping more and more, she looked across at him, with such an appealing look of terror and shame and child-like innocence, her beauty so enhanced by the storm of emotion, that

Edward Longley, who had been on the point of bursting out laughing, thought it best to appear quickly repentant, and to apologize most humbly for his stupid and unpardonable mistake.

Luckily for both parties Mrs. Williams, just apprised of the unexpected arrival, came bustling into the room, and her lengthy exclamations of surprise and affection, gave Agnes time to wipe away her tears before she was noticed again.

Nevertheless, when Ellen appeared on the scene, it struck her, even amidst her excitement, she found a very uncomfortable trio; there was Eddy astride on the music-stool dangling his long legs, and glancing from Mrs. Williams to Agnes with a comic expression of helplessness; while Agnes, hot and shrinking, tried to look everywhere but where her eyes wished to look—at Edward; and Mrs. Williams, placidly talking on, was

all the time wondering whether there was any addition she could make to the dinner by way of complimenting the new comer.

"Do you know," cried Edward, when Ellen had ceased her ejaculations of delight, "I took Miss Turner for you, and gave her a sisterly salute. I'm afraid she'll think me a bear ever after; but how could I guess there could be two such charming young ladies in one neighbourhood? Naturally I never waited to see *who* it was; her back was towards me as I came in, too."

It sounded such a simple matter as he said it that Agnes could only join in Ellen's laughter; it was evidently her best plan to attach as little importance to it as did he, nevertheless she remained constrained and silent in his presence all that day.

"Why didn't you write?" was Ellen's question; and his answer was,

"Another fellow from India, whose people

live at Southsea, made him stay with him for two or three days; and then he had had to stay in London incog., till he got decent clothes made."

"As if we cared for the cut of your clothes!" Ellen exclaimed.

"I thought you'd say so if you knew I'd arrived," he retorted, "but it requires more moral courage than I possess to stand quizzing, even from passers-by, so I kept a discreet silence till my tailor made me presentable."

Slyly glancing at him Agnes thought the tailor had had nothing to do with turning out so Adonis-like a youth. Alas for the fickleness of inexperienced maidenhood! Arthur Sherwood, with his perfect manners and delightful appearance, had already sunk in Agnes's estimation before the sudden rising of this new sun; his white square forehead, his violet eyes and curling lashes, his exquisitely-

trimmed moustache, and that certain resemblance to her dear Ellen, all were snares and charms that already were drawing her surely into that dangerous state of interest and admiration which, whether it results in weal or woe, yet never—never allows its victim to regain the freshness and independence she once possessed.

The long day, the gay evening with its party of William's friends, Mr. Sherwood's jokes and William's nonsense, the music, the laughter, all made a confused medley in Agnes's ears. Waking soberly in her sombre room next day, she asked herself, "Had it all been a dream?" but then the rush of happy expectation silenced her doubts; Ellen's brother *had* come back. She should see him again constantly. She was glad he was so very nice—for Ellen's sake, of course.

"By Jove, she's the very loveliest girl I ever saw in my life!" was Mr. Longley's verdict

on his sister's friend as he and Arthur and William sat smoking when the guests had gone. "Why the fellows would go mad after her at Dooliejuldi."

"She's a good unaffected little girl," said Arthur, with the condescension of an "engaged" man.

"I should say she is," William cried, heartily. "I was thinking to-night there would be no other dinner-table—search London over—with two such pretty and nice girls as ours showed."

"Yes, Ellen's a handsome girl too!" Edward continued, complacently, "but it strikes me you are all doing your best to spoil her. She's got the whip-hand of the governor and the old lady, and no mistake, but she hasn't the rare beauty of Miss Turner."

"Tastes differ. Ellen is a cleverer woman," William replied, quietly.

"No, Agnes is the prettiest," said Arthur;

"for a man who could afford a penniless wife, and could show fight to his mother-in-law, Agnes is the very thing. No doubt she's a sweet little girl."

He sighed involuntarily as he spoke.

"Hope Amelia's sleeping the sleep of the unconscious!" William exclaimed.

"India's the place for her," Edward continued, "I've a dim recollection of that determined old mother. I saw the other daughter, Mrs. Seeley, at a hole in the jungle, called Hazaritiaro; she spoke of this sister as of a little school-girl."

"So she was when Mrs. Seeley left home."

"In India one has the pull of you married men at home," Mr. Longley went on, addressing Arthur more especially as nearest a Benedict. "There's no appeal possible there to interfering relations. Unless a woman is downright vicious, she must stick to her hus-

band, for he is the only being related to her within thousands of miles. She can't go out gossiping all through the day, too, and is obliged to look after the house pour s'amuser, and when she can go out, she is generally dependent on her husband to drive her, and to escort her into public. A fellow in nine cases out of ten has the best of it in India, I assure you."

"Have you come back for a wife?" Arthur asked, abruptly.

"Ha, ha!" Edward laughed. "The old story, eh, William? He thinks that's the sole aim and object of every man's life, because it happens to be his just now."

"If you have," Arthur continued, determined to say what he had to say, "don't take Agnes Turner; life in India would be misery to her. The poor child has not yet been permitted to think for herself; her nature is so tender and over sensitive, it would be cruelty

to plant her in such uncongenial soil. I fancy," he added, in a lighter tone, and with a laugh not altogether natural, "a woman should have a high spirit, iron nerves and constitution, and not too much refinement, to enjoy knocking about with a regiment in India."

"You are very much interested in the little girl?" Edward said, turning upon Arthur.

The latter rose and knocked the ashes from his pipe, so as to have his back to his companions.

"I am," he replied, gravely. "I have seen her running about with Ellen ever since they were children; her mother has done her best to unfit her for real life. So ends my gratuitous warning. Good-night."

"What made him choose the beaky one?" Edward asked, as soon as the door had closed on him. "He must be spoony on the other!"

"Spoony—Arthur spoony! it isn't his 'nature to,'" William cried; "but no one can help liking pretty Agnes Turner, she's such a simple creature, and has such a dull time of it with her father and mother."

To his sister, Mr. Longley was much less enthusiastic about her friend, and Ellen was disappointed at his coldness.

"I had thought," she said, with foolish candour, "you would have liked her very much; she is such a sweet, good girl!"

"Oh, that's your little game!" her brother exclaimed, taking both her hands and facing her. "You think I may as well rid you honourably of a rival beauty!"

"You're caught!" she laughed. "So you acknowledge we are both beauties, Mr. Eddy?"

"I give in, but I'll reward you by letting you chatter on about your pretty friend. Yes, she is pretty, and no mistake. I'll tell

you a secret, only you must really not tell; I knew she wasn't you at the piano yesterday; I saw her for good ten minutes before I spoke, but who could have resisted such a temptation? not a fellow straight from the jungles, at least—not I!"

I am afraid Ellen admired his impudence more than a strictly proper young lady should have done, but he was her only near relation —the handsome brother she had not seen for seven years—how could she be critical in those early days of their re-union? how could she help being carried away, as were all the Sherwoods, by his happy, saucy manner, and uncommonly taking appearance?

"You are all awfully altered," he said, "except old Mother Williams, who is a greater bore than ever. Oh, how I used to dread spending my holidays here when William wasn't at home; but I tell you what, Ellen, Mr. Sherwood doesn't look right."

"How do you mean?" she asked, anxiously.

"Oh, I dare say it's fancy," he replied, seeing her alarm. "Of course I didn't take great notice of his look when I last saw him, for I was a mere boy, but I fancied he had a stouter, haler look, and now he seems shrunken."

"Ah, but he's growing old!"

"Well, yes, but I doubt whether we shall call ourselves old at his age."

For the present Mr. Longley was to make his head-quarters in Porchester Terrace, on his sister's account. He owed one other duty visit to the aunt and uncle who had brought him up, but he was in no hurry to pay it. They were a childless, elderly couple, who lived a life devoted to good works.

"I don't believe more excellent people live," was their nephew's avowed opinion. "I'll go there just before I start back again,

so as to take the odour of sanctity with me to heathendom. Worthy people they are, indeed, but just now I don't really feel myself worthy of their society."

Edward's return and Arthur's engagement made the Sherwoods' house very lively. No wonder the new comer declined to leave it. Sir Roper Smith was much taken, he graciously said, with "the captain," as Eddy liked being called; the young man also liked partaking of the city knight's good dinners, feeling himself of a superior caste to the kindly old city gentleman who asked his opinion on military matters, and accepted his anecdotes of Indian horrors and adventures as gospel.

"Had there been another beaky one," Edward told William, "I'd have gone in for her, then I'd have gorged the old gentleman to death, and lived happy on his leavings ever after."

But the strangest thing of all was Mrs. Turner's admiration for him.

He pretended to remember all sorts of kindnesses she had (never) shown him in his boyhood; he went up to the dingy pictures on the brown, dusky walls, and professed to recollect "that delightful old scene, oh, so well!" he gazed at Jane, the former nurse, as if her image had long been impressed on his memory; he said, with an air of the most delightful innocence, that he supposed Mrs. Seeley was Mr. Turner's daughter by a former marriage, and it took a long time, and Mrs. Turner's solemn and repeated assurance, to convince him she was old enough to be Mrs. Seeley's own mother.

In Mrs. Turner's presence Eddy ignored Agnes, and perhaps this was the diplomacy that caused the watchful mother to regard him without suspicion, and to allow her to enjoy his jokes and his freedoms.

She who snubbed all eligibles, who was so often downright rude, even to her favourites, the Sherwoods, became almost agreeable in Eddy's society.

"You are very foolish to encourage that young dangler so much," her husband ventured to remark, to which she had rejoined that she supposed she knew what she was about.

"If Mr. Longley married at all, it would be to a showy girl with money; he was not the man to fancy a mere school-girl. Couldn't Mr. Turner see that it was good policy to be civil to the young man, so if poor Johnny ever chanced to meet him in India, he would be sure of a friend?"

"Poor Johnny," a good, but very stupid, raw youth, came home about this time, and he, too, became one of Eddy's worshippers. To Agnes these two months of late summer were months of delicious happiness. She

never thought how it was to end, never asked herself what she should do when autumn came and dispersed these gay young friends. Already William had started on a foreign tour, and Arthur was making arrangements for joining his lady-love at Scarborough. There was that duty visit, too, to Mr. Longley still owing, and the end of September must see him on his way back to Dooliejuldi. After that, what was there to look forward to? Only close sitting all through the winter at the outfit Johnny would require next spring; and then a return to the dull routine of practice and study. Why would she sadden the delightful present by anticipating and dreading the dreary future?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENCHANTED PRINCESS.

THAT Mr. Longley was a general favourite wherever he went, and an especial favourite with one or two in particular, was a matter beyond doubt, and yet Ellen was dissatisfied.

Perhaps it was that she had deified him in her thoughts in those seven years of his absence, and like all who look forward to unalloyed satisfaction, had awoke to disappointment, through no fault of the object so deified, but simply because the wisest and best of mankind is frail and faulty, and must not be blamed because, being mortal, he acts

like a mortal. Perhaps it was Ellen who was to blame for making to herself an idol of clay; perhaps—and which is the true supposition, the course of this story must show—perhaps there was something wrong in this charming young man's character that revolted against the honest, noble heart of the watchful sister. At any rate, after six weeks' constant intercourse with him, Ellen felt herself no nearer to him. He joked and laughed with her, as he joked and laughed with every one, but he discovered to her none of the inner workings of his mind, took no pains to discover hers, and was as much a stranger to her as to his secret hopes and desires, as he was to old Mrs. Williams.

Once or twice being alone together, Ellen had tried to get beneath this generality of manner, had interested herself in his Indian life, and intentions regarding the future, but after the first time he had in no way responded

to the attempt. That time he had expressed a wish for her to live with him in India, and had inquired how she managed with *all* her money.

"I can't touch it, dear, till I am of age," she answered, and told him how generously Mr. Sherwood was behaving.

"Why, you will have a small fortune!" he cried, with some interest, adding, "I never can understand why my father was so unjust to me!"

"Unjust, dear!" she cried, aghast at the accusation.

"Why, yes," he rejoined, "it isn't usual to divide *equally* between a boy and girl. A boy's expenses are always three times more than a woman's, of course. Now two hundred a year is enormous for you, while for me it is simply a drop in the ocean. If our father had used his discretion, he would surely have done me the justice to leave me

at least three parts instead of a paltry half only."

Ellen, feeling for the moment guilty of standing in his way, asked timidly if he was in want of money.

He turned sharply towards her.

"Why, what could you do if I were?" he asked.

"I would ask Mr. Sherwood for some of my savings."

Then Eddy smiled and patted her head.

"Likely he'd listen," he said. "No thank you, dear, I can struggle on, and I'm very thankful you are so comfortably off. Of course one gets riled sometimes to see people who don't want much rolling in riches, while others can scarcely pull along."

It was not till she was alone, and could think this quietly over to herself, that Ellen felt her brother was not altogether the model hero she had hoped he was. She was very

generous, and would gladly have given him anything in her power; but he evidently desired none of her confidence, and she had failed in striving to know the real state of his purse.

She had been accustomed to hear him called "a lucky young fellow," because, in addition to his pay, he was secure of that seemingly despised little income, and also of a yearly sum of sixty pounds—a free gift from the relations who brought him up, and who gave it to pay his tailor's bill, they said. She knew it was not every young officer who could boast of such an allowance, but who yet managed to live like a gentleman, and she was disappointed, and could not help acknowledging self-love and self-interest were too strikingly apparent in the above conversation.

She was not the only person who had arrived at the same conclusion. With Mr.

Sherwood's hearty manner and cheerful badinage was a very keen observation, that noted many a word and look, and saw below the surface of those who fancied themselves unnoticed by him beyond the moment.

Mr. Sherwood, too, had tried to make Edward talk to him of his ways and means, openly, as one of his sons might have done, and had failed; he would have overlooked a little extravagance, and would willingly have helped his old friend's son, not with advice only, but with money, had the young man met his overtures with the openness hoped for; but Edward did not understand his former trustee's character—he could not realize how a man, with sons of his own, a lawyer too, could act with generosity, and make allowances without making charges also. So, by over caution Mr. Longley lost the aid he really wanted, and what was worse,

created a barrier of undefined mistrust in the hearts of his two best friends.

Nevertheless, after a little time, Ellen made another attempt to gain his confidence.

"He was very likely put out by something that day," she argued to herself; "and it was very good of him not to consent to have some of my savings."

They were walking together from the Turners' house, towards Kensington Gardens, when she made this second attempt. Eddy had just exclaimed apropos of Agnes Turner:

"Yes. By Jove—I'd like to see what a sensation she'd make at Dooliejuldi. The Colonel's wife would choke with envy and jealousy."

"You'd better try the effect," Ellen said, shyly.

"So I would—if I could."

"How do you mean—if you could—?"

"I mean, if I could afford to marry."

"But when you have the adjutancy besides the Indian pay, and your own money—isn't that enough to marry on? But perhaps she wouldn't have you."

He took hold of his moustaches and laughed softly, then said musingly—

"I suppose she has nothing—beauties never have?"

"Oh yes, she has fifty pounds a year, an aunt left her."

He laughed aloud this time.

"You are the most ridiculous person alive," he cried. "Fifty pounds a year—why, it wouldn't pay a dirzee even for her."

"What's a dirzee?"

"Oh, there now, don't be tiresome, dear, as if all the world didn't know a dirzee's a tailor. Well, the adjutancy is some help, certainly, and I really don't see why a poor fellow is to deny himself *every*thing because he's been badly treated."

"Would you like her to be your wife, Eddy, dear? She is such a good dear girl; she ought to have a good affectionate husband."

"Oh, Ellen, how gushing you are. Do talk prose, my dear child. Yes, I should like to settle down quietly with such a beauty as she is; but then, you see, there's her passage to pay, and a bungalow to furnish;—all want cash, and old Mother Turner may want settlements."

"I suppose you spent all your ready money, dear, in travelling and presents for us. But, you know, if only you let me ask Mr. Sherwood—I should be so happy to give you what you want."

"No, I will not take it. If you like to *lend* me something, I don't mind paying interest. But what nonsense this is; wait till I'm accepted, dear."

"Then you will propose?"

"Oh, I don't know—really—come along; here's Maielli's. I want some cherry brandy, and you shall have an ice."

Thus again, though she seemed getting so near, she was really repulsed by him. Nor did he refer to the subject of matrimony again, till one evening, at dessert, when the servant had left the dining-room, he exclaimed before the whole family—

"Now, Arthur, you are not the only interesting bridegroom elect. My dear mamma-in-law Turner has bestowed on me her blessing and the hand of Agnes la bella."

"I am very sorry to hear it," cried William, who, as usual, was equal to the occasion, and of course the first to speak. "She's much too good for India. However, 'there's many a slip,' you know; so let us hope Mrs. Turner will recover her senses before too late. I meant to have asked the poor child myself; only I'm such a young creature to settle down

at present; however, I'll mention my intentions, and make the sacrifice at once—and *then* you'll see where you are!"

Mr. Sherwood congratulated him sincerely, but Arthur said hardly a word more than was barely civil.

Ellen had kissed him warmly, and escaped from the room quickly.

She could not wait for the morrow to have the news confirmed, but ran over the way at once.

Agnes was seated in the dingy drawing-room, reading aloud Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," while her father slept, and her mother knitted iron gray socks.

"Then it can't be true!" cried Ellen, breathlessly, incapable of supposing a girl, just engaged, could calmly read history.

"Good evening," was Mrs. Turner's greeting.

"Oh, dear! I was nearly asleep," exclaimed

her husband, standing erect instantly, as the monotonous sound of his daughter's voice ceased.

"Oh, Ellen! yes it is really true," Agnes cried, in answer; then added in a whisper, "I'm so glad you've come; I was nearly crazy over those horrid Romans."

"I suppose you've heard our news?" Mrs. Turner said, pushing a chair forward, and knitting on vigorously when Ellen was seated. "I made Agnes read to us as usual, to prevent her exciting herself with foolish castles in the air; it's a bad look-out for her—very; but your brother will have his own way, and I always give in, I am so foolishly weak."

"I can't understand it at all," Mr. Turner added; "how any girl can be so foolish as to go off with a man to India of all places in the world, passes my comprehension. There is Ethel, buried alive; and now Agnes, actually willing to leave this nice comfortable cheerful

home for—the Lord knows what, I'm sure I don't!"

"Oh, nonsense!" his wife exclaimed; "it's human nature for the girl to admire and love such a handsome fascinating young man. Pray don't put gloomy notions into the poor child's head; she must take her chance like all the rest of her sex. Why shouldn't she make herself just as nice a home as this, too?"

When the two girls were alone together Agnes spoke freely enough; she said,

"It only seems the other day I was growling and grumbling at this weary life, thinking you would all go away and be happy, and I should be left always—always here; and now, only fancy what a difference; he is so handsome, he is so delightful, so witty and so clever and so good, and fancy him choosing me—and I shall go to India and see all that lovely land, and live in a delightful

bungalow; and you, poor Ellen, will stay behind—perhaps, though, you will marry soon!"

For the first time in her life Ellen thought Agnes rather silly; but did any sister ever appreciate love rhapsodies on her brother?

"Mamma was so astonished," Agnes went on, "but *I* thought he was going to say it," she added, blushing, and smiling archly. "She wouldn't understand what he meant at first, and then she said—no, nothing would induce her to let me go away; and I was so silly, I cried dreadfully; and mamma said she had never seen me cry since I was a baby, and she was so good, and took hold of me and kissed me; and at last she said she couldn't give me up to any one *but* Mr. Longley, so then he laughed, and said I should have such a charming home—and he knew Indian life so well, he could spare me all trouble and discomfort; and, in fact, you

know mamma, she vows and protests, and then gives in, and, of course, papa does what she bids him."

"But, Agnes," Ellen said, very gravely, "are you sure you really love him for himself, and you will love him all the same if India isn't nice, and if you are not comfortable? Are you sure you are not only taking him because you are so dull here? It would be wicked, love, if you married him merely for a change."

The large, childlike eyes looked straight at her monitor, with the startled earnest look so peculiarly suggestive of the girl's inexperience.

"I don't think so," she said, after a pause; "I asked myself that. I don't think so; and, dear, if ever afterwards I find I did, he shall never know it—no one shall."

Her look and words touched Ellen deeply.

"If Eddy ever is unkind to her," she said to herself, "I shall hate him."

Then she told herself she had no right to doubt him. Did not every one like him? Had he ever shown bad temper or unkind feelings, save just once in that matter of his money; and, poor fellow, if he wanted to be rich, might it not be because he wanted his wife to be more happy? And was it not natural for him to long to be able to do as other men could do—men like William, for instance, who need deny himself nothing—in reason?

Miss Smith was the only one who spoke openly against the engagement, calling it the most ridiculous piece of folly she had ever known. Her lover agreed with her privately; but whereas he pitied the lady, she pitied the gentleman, a slight difference happily not discussed, so no harmony was broken.

Mrs. Turner never did things by halves; having consented to the match, she gave in as to its speedy consummation. She could give

her child nothing till her death worth having, but she could pay her passage and give her a good outfit. Which was all Eddy expected. If Eddy's leave was up in October, why then Agnes must be married in September. August was already here, but in London outfits are easily had, so, instead of beginning an outfit for her brother, Agnes had to think of her own; not that she was allowed to do much in that matter, Mrs. Turner would as soon have allowed her husband to manage the house as have trusted the girl to choose her own clothes.

And Edward was very exacting. No sooner was the engagement proclaimed than he began to show off his prize. There were not many exhibitions left to visit now the season was over, not many fashionables left, yet wherever there was a chance there he exhibited his beautiful bride-elect; her appearance created a stir in every place,

and this delighted him, it was a faint foreshadowing of the sensation to be caused hereafter in India.

Never was there such a jovial bridegroom-elect as was Eddy Longley in those weeks before his marriage; he had no uneasy qualms as to the future, present pleasure was enough for him. The Turners were behaving handsomely: everything had given way to his convenience. William's foreign tour was postponed, for Eddy required his services as best man. Arthur's holiday was shortened, for his fiancée wished to be at the wedding—her desire to show off her finery overcoming her scruples about countenancing so foolish an affair.

Mr. Sherwood must of course remain in town, to keep open-house for his dear Ellen's brother, and the aunt and uncle had graciously forgiven his lack of duty, and had sent a handsome present in hard cash. Of course

Eddy was altogether delightful—most of us are when all goes well with us; and he was so affectionate to his sister that she accused herself of being hard and suspicious, and spent all her pocket-money in buying things for her new sister. Could she have had her way Eddy would have received a very large sum of ready money, but Mr. Sherwood was decided against this.

"You shall give him a hundred pounds," was his only concession, "and that is a great deal too much out of your little property. I dare say he won't take it."

But Eddy did take it, condescendingly, though.

"You are a good little sister," he said; "I know you wouldn't be stingy if you had power over your own."

Parcels for Captain Longley from Bond Street tradesmen were always coming in, and occasionally pressing letters accompanied

them, but Eddy allowed no cares to crop up just yet.

"*You* mustn't marry for years to come, child," William said to Ellen, "till my finances recover all this, for what with that turquoise set to Agnes, that desk to Longley, and the sumptuous gifts I shall have to provide for Amelia the magnificent, to say nothing of the new suit for my man, and the innumerable tips to every one's servant, I shall be cleaned out. If my dear father only knew I wanted it I'm sure he'd give me a large cheque directly."

He knew his father was near hearing every word.

"I am the least likely man," Mr. Sherwood exclaimed, "to encourage foolish display; if you choose to make presents beyond your means, you must take the consequences."

William was delighted at the success of his plot.

"My dear father," he cried, "I've actually succeeded in making you doubt your William. Don't you know next week is quarter-day for me? and in balancing my last quarter's expenses to-day I find myself actually five shillings and elevenpence three farthings to the fore."

"Not so much as you ought to be, my boy; however, I'm very pleased you have anything to the fore. I meant to tip my coachman at the wedding, but I'll do it now instead. There shall be fifty pounds ready for you to-morrow, Billy, for drives you've taken me safely all this summer."

Then the son stood up and protested he wouldn't have it; and didn't his father think he'd drive him sooner than any one else in the world, and that it was only his nonsense talking of wanting money, just to make his father fancy him a spendthrift, &c., &c.

For long afterwards that gift enforced—and, after much fighting against it, accepted—was the dearest treasure in William's possession, the last relic of a scattered and lost home.

CHAPTER IX.

DESOLATION.

THE very next morning Arthur Sherwood, who had his own little office-room separate from his father's, entered his father's presence, and requested a hearing for a few moments.

"I've just had a note from Sir Roper, sir," he added.

"Sit down, Arthur," Mr. Sherwood answered, laying down his pen, and pushing his blotting-paper from him. "Thinks it's time for me to sell out that five thousand pounds, eh?"

"No, he's written to tell us bad news."

"What! Amelia ill?"

"No, no, sir; it's a money matter only, but you will feel it keenly, I am afraid; it concerns William."

"That rascally company!" cried the father with sudden conviction, "they're gone after all?"

"They're gone after all," Arthur echoed, "and—and poor William is a shareholder!"

Mr. Sherwood swore. Arthur had never heard him swear before.

"The poor lad!" the father continued presently. "The poor lad! What a monstrous iniquity; better that he'd never had a farthing—better anything, than all these lying hopes!"

"Sir Roper has lost money too, but his loss will go no further. He recommends us to look into the matter immediately; William might escape extreme liability, if we act promptly."

Mr. Sherwood started up.

"I'll go off to the city at once," he exclaimed. "You can manage here without me; when William calls for me don't say anything to alarm him, merely that I had business, and couldn't afford the time to drive with him."

But William knew as soon as his father. Mr. Turner had had authentic news, and, of course, his wife read all his letters.

"Who's to tell the Sherwoods?" the poor ci-devant trustee had exclaimed. "*I* can't."

"I'll tell them," Mrs. Turner had at once answered. "It's the least we can do now, to break it to them gently; I'll go to William at his chambers."

"William!" she cried, entering the cosy drawing-room the barrister-at-law called his office, and interrupting him in an article in Blackwood, and a very satisfactory pipe. "I've an ungracious task to perform; I'd rather lose a limb, I would indeed, than have to say what I've come to say."

"My dear Mrs. Turner, how you alarm me; here, take this easy chair, and have a glass of wine first. What's wrong? Agnes and Longley split? or Jane given warning? or--or has Mr. Turner been at his old—been I mean losing more money?"

He looked so gay and fresh and prosperous; all around him was so substantial and handsome, that she paused in her cruel tale.

"No," she replied with unwonted sadness, "it doesn't concern any of them personally."

"No!" he replied, still cheerily and unapprehensively. "Then I'll give it up."

She looked round again, undecided how to word the news that yet must be given, and should be quickly given, and her extraordinary hesitation at last alarmed him, and made him give the necessary spur.

"Tell me the worst, pray," he added; "you and I are no cowards, are we?"

Her voice trembled as she answered:

"Poor John's ill luck has fallen upon all he has ever touched. The Royal Company has called in its creditors."

"Then," William said very quietly and thoughtfully, "that means I'm off my pedestal?"

"Oh, William!" Mrs. Turner exclaimed passionately, and with tears, "to think that we should have brought you to this. That man," meaning her husband, "means the best and does the very worst. I have been fearing it ever since that foolish Mr. Hawkins made him trustee. Why didn't they have two trustees? Then John would have been kept straight. Why did I interfere the other day, when poor John was so anxious for you to leave the concern? We have both helped to ruin you, and now we can't help you!"

William was more grieved, at the moment,

at the state of excitement and remorse this usually self-dependent, domineering, self-satisfied little woman was in, than at his own loss; the one was palpable, the other required time to make it fully realized.

"Pray, pray!" he cried, taking both her quivering hands kindly in his, "don't blame yourselves, we all thought we were in capital hands. Why after all, what is it? I've had a jolly holiday, enjoyed life more than I ever expected, and now I've only to return to what was first intended. I'm better off still than many; my father loses nothing, you know."

She rose, and re-arranged her bonnet and gloves.

"You deserve prosperity," she said, "and mark my words, you'll be prosperous still; but it is so hard this blow should come through us. Now go off to Rumbell's, *now*, do you hear? you may save something by quick action."

So Mr. Sherwood and his son met in the city, and each observed the other to see how much was known. Mr. Sherwood was wet with the shower that fell as he hurried to the city, and his face was pale with the chill and agitation of what he had heard further respecting the break up. It was a bad business, as bad as could be, and the father dreaded the effect on his high-spirited son. William spoke first.

"Well, father, I'm afraid this will worry and annoy you, but it might be worse. I've neither wife nor bairns, luckily, and am young enough for a fair start yet."

Mr. Sherwood put his hand on his son's arm, and pressed it without speaking.

"There never was such a good lad as this," was in his thoughts, "but if I say so, I shall break down, and make a fool of myself in public."

It was hardest of all at home, though, to

bear Mrs. Williams's continual pity. Arthur had come in first, and told them what had happened.

"My father's awfully cut up," he added. "Of course he can't bear his darling should have a finger hurt."

"By George," Edward Longley said, "this is a floorer for you, William; but it would have been ten times worse, had you been going to be married on the strength of it."

That style of comfort was much the best for the sufferer, and Ellen's sympathy was better still.

"Perhaps, now that you must work," she said, "you'll make a name for yourself. Don't you remember you used to say, you'd far rather be the founder of a great name, than merely inherit it?"

Her eyes, full of kindness, were turned to his, and her pretty soft hand wound round his. Neither of them dreamed of being

what is called in love with each other, and yet in all the little incidents of daily life, they turned to one another naturally for help or sympathy.

"I don't mind, really, at least not much," he said the next day, "but my father is so cut up about it. I heard him walking up and down his room whenever I awoke last night."

Mr. Sherwood was terribly cut up, as his son phrased it. He and Arthur had a long consultation at the office the day after the news came officially, and it was not an amicable one. The father stated that, as things had turned out, he could not, in justice to William, settle five thousand pounds upon Arthur's wife, bidding Arthur recollect the promise was only given *because* his brother was otherwise provided for.

"Then," Arthur had said, "my marriage cannot take place. If William had chosen to live quietly, and not cut a dash, he might

have saved a heap of money in the last three years. Sir Roper had expressed his amazement often at such folly, and now *he*—Arthur—was to be sacrificed. William had always stuck himself up," &c., &c.

"Sir Roper shall be told what I intend," Mr. Sherwood said, not noticing the offensive part of his eldest son's remark. "I shall, of course, make you my partner as I promised before. William cannot interfere there, he has chosen the other branch, and he must work up for it without delay; but I cannot and will not make the proposed settlement."

This it was that had kept Mr. Sherwood restless all night, trying to see how he could behave justly to the one child, without being hard on either. Arthur coming into partnership at once, would curtail the father's income greatly, and here was William to be altogether maintained, till he got into prac-

tice at the bar, an indefinite time in fact. Mr. Sherwood was neither so young nor so hale as he had been; he could not grapple with trouble now, it weighed on his mind, and reacted on his health. He thought of Ellen and Mrs. Williams, from neither of whom had he ever taken a penny in return for the comfortable home it was his delight to afford them; yet now, with his business profits halved, in fairness to his children, he ought to let these two contribute something, and he felt as much shame in the idea, as if he meditated defrauding them. No wonder he lost flesh and spirits, and in a few days looked an old and careworn man.

Meantime William was hard at work; he sold his horse and carriage, dismissed his servants, gave up his chambers, counter-ordered luxurious necessaries preparing for the tour abroad, now given up, and got rid of all those handsome fittings that had dis-

concerted Mrs. Turner's attempt at telling him his ill-fortune at his chambers.

The wedding day came amidst all this turmoil of mind; no one beside the bride and bridegroom being at all in "marriage mood." But then weddings generally are doubtful entertainments, like Christmas time, they are really enjoyed only by children and servants, those thoughtless people who only want good feeding for their perfect happiness. Sir Roper and Miss Smith were not present, and Arthur was very glum in consequence. Sir Roper had not absolutely broken off his daughter's engagement, but he had expressed himself pretty freely about Mr. Sherwood's resolution, and a total rupture seemed imminent.

Outwardly, however, it was a charming wedding. Agnes looked very beautiful, and Eddy looked very triumphant; and when the happy pair had driven away, and those

left behind were wondering how to get out of their finery most expeditiously, and how to get over the rest of the day—every one declared it had all been most delightfully successful, and every one told every one else they had never enjoyed anything more.

"You look tired, sir," Arthur said, as his father walked home.

"I am tired," was the answer; "but I must go down to the office for an hour or so. I don't want you. I'm only going to read over my new will; it must be signed to-morrow."

Arthur said no more. That new will was no benefit to him, he knew.

William and Ellen had run across before the rest, and were fanning themselves in the drawing-room, and protesting against "swell" weddings, when Mr. Sherwood came wearily in.

"Oh, dad, you're done up!" cried William.

"Get into decent clothes, and rest your venerable limbs!"

"Nay, I'm going down to the office; ring, and tell them to fetch a cab," Mr. Sherwood replied.

"Oh, don't do any work to-day, dear," Ellen exclaimed. "Look, it's three o'clock now."

Mr. Sherwood smiled, and made her stand before him while he admired her finery.

"Ah," he said, with some of his old fun, "fine feathers make fine birds. If I met you for the first time decked out in this way, I should fancy you almost a pretty girl. What do you say, Billy?"

William's face suddenly turned crimson. He looked at Ellen from head to foot, then turned quickly to the door as the servant answered the bell.

"Fetch a cab," he said, first; then, in answer to his father's appeal, he added,

"Almost pretty! Well, she's not absolutely repulsive!"

"I shall have a nap as I go," Mr. Sherwood said, as his cab drove up; "I feel uncommonly sleepy."

And he left them, having declined William's offer to go with him.

"I tell you what we'll do," said Ellen. "You and I can walk down to John Street by-and-by, and fetch him home. I do want a tiring walk after all this hot standing about."

"All right—but not in all that finery, I hope? We should be taken for the happy pair!"

"No, goose, that would be too awful—of course I shall change first."

"Awful for whom?" he said. "You, or me?"

"Both," she cried, and stopped the conversation by abruptly leaving the room.

Leaving him standing over the empty fireplace, with a bitter sense of having lost the right to win any woman's love for many a weary year to come, and wondering why the knowledge of having lost more than money by that bitter smash of the "Royal Company" had come so late.

It was past five o'clock when they reached 129, John Street, and the lamps were lighted. Most of the offices were already deserted. All the clerks but one had gone from Mr. Sherwood's, and he, whose duty it was to lock up, stood on the front-door step sucking a quill pen, and looking vacantly up and down the street.

"My father still here?" William asked him, as he brisked up and made his best bow to the young lady.

"Yes, Mr. William—hard at work still, I think. Shall I run up and tell him you are here, sir? The stairs are dark and dirty now for Miss Longley."

"Yes, ask if we shall come in and wait?"

He was back in a few moments. "I've tapped, Mr. William, but he's gone to sleep, I suppose; perhaps you'd better go in yourself and wake him."

"Come along, Ellen," William exclaimed, starting off.

The stairs were in semi-darkness, and the visitors had to fumble about before they got hold of the door-handle of Mr. Sherwood's room. He had evidently, as the clerk said, gone to sleep, for he took no notice of their entrance.

"Poor old dad!" William whispered, "he said he was very sleepy."

There was just enough light in the room from the street-lamps below to show the lawyer was not sitting at the table, and for an instant the room appeared empty.

Then Ellen uttered a cry—a cry that for years afterwards haunted William's dreams.

Mr. Sherwood was lying on his face in a heap at her feet—dead.

Neither of them had ever seen Death before, nor had the clerk, who, attracted by Ellen's cry, came to them; yet each of the three knew as soon as they tried to lift the body, before the full light was thrown on the face to convince them by its lividness—that he was dead.

William and Ellen never remembered clearly afterwards the terrible incidents of that awful discovery—how the doctor got there, how the heavy body was carried home, how the news was broken to the expectant household, how the long sleepless night passed, how neighbours got to hear of it immediately and came to offer assistance. Their senses, dulled by the fearful shock, remained dulled as to those trying details. That an awful blow had fallen upon them with overwhelming violence was all they

then realized, and in after-days, when they could bear to think, they even then could not recall distinctly what had happened.

For though the one had lost a father, and the other had no relationship in the dead, yet Ellen felt the loss as keenly as if she had been his daughter. She had never known a nearer friend. From her babyhood she had relied on him to supply all her wants and to return her clinging love. He gave her the only home she had ever known; he was associated with all her life. In his care she had never missed parents, brothers, or sisters, for he had given her brothers, and treated her as a cherished child of his own; and now she looked the world through and saw no one whose protection she could claim—no one on whose affection she could rely. Desolate and bitter was her grief, for her loss made her doubly an orphan and an outcast.

She did not see Arthur till the next

morning. He looked very ill, and broke down as soon as he saw her, sobbing and weeping with a violence of which his nature had seemed incapable. Yet, though this grief—so terrible to witness in a man—drew her towards him, and made her like him more than she had ever done, the words he said as soon as he was calm again, annoyed her. They were—

"We have lost the truest friend we shall ever know; but, Ellen, remember this house is your home. I shall consider the comfort and convenience of yourself and Aunty Williams before my own."

"What can he mean?" she thought. "Is he the master now?"

He made a speech of like import to the old lady when she took her place at the breakfast-table, and Ellen wondered at her answer.

"God bless you, my dear Arthur. I am

sure your father's son cannot be otherwise than considerate and kind."

Then the old lady began talking and settling what tradespeople were to be employed for the funeral and mourning; and, though quiet tears fell all the time on the notes she pencilled according to Arthur's directions, she went on as methodically and placidly as if her task was the every-day order for the family meal.

How often we misjudge the old when we see them take the deaths of old friends—associated for a lifetime with all their joys and sorrows—as commonplace events. We call their senses blunted — their hearts chilled.

"Old people get so selfish," we say. "Aunt Mary doesn't seem to feel Aunt Ann's death much. If Uncle Henry hadn't been in deep mourning, I shouldn't have supposed he'd lost his only brother so lately."

We quite overlook the fact that this last loss is only one of many the old man or woman has suffered, that tie after tie has been broken, that almost every day in the year is an anniversary of a strong link snapped, that the scenes they move in are alive with faces long since faded in the grave, that their memories are full of voices never more to be heard on earth; so that continued trials have taught them to resign themselves to God's hand, and to believe that time, as it takes the best-beloved from their side, is also hastening the day when they shall rejoin them for ever. But in the first sorrow the young experience, they cannot realize subdued suffering. They fancy the light is shadowed for ever, and that their poignant anguish will never be assuaged. So Ellen thought, and therefore she accused the placid old lady of lack of feeling.

By-and-by, William came in. He did not

break down as Arthur had done. In his own room he had given way and struggled alone with his sorrow, but when he joined the others he spoke composedly, and took part in the proposed arrangements.

"Dr. Mantell will arrange for the inquest," Arthur said. "Of course, there can be but one verdict, 'Died by the visitation of God.'" And then he began to sob violently again.

"Drink some nice hot tea, my dear love," cried Mrs. Williams to him, compassionately.

William took up his brother's words.

"Dr. Mantell says he has known our father has been failing for months past, and he thinks the chill he got the day he went to Rumbell's, with the agitation of his mind, brought things to a climax. Arthur, we must go to the office as soon as possible, and look over his papers; there may be some directions respecting his funeral."

"I am ready now," Arthur said, rising.

Before William followed him out of the room, he went to Ellen.

"You must eat and drink, child," he said, pointing to her untouched breakfast. "If you don't, I shall ask Mrs. Turner to let you go to her till this house is open again."

"William, I *can't*," she cried, bursting into hysterical tears.

"Look here, Ellen," he added, "if you give way in this childish manner, you will add to our trouble. If you will compose yourself you can be of great help to us all just now. Things *must* be done, and done quickly; who is to do them, if we all indulge ourselves and sit idly weeping?"

His words sounded stern, but his voice was full of compassion, and she felt it.

"I will try my best," she answered, in a low tone.

Sir Roper Smith came up to London on

hearing of Mr. Sherwood's death, and Arthur went off to see him as soon as he arrived.

"Was there any will left?" was Sir Roper's first inquiry.

"Yes," Arthur answered, "two; one made when William had his legacy left, and became independent, and another just made."

"I suppose one contradicts the other?"

"Yes; in the former, William gets only two thousand five hundred pounds—my mother's little property — besides some plate, and pictures, and books of no great value, together with a few trinkets of my father's; everything else—ready money, house and office furniture, wine, the rest of the plate, private investments, business, &c., are left to me unconditionally. There are, besides, a few small legacies. I am also left residuary legatee, and Dr. Mantell and I are executors. At the time it was made

William was too young to have acted as executor."

"And this second will?"

"Leaves us an equal share in all ready money, private investments, furniture, plate—in fact, we are to halve everything he possessed, except the business, of course, and the office-fittings, &c. William's legacy is made seven thousand sterling—to be paid at once, duty free—and he is associated with me as executor."

"So, altogether, you are both well provided for?"

"Well," Arthur replied, gloomily, "my father lived almost up to his income; he was very profuse in charity, and let all sorts of clients escape scot free. It strikes me William has got the best of it. But then this last will was never signed!"

"Never signed!" cried Sir Roper, in his excitement quite forgetting the solemnity of

the subject. "Then what's the use of talking about it? It's no will at all, is it?"

"Why, not legally," Arthur said, hesitatingly; "only if I like to consider it so."

"If you like to be an arrant fool!" the old gentleman exclaimed. "Why, no man alive would do such a ridiculous thing. All I can say is, if you do, I shall certainly forbid my girl to have anything more to say to you. If you can't take care of yourself, you certainly aren't fit to take care of a rich wife. I would be very sure not to leave my money to a fool."

Such plain speaking grated most discordantly on Arthur's ears; yet it agreed with his own half-determined ideas. It *was* a chance only a fool would throw away, he considered. But he made Sir Roper no promise as to how he would act, only wrote all particulars of the two wills to Amelia, at

Scarborough, and awaited her reply. Miss Smith had but one opinion.

"DEAREST ARTHUR," she wrote,—"What a providential thing it is for us that dreadfully partial last will is of no use. What would have become of me if it had been signed? Don't you remember, I always said William could turn your poor dear papa round his finger? So he could, couldn't he? I never told you, but pa was getting awfully grumpy about that settlement; but now we shall be all right, you dear. Don't fret, love, about your poor dear papa; he has gone to a happier world, and we can't expect to have them always.

"Ever your own

"AMELIA."

Amelia might be doubtful about her tenses, but she was very clear as to the main point. The morning of the funeral, Sir Roper pri-

vately asked the young man which will was to be read.

"The first," was the answer.

"'Eaven bless you," said the old knight.

CHAPTER X.

LEGALLY JUST.

THE funeral was over, the luncheon after the funeral was eaten with more or less relish, and then, when mere friends had gone, the family and Dr. Mantell assembled in the drawing-room to hear the last wishes of the good lawyer.

In the few moments of leisure Ellen and William had had together during the past six days of hurry and confusion, they had once or twice talked the future over. William had been present with his brother when they found the unsigned will in their father's open desk. Mr. Sherwood had evi-

dently been looking at it when his seizure came, for the pencil-marks were on it, and the pencil had been found on the floor where he fell. Together the brothers had read it, and then without comment had locked it up with the former will. Ellen knew all this, and knew also the latter will was invalid.

"But, of course, Arthur is sure to go by it?" she had said.

William shook his head. "He might before he knew the Smiths, but he won't now," he answered.

Ellen refused to believe in such "iniquity," as she called it; but William would allow no hopes.

"Had Arthur any intention of being so generous——" he began.

"Generous!" she cried; "it is but common justice!"

"Nay, nay," William said, gravely.

"Arthur might argue common justice is due to himself and Amelia first. But, listen: Arthur would have told me long ago if he had ever intended to abide by this unsigned paper; but the way he carefully avoids me in private, and keeps silence about the property, altogether convinces me he means no good to *me*, at all events."

"Then!" Ellen exclaimed, angrily, "I'll never speak to him again! but I don't believe he'll be such a cheat!"

"Hush, hush, child! why no one will be hurt but me!"

"Well!" she cried, "but don't you think I care; don't you think every one will care for you to be so treated!" and then she broke off suddenly with blazing cheeks, and made an excuse to leave him.

But all doubt was quickly ended.

"Will you read it, doctor?" Arthur said, as the doors were shut upon the assembled

party, and he gave the will to his father's old friend. Dr. Mantell opened it and looked at the date.

"What, is this the last?" he asked with surprise.

"Yes," Arthur answered, quietly, "my father made another, but left it unsigned. That will remains, therefore, the only existing valid instrument."

William's eyes never left the carpet—Ellen and Mrs. Williams listened breathlessly.

When the doctor had finished reading, he turned to the younger brother and exclaimed,

"This is hard lines for you, my boy!"

"Yes, but I have the satisfaction of knowing it is owing to no unkindness of my dear father's," William answered bravely; "his last work was to cancel that will."

"No, no," Arthur interposed, "not to *cancel* it, or it would not hold good now."

"To try to cancel it, then; but it's no use

talking—that is to be the last will, doctor—of course you'll act. I suppose you accepted the executorship long ago ?"

"Yes ; but surely, Arthur, something must be done——"

William hastily interrupted him.

"I am sure Arthur is not acting carelessly and unadvisedly ; I am sure he has come to the determination to act according to the letter of the law after full and deliberate thought ; it would be unseemly for our father's sons to dispute at all, on this day of all days especially ; and any questioning at present on this subject cannot fail to end in dispute. Arthur, that will says the house is to be kept up at the expense of the estate for three months. I shall not, therefore, be trespassing on your hospitality by remaining here until I find something to do. As for our aunt and Ellen they will of course consider it their home until they have formed their future plans."

Mrs. Williams now lifted up her trembling voice.

"Arthur, Arthur!" she exclaimed, "such ill-gotten gain will do you no good. You *know* that will was made when your father believed your brother was provided for; you know his just mind would never have given all to one son, and left the other a pauper."

"You take a sentimental, exaggerated view of the case," Arthur cried, rising to enforce his words. "William will have all my cases as soon as he has passed one more examination, and when he is once known will soon have a good business, one that pays much quicker and higher than mine too; he has a legacy in hand which will support him meantime—why his prospects are most promising. I really do not see there is any blame to attach to me."

He looked round as if challenging a denial, but none came. There was a pause. William spoke at last.

"As I said before, Arthur, you are acting in strict equity;" then came a faint smile of humour over his face, as he added, "whether equity is the same as justice and mercy is, you know, a vexed question, but it shan't be one between you and me. What I should like to have clearly stated, however, is this: in whose care is Ellen to be till she is of age? Arrangements concerning her in that will provide for her as a child."

"By her father's will she can't touch her money till she is of age," Arthur replied. "I suppose, Ellen, you will consult Edward; meantime Sir Roper and Amelia are very anxious for you to live with them—I need not say *I* think that would be the best arrangement."

"Thank you," she said, coldly; "but I prefer going to Aunt Miller—I have already written to her."

"As you please, of course," he rejoined, colouring at her changed manner towards

him; "the doctor and I will continue to act for you, then, in my dear father's stead. I will explain all to Edward."

"'He has a legacy in hand,'" William repeated to himself, when the conference was broken up, "as if he didn't know every farthing will be swallowed up in the company." Yet he made himself restrain the anger so ready to break out against his brother. His father's son should never be his avowed enemy; but the resolution was almost more than his strength could carry out.

Dr. Mantell was as wroth as were Ellen and Mrs. Williams. They together raised such a chorus of invective, that William felt his own indignation cooling. One great good the doctor did him, however, beyond mere sympathy, he managed to negotiate with the company, and by the prompt payment of two thousand pounds saved the young man from all further calls upon him—calls that might

otherwise have crippled his resources and paralyzed his endeavours for years to come. This money William could not have given up at once, and the doctor's advance was, therefore, an immense boon. When that loan was paid William's sole capital would be little more than six hundred pounds, and with that he must face the world; and how face it was a question that every day made more and more difficult to decide.

London was deserted; the friends who would have advised him were scattered all over the globe, and those whose opinion he most valued were farthest off. By letter he shrank from telling his case—it is so difficult to make a thing clear and terse, too, without question and answer face to face. There was only one thing on which his agitated mind was at that time perfectly determined amidst all the perplexity—never to accept help from Arthur.

Arthur was very little at home during those ensuing three months; he slept and breakfasted there only, his other meals being taken with his fiancée. His absence was a great relief to the ladies in Porchester Terrace. Mrs. Turner had told him her opinion of his conduct freely, according to her wont, and he had never entered her house since; perhaps he was glad of the excuse to keep out of the way of the bride and bridegroom who spent their last week in England with that lady.

Eddy tried his utmost to persuade his sister to go out to India with them, but something, she did not then know what, made her refuse.

"Next cold season—a year hence," she at last did say, "I will come out if I find I don't like living at Aunt Miller's."

Agnes clung to her when they parted, and exhorted her to keep her promise.

"Mamma is paying Jane's passage out, and

is to pay her wages too," the bride sobbed; "mamma had a dream, she says, and she will never be happy again if we don't let Jane go. I am so glad; but if you'll come too I shall care for nothing."

It struck Ellen as a strange speech for a bride to make. "I wonder," thought she, "has she found a husband isn't everything? I thought one cared for nothing else in the world when one got the husband of one's choice!"

"You keep Ellen up to joining us, there's a good fellow," were Eddy's parting words to William; "she'll make a splendid match in India, well introduced."

These words haunted William, and made him reserved and silent in the girl's presence.

"I don't think he's sorry I'm going," she thought, as he stood on the platform waiting to see her start for her new home in Warwick; and when she had actually passed out of sight,

crying, and feeling she was leaving the only friend she cared for, she had no idea he felt the bitterest pang he had known since his father died.

Mrs. Turner, who was with him, did her best to cheer him. "Poor girl," she said, "it's a hard trial to leave what has been such a happy home; but we will hope she will soon get a good husband to take care of her. I once thought your poor father intended her for one of you boys; however that can never be now."

So William, chilled to the heart, walked back to the almost empty house in Porchester Terrace, to pass his last night there alone. Dead leaves strewed the unswept paths, the window plants had been removed, and the curtainless windows looked cheerless and naked. Standing on the unwashed doorsteps he looked down the almost deserted road and vaguely watched the bare trees of Kensington

Gardens swaying in the cutting wind against the murky sky. Gloom without, gloom within; life had no brightness for him that wintry afternoon. For the first time in his life his buoyant spirit realized despair, when his attention was suddenly attracted by the face of an old gentleman going by in a hansom cab.

It was old Dr. Sharpe, of Cambridge, and the sight of the kindly-wrinkled face recalled to his mind that happy thoughtless make-believe study-time at college. Longing for a friendly voice William started down into the road, hailed the driver, and had the doctor's hand in his before the latter could understand the reason of the stoppage.

"Yes, yes," said the old gentleman, "I saw an account of your sad loss, my dear boy, in the papers. Estimable man your father—very estimable, gentlemanly, well-informed man. Jump in, my boy, jump in, and come along with me — I've got Lord Alderney's

house in Brook Street; he always lets me go there when I come up to town. He was one of your father's clients, you know—has often told me what a good fellow he was—Alderney was my ward, you know — my poor sister's son. Now then, cabby, go ahead," added the old gentleman, with a sudden change from the most subdued tones to a ringing and rather nasal voice, as William seated himself by his side, "go ahead, and don't swamp us at Park Lane Corner, d'ye hear?"

"And now, Sherwood, let me have your say. So the home's broken up, eh? Well, you are pretty warm to the fore, eh? Ah, my dear boy, I always said had you been a poor man your talents would have been of use — you might have been a luminary amongst us, my dear boy—you might, indeed. Ah well, I suppose most of us like money better than fame though."

"Ah," William answered gravely, "I threw away that golden time at Cambridge; like a

fool I thought my fortune was made, but it's all gone, sir. I'm poor enough to please you now;" and then with a little encouragement he told his story.

The old gentleman forbore to criticize Arthur's part. William mentioned it as simply as possible; he groaned deeply, though, when he heard how the little legacy had to be sacrificed.

"And how do you propose to act now?" he inquired, when William ceased.

"That's just the difficulty. I cannot decide whether it will be well to eat up my capital and continue to qualify myself for an expensive branch of the law in which I may signally fail after all, or to give that scheme up and be content to seek employment in a bank or office. Amongst my father's friends I might find something; but this looks like sinking all chance of future advancement and remaining only a clerk all my life."

The doctor first shook then nodded his head, his lips pursed out, his eyes fixed on his companion's, and so he remained silent for some moments.

"No chance of any more legacies?" he then asked.

William smiled. "I fear not," he replied.

"Come, that's a blessing," the doctor cried cheerfully; "you'll do yet, my dear boy. Now I'm engaged to dine out, so I can't be hospitable to you to-day; but I should like to try and help you, my dear boy—can you come and dine with me to-morrow? I shall have digested the matter by that time, and if you and I go over the pros and cons quietly, over a bottle of Alderney's Madeira, depend upon it we shall find our way out of all this mist."

When William returned home, inexpressibly cheered by this unexpected meeting, he found a letter awaiting him from Arthur:

"My dear William," it ran, "Sir Roper and I have had many anxious conversations about your future, but I have never till now ventured to offer any advice, because I feared it might be taken in a wrong spirit. However, here we are, on the edge of separation, our old home broken up, and our ways drifting apart, so I determine to speak out. Through Turner's folly—a folly I always expected to end in your ruin—as you may remember I prophesied years ago—you have, I am told, been obliged to give up the legacy our father left you. I don't see how, on the little capital you have in hand, you can just yet qualify yourself for the bar. I am very willing to discharge my head office-man and take you in his stead, at his salary, £350. This would, at least, keep you comfortably and allow you time to continue your other studies if you like. I may as well add, *in strictest confidence*, that if Sir Roper keeps his

word, and leaves my wife the whole of his property, I shall cut the business altogether; nor will my sons need to learn any profession. Why don't you let me give you your articles, so that in this event you can take my business after me? This seems to me a sensible, natural arrangement—let me hear if it meets with your approval. Of course you will not mention the proposal I make you about *the future*. Sir Roper and Amelia wonder you never go near them.

"Your affectionate Brother,

"ARTHUR."

"A very affectionate brother," thought William in glowing scorn. "How good of him to wish to discharge a faithful clerk like Smithson, so as to benefit his pauper brother at a cheap rate; then, when he becomes a millionnaire I may have his business. Oh, yes, 'do have it—I don't want it.' I wonder

if I'd have to pay him for his goodwill and office-fittings? It would be very pleasant to stand in his presence till he signs the letters I have written by his orders. It would be very soothing to see him in my dad's arm-chair—to go day after day into that room as a servant, and never to see and hear the dear old face, the dear old voice. No, no, Arthur; I'd rather be 'any other article, marm?'" and here he began to rub his hands and smile and bow in derision as he pictured himself behind a counter serving out lace and ribbons.

Then he got ink and paper, and wrote a furious letter of angry refusal; then he tore it up into atoms, and with his head on his clasped hands, soft feelings having come with his thoughts of his father, he prayed for and found strength and calmness.

The next day he moved into lodgings. The Turners had tried to induce him to

occupy rooms in their house. It would have soothed their conscience, Mrs. Turner said, if he would have accepted board and lodging from them till his plans were settled; but William, who had never had pride before, said pride had come with his poverty; he must begin independently or he might end in liking to sponge on his friends. They were cheerful lodgings in Eastbourne Terrace, and the continual screams from engines he declared would keep him alive and progressive. Then he wrote a reply to Arthur, a very different answer to that he had penned the evening before, merely:

"My dear Arthur,—Your letter requires consideration. Let my answer stand over for a few days.

"Your affectionate Brother,

"William."

As he dropped this letter into the post-office, and walked on to keep his appointment in Brook Street, he apostrophized himself complacently thus :

"My good William, you have won a victory over your quarrelsome, envious spirit —you may win a name for yourself yet. Three cheers for my noble self."

So he went cheerfully on to hear his old doctor's advice.

And over the promised Madeira, Dr. Sharpe's advice was this :

"Come back to us and read up a bit quietly with me for a fellowship. You'll make a capital tutor."

"Why," cried the young man, almost laughing at the ridiculous idea, "why I'm the least fit man in the world. I should be an impostor!"

"I think not, my dear boy," the doctor continued, calmly. "You are in the first

place a gentleman; that means, as I take it, a man of honour; in the second, you are naturally a scholar, though you have hitherto lacked the stimulant to make you work; thirdly, you are even-tempered and cheerful: ergo your sense of honour would make you do your duty thoroughly; your scholarly tastes would make your work interesting; and your good temper would make your young men ready to obey you, eh, my dear boy?"

"You judge me too kindly, sir; I am indolent and uncertain."

"Ah, well, they who *know* their faults can easily correct them. Some of us think we need no amendment, eh? But seriously, Sherwood, think this over, it is an employment that will keep you amongst your equals, will fairly remunerate you, and ought to lead to better things still in no long time. I'm going back to Cambridge next Saturday—come with me and be my guest till you can suit yourself

better, unless, indeed, your brother's conscience should prick him first, and he should insist on a division of the spoil."

"He has made me an offer, sir," and William put his brother's proposal in the fairest way he could.

"I hope you won't mind my saying that I'd like to put him in quod, my dear boy," cried the doctor, warming over his nephew's Madeira. "You surely wouldn't entertain such an ignominious project as that? Tell young Six-and-eightpence, or Three-and-fourpence, whichever it is, you will get your living without his charity."

"I will give you an answer before you leave town," William said, smiling at his champion's warmth. "You have almost persuaded me to believe lecturing and explaining are my vocation; but I must wait for daylight —a good dinner and a kindly host are apt to mislead one's ideas."

"Prudence, reticence, and good temper ought to make a man's fortune," said Dr. Sharpe, when the sound of his young guest's footsteps had died away down the quiet street. "I shall see him climb the hill successfully. The lad had it in him in his prosperity, but it will come out strong by-and-by in this his so-called adversity."

Two days later Arthur received the following:

"My dear Brother,—The Master of Newall, Dr. Sharpe, has advised me to return to Cambridge, and promised me his support. I, therefore, shall not ask you to turn old Smithson out of his place for my benefit. I shall not have time to call on Amelia; pray make my excuses neatly to her. I suppose she will be your wife when we next meet? Direct to me when you have

occasion to write, to the care of Dr. Sharpe, Newall.

"Your affectionate Brother,

"WILLIAM."

Then William went off to Brixton, where, in a semi-detached villa, Mrs. Williams had cast in her lot with two old ladies of slender means, similar to her own.

The good old lady was very hoarse, and explained that it was owing to reading aloud. "My good friends are more afflicted than I am," she said; "one is nearly blind, the other is very deaf, so I exert myself for them—thankful I am as able as I am."

It did not sound a very cheerful mode of life, and he told her he wished he had a more congenial home to offer her, and then, stating his plans, added perhaps he should be able to claim her services as housekeeper before long.

"Nay, nay; you must have a younger one, my dear," she cried, stroking his hand affectionately; "but there's one thing you must never forget, don't eat *fried* sausages. Cambridge sausages should be boiled and eaten *very* hot."

He laughingly promised to remember this precept, and then asked after Ellen Longley.

"Ah, my poor dear Ellen—Mrs. Miller wrote last instead—the poor child seems fretting after us all. I have written this very day to beg her aunt will insist on her keeping her head warm, and avoiding draughts. She was always so careless on these vital points—just excuse me one moment, my dear—I hear dear old Mrs. Locke; I'm always so afraid she'll walk over the stairs, thinking it's all level ground," and seizing her hood and shawl she trotted off.

"But is Ellen ill?" William asked, having impatiently awaited her return.

"Well, no; but restless and ailing, I fear. I have sent her off a wonderful prescription that my dear sister Anne's poor dear Charlie's wife used to derive——"

"Dear Auntie Williams, what is the date of Ellen's last letter?"

"The date—see, here's the letter—take it and read it at your leisure. I forget what is in it; but I'm sure you'll admire her beautiful correct spelling and writing."

He took it quickly, and then promising to let her hear from him occasionally, and never to be in town without visiting her, and always to wear goloshes in chapel on account of the vaults beneath, and to be very careful of his candle, and to avoid late hours and the society of fast young men, and a few other warnings, all of which he promised to observe solemnly, he came away from his old friend. He read Ellen's letter over many times, and was sadder after each perusal. It was

an affectionate letter, and made one or two attempts to be cheerful; but the fact would come out that she pined for the old friends and the old home. She alluded to him as to "poor William," and wished "I could see him and you sometimes. I should be quite happy if I could only have a talk with you both now and then." Then she said how kind her aunt and uncle were: "such good people they are; they spend their lives amongst the sick and the afflicted. I shall become quite learned on all sorts of dreadful diseases; but it is very sad to witness so much suffering continually."

"Poor girl," he thought, "after such a bright home to go amongst that dismal set. Oh, what a fool I was not to have spoken while I had the right, she would have stuck to me now, and now she will marry some one else years before I shall have a position to enable me to marry." Then, he wondered,

would she have listened to his suit; but the wonder was quickly smiled into certainty that she would. Quick glances, quick blushes, half-spoken words, so sweet to look back upon, returned to his memory. Yes, she would have listened, he knew. Nay, she would listen now; but his honour and his pride prevented him giving her the chance. Better lose her altogether than lose his self-respect, unless, indeed, he could work his way steadily and rapidly upward; but, alas, in these days fame and fortune have to be wooed painfully and slowly, and William mistrusted his own power of being steady and painstaking. "I failed at school and college," he thought bitterly; "I may break down again worse than before."

But as despondency overcame him, a shrill voice rang up from the street—

"All's for the best, be happy and cheerful,
Trouble and sorrow are friends in disguise."

It was sang by a dirty little errand boy as he carried his last orders for the night. The words rang like a friendly admonition in the lonely man's ears.

"Bless the little cad," he said cheerfully, and as he filled his pipe, he finished the song himself.

CHAPTER XI.

FORLORN, BUT HOPEFUL.

MR. AND MRS. MILLER were almost strangers to Ellen Longley, though they were the nearest relations she had. They were a childless couple, living in a comfortable house at Warwick, a couple well on in years, though by no means aged; excellent people, living only to do good, as every one said; and yet, on account of certain peculiarities, they were, notwithstanding their acknowledged excellence, not calculated to make charity—I use the word in its largest sense—altogether beautiful in the eyes of thoughtless people.

It was a radical change of life for Ellen, and alternately it wearied, amused, irritated, and lastly roused her admiration.

"Dear child," Mrs. Miller would say, in a soft die-away voice, with her head on one side. —"dear child, I am called away to visit an afflicted sister; how will you employ the time of my absence?"

"Oh, thank you, aunt, I will walk with you, and wait for you. I am so fond of fresh air."

"Nay, nay—I am going in very poor clothing. I know young people. I would not ask you to disgrace your beautiful toilette by being seen in my humdrum company."

"Indeed, I should never care how you dressed, aunt; I hope I'm not so silly as that."

"Then I must care for you. No, no. James, husband, this young creature—this fair young creature—must not go out with me in my old gray alpaca, must she?"

"I think not, indeed I think not," was the answer, seriously and deliberately given. "I tell you what, we two young people won't be left to mope at home, though," he added, jauntily. "What do you say, Felicia, to my taking her for an hour to see our dear young friends work—I allude to the Misses Lowe?"

"Ah, James, always the right thought at the right moment; ah! that *will* be a treat. Run away, dear niece; put on that pretty, pretty hat, and go and enjoy yourself."

"Ah, ah! but my thoughts are not always bent on self-enjoyment only," the old gentleman cried, as soon as he and Ellen had set off arm in arm to pay this delightful visit. "I tell you a plan I have in my head;" and here, after looking furtively round, he sank his voice to a whisper, "Your estimable and beloved aunt is very fond of sea-kale, and I saw the first of the season as I came through the High Street this morning. Now I will buy

some for dinner, as a surprise; it will refresh her after reading to poor afflicted Ann Somers. But will you mind my putting it in my pocket? for if I carried it in my hand, and we met her accidentally, she would suspect something."

Ellen offered to carry it in her own pocket, or under her cloak, but the courtly old gentleman almost wept at the idea of thus burthening his "fair and fragile companion," so they went round by High Street, and Ellen kept watch outside the shop till he made his purchase, after which, with many chuckles at the success so far of so deep a plot, Mr. Miller took her to the Misses Lowe's "unpretending abode of ability and elegance," as he termed their cottage. Three ladies—the youngest at least forty—came quickly into the lobby as they recognized Mr. Miller's voice. All were very thin, very lively, and spoke with an Irish brogue. All three danced round Ellen, and "oh'd" and "dear young creature'd" over

her to such an extent, that she longed for William to enjoy the absurdity with her. A keen perception of the ludicrous was with her almost a failing, and after her long unnatural gloom and repression, she felt painfully tempted to burst out now in a fit of girlish laughter.

Mr. Miller had to go through the story of his wife's visit to Ann Somers, and his plan for amusing and improving his niece's mind in her absence, which became quite a long story as he told it, interrupted as he constantly was by ejaculations and exclamations at his kindness, and wit, and amiability. Then the work was brought out, and exhibited; wonderful wool-work—portraits of rabid-looking parrots and square-faced gleaners; more wonderful wool-work of odds and ends, to form what they called a *goblin* effect; then tippets for Sunday-school children, made of listin, or the blue edges of new flannel; also hearthrugs of

knitted strips of old cloth, to "protect aged labourers' feet from the cold stones of their rude dwellings;" then hideous crochet caps for "that interesting 'mothers' bag;'" and "little garments for little strangers," which latter articles were exhibited while Mr. Miller was supposed not to be looking, with knowing little smiles and shakes of the head to prevent Ellen being too vociferous in the surprise and delight she was expected to feel.

At the expiration of an hour—to the minute—Mr. Miller rose.

"Our time is up," he cried, like a general addressing his troops after a field-day. "Ellen, I am at your service. My dear ladies, with this little remark for contemplation, I leave you:—

> "'The busy bee, the busy bee,
> It speaks of you all three to me;
> In another world, may you all three
> Store honey like the busy bee.'"

One wave of the hand, and he ran away, as

if to escape the applause his modesty forbade him to desire to hear.

Ellen had some difficulty in overtaking him, as she had to make more elaborate adieux, this being her first visit. She found him wiping his eyes, as if overcome with emotion.

"Excellent women!" he exclaimed, as she joined him. "I am not an advocate for celibacy; but, after seeing them and their works, I am almost tempted to think we gentlemen are not always acquisitions. That little jeu d'esprit was quite involuntary. I could not help it, I assure you. It will please Felicia, your dear aunt. Single-minded wife, my triumphs are always yours!"

What a happy old gentleman he was in the belief of universal goodness and ability.

Beside the Misses Lowe, there were many other intimate visitors always coming to early

dinner or tea. There was the curate—the best young man that ever lived—who, on a salary of eighty pounds a year, managed to help to support an idiot sister, and to clothe and feed his own large, gaunt frame. A large joint was always provided when Mr. Goodley came; and the Millers would eat scarcely any breakfast, so as to be exceedingly hungry by dinner-time, that their guest might not fancy his own appetite uncommonly great.

"You must give us very small pieces at a time, husband," Mrs. Miller would say, "then dear Ellen and I can come twice or three times, to set the dear man a good example. Ellen, love, you will assist at this pious fraud?"

Then there would be a large ham on the table; and Mr. Miller would profess he had never tasted so well-cured a ham; Mr. Goodley would politely agree with him, and Mr. Miller would address his wife thus:—

"Felicia, my own, I wonder if I am going to be rude?"

"Dear husband, what is it?" she would reply.

"Felicia, Mr. Goodley says this is a good ham. Now, I suppose bachelors don't boil a whole ham, because they never could eat it while it was good—at least that was my experience as a bachelor."

"Dear James, let us inquire. Mr. Goodley, do you ever boil large hams?"

"No," cried Mr. Goodley, in his deep harsh voice; "mutton-chops and beef-steaks are my principal dishes."

"But cold ham at breakfast, Felicia, is very good."

"It is, husband. I wonder now if Mr. Goodley——"

"Ah!" then the husband would interrupt, "that's what I was going to say. Would Mr. Goodley be offended, if we sent him some

for breakfast?" At which Mr. Goodley generally laughed outright.

The beer would be the next subject. Did Mr. Goodley think this was really Scotch ale? Mr. Goodley only knew it tasted strong and good; he only hoped it would not make him tipsy, as he was not accustomed to beer in the middle of the day.

"He can't get the right flavour then, now," Mr. Miller cried. "He ought to take it in the evening, after his daily labours. Will you mind my sending you a bottle or two for you to taste properly?"

The result of one of Mr. Goodley's visits was that a large basket of good things would follow to his lodgings, and the worthy people would enjoy their meals doubly, thinking he too, for a day or two at least, would feel strengthened and warmed.

Three times a month ten blind women came to spend the evening. Happy souls

they were, laughing heartily at Mr. Miller's smallest jokes, and singing dolorous hymns of his composing with heartfelt satisfaction. Most of them were repulsively ugly, many bearing the marks of the terrible accidents that had brought about their affliction. Ellen did her best to be as happy at these entertainments as the rest, but they saddened her inexpressibly; indeed, she was beginning to feel the hitherto bright world to be, after all, a prison full of sickness and sadness; and she could not understand how her aunt could be so cheerful, surrounded as she was by poverty and suffering of the most trying kinds.

"Prosperous folk don't want us," Mr. Miller said, one day, when Ellen had expressed something of this. "Is it not enough to make us happy to think we have the power of lightening a burden, and softening a hard trial? We are not crippled, not overwhelmed with debt and sickness, therefore we of all

people have cause for continual rejoicing, especially as our means enable us to alleviate a little of our poorer neighbours' trials."

"I am very wicked, I suppose," Ellen would think, as she sickened at the idiot home her aunt was always visiting, and at the hospital where she went and read aloud. "Is there no other way of doing and being good than by giving up our tastes and feelings and wishes to these poor sufferers?"

Mr. Goodley unconsciously answered the question for her.

"Your young lady looks very ill," he said, one day, to Mrs. Miller; "do you think it right to take a girl like that into those close rooms to see such hopeless pain?"

"Right!" cried the good lady; "what are we put on earth for but to do what we can for the afflicted?"

"But Miss Longley has lately had a great affliction on her own shoulders. It strikes me

you should heal her pains first, before you add those of strangers to them. Her guardian was a good man, wasn't he ?"

"Yes, he was, a truly good man, though I never could get him to talk on deep matters concerning our faith; he was a father to her, a true friend, a Christian gentleman. His sudden death was a terrible shock to his family; but Ellen has a strong mind. I think it has quite recovered the blow. She never speaks of her guardian."

Mr. Goodley was not satisfied; he accompanied her home; and, after sitting talking on every-day matters for a little, he addressed Ellen suddenly,

"How long has your guardian been dead ?"

A shiver ran through her, she turned deadly pale. His abrupt question had opened the wound she had resolutely kept closed so long; it was more than she could bear to have that awful time forced back on her by a stranger. She

made an attempt to answer calmly, but it would not do, and she burst into hysterical tears.

"There, there now," cried he, "I've just been saying you were not fit to go pottering about among your aunt's sick pets. We haven't all got the same gifts. St. Paul never tells us anywhere that he ever poured oil and wine into people's bodily wounds; if we were all hospital visitors, all other good deeds would be left undone; if we were all preachers, by the same rule, where would be the hearers? Flowers are useless things compared with vegetables, but they beautify and gladden our lives. Our great Master mentioned them with admiration; He did not call them tares. There are diversities of gifts. Miss Longley's gift does not lie in the same groove as yours, my dear Mrs. Miller. Suffering even in others is more than she can bear to witness at present. Let her be a tender flower, needing gracious sunshine yet awhile."

His homely ugly countenance became almost beautiful as he spoke. His self-denying life shorn bare of all that makes life desirable, except the power of doing good, had no effect in making him despise and condemn the different natures who shrank, like sensitive plants, from rough handling.

"Dear, dear child!" cried Mrs. Miller, quickly convinced of the truth of the curate's words; "she shall go oftener to the dear Lowes; with them she will have social enjoyments suited to her years."

"Those ladies are all very well," cried he, in return, "but they are great bores sometimes."

Mrs. Miller held up her hands at this almost blasphemous opinion, but Ellen laughed—a natural laugh that quite repaid the speaker for his plain speaking.

"Their wool-work is hideous," he continued; "they are the greatest fidgets I ever

knew; they fritter away their existence in making things only fit to keep children quiet; indeed they are not even equal to butterflies, for butterflies look pretty, if they are fit for nothing else."

Again Ellen broke out into genuine mirth, and this time Mr. Goodley's deep haw-haw joined in. It seemed to Ellen as if a heavy load had been lifted off her by this burst of alternate tears and laughter. She felt natural once more, and moreover she felt, since her friend's little sermon, that she was not hopelessly wicked because the blind and the idiots inspired her with terror and despair.

After this, she began to consider the curate's visits as gleams of sunshine in her monotonous life. As for the poor curate himself, his zeal to give her pleasure showed itself in many ways. A bunch of wild flowers she had expressed a desire to have; a book borrowed from some college friend; the last

telegraphic news; all were constant excuses for visits. Ellen never dreamed that this awkward, uncouth man, with his alpaca coat worn rusty and shiny, his harsh voice, and his empty pockets, was foolish enough to think her a lovely, lovable woman.

But he was not totally mad; he thought of her as he thought of a bishop's see—as a thing desirable, "but not attainable;" he knew himself to be a "mere hewer of wood and drawer of water," and was doggedly content so to be.

But had he been an Adonis, Ellen would still have been like Mariana, "aweary." Every letter from India continued to call for her to come. Eddy wrote strongly about her proper home being his; but Agnes's weaker arguments told the most. She wrote that she *longed* to see her again, and the idea of such clinging love awaiting her acceptance of a home in the "glowing orient," ready prepared

to receive her, drew her to entertain the idea of actually going, and eventually to consider it a settled thing.

"Of course you'll marry a nabob," cried Miss Clarinda Lowe. "Oh, what a brilliant prospect lies before you; bungalows and nabobs, elephants and chillum-chees, and chutneys!"

"You'll have free choice of the entire presidency!" added Miss Arabella. "And the beautiful *Panjab!* shall you see its glorious fastnesses?"

Ellen was a little better instructed in Indian geography—though very little—and explained that as her brother was at present quartered in Central India, she might never go into the Punjaub.

"Ah!"—Miss Lowe was not to be put down—"but for change of air for a few days, no doubt her brother would show her all the sights of India. Cashmere, for instance, and

the Khyber pass. No lover of history could be in India," she thought, "without visiting 'Pesher wur,' and the Khyber pass."

"She might go there for her honeymoon," simpered the youngest sister. Then Ellen turned almost angrily towards her.

"I am not going out to be married," she cried. "Nothing would induce me to go *on spec.*, as people call it. It is disgusting."

She said this to every one, and saw general smiles of incredulity in return. It was the thought of being supposed capable of going out with such an intention that kept her so long from a final decision.

When her twenty-first birthday arrived, and she became mistress of her own money, this decision could no longer be delayed; for Eddy's letters became more pressing. "Why was she so unkind to poor Agnes?" he wrote; "she would be of the greatest comfort to her, for India did not suit her health, and she was

kept much at home. Why should not his only sister prefer his protection to that of distant relations ?"

She wrote to William, telling him her want of decision, and his reply gave the required spur.

He thought she ought to go, unless there was any *special* reason against her leaving England. "Pray who was Mr. Goodley, whose name was in all her letters ?"

Poor William, he had forced himself to write in this indifferent manner, believing it was best for her welfare. He had been "pounding away," as he styled it, steadily at Cambridge for eight months—as yet with little success, he wrote—but those who watched his application judged differently. To the old Fellows, resident, he was already marked out as a rising man. Dr. Sharpe's influence steadily exerted made him many friends. The old love of fame that had been

kept down since his boyhood by his prosperity, came back again soon. At first he worked for the love of power, gradually he worked from a nobler and purer desire—the desire to benefit his fellow-men.

Ellen was disappointed by his plain reply; why, she did not know. She had asked for his opinion, and had said she wanted decision, inferring she would abide by what he said; yet, after the first reading of his letter, she thought bitterly that the sooner she went to Eddy the better. There was no one in England who cared for her. By-and-by she acknowledged that his advice could be no other than what it was. As to his allusion to that lanky curate, why, had she not drawn it upon herself by writing of him so frequently? Acting on the first proud feelings, she wrote to Dr. Mantell, to ask him to take her passage by the first ship in October, as a relation of Mrs. Lamax was going by it, and would

take charge of her; then she wrote to ask Mrs. Turner to let her come to her for the week before her departure. And all this was settled before she again wrote to William, and told him what she had done.

Behind the Millers' house a long narrow strip of garden ran down to the meadows which extended to Guy's Cliff. It was quite open at the farther end, and commanded a pretty, peaceful view over the park-like Warwickshire fields, with their great clumps of forest trees, their soft slopes and winding streams. A few lilacs and arbutus shrubs sheltered the little gateway; and here, while her aunt and uncle were quietly reading after the midday meal, Ellen stood alone, and thought of the life that had gone, and of the future that was so vague and strange. Nearly a week had passed since she had told William she had determined to go to India, and he had vouchsafed no notice of her letter.

Could it be that he too had changed, like all the world, and, amongst his college friends, had forgotten the companion of the home he had seemed to prize so dearly?

Then she heard a step come up the gravel-walk.

"There's a gentleman wanting you, miss," cried the prim maid, and close behind her was the object of her thoughts—William Sherwood

"Shall I tell master and mistress?" Ann continued, as she turned to go.

"No!" he exclaimed; "I won't disturb them at present."

He came up to Ellen as if they had parted only yesterday, though it was nine months since she left London. Mr. Sherwood had been dead a year; but Ellen still wore deep mourning for the guardian, who was no relation to her. William noted this as he came calmly up and took her hand; noted, too,

that she was very white and thin, and that all the glee had gone from her violet eyes; but he saw also that she was strongly affected as they met; that her hand was hot, and trembled in his; that her lips and voice shook as she answered his quiet greeting in a like quiet manner, and that her eyes deepened and brightened as they shyly met his. Could he have said what was in his heart, and what he had schooled himself to keep unsaid; could he have dared to draw her weary head to his shoulder and sheltered her in his arms, as he longed to do, the world might never have known a great name; for, secure of the happiness he coveted, he might have let fame pass from his grasp, and contented himself with mere homely domestic joys. But he had already learned that great grand lesson, without which no real, lasting work can be achieved—the control of his own spirit. "Greater than he that taketh a city is he that

controlleth his own heart," says the wise man; and as William stood in the presence of the woman he loved, he was strong to control his words and looks, because he believed it was best for her, and due to his own honour that he should let her go free.

So they talked together as brother and sister, a little stiffly at first, but soon in the old familiar way. He had managed to leave his work for a day, he said, because he wanted to know what he could do to help her arrangements; and, beside, he wanted to see her again. "Talking was better than writing; and he felt sure she would be starting off to Botany Bay, or some other equally inconvenient locality, if he left her to manage for herself." He heard all her plans, and suggested alterations where he thought them necessary. He seemed to have thought of everything, even to the boxes fittest for India.

"If I listened to every one," laughed Ellen, as she acknowledged the usefulness of many of his suggestions, "I should never be ready to start at all. Mrs. Lomax says, 'Oh, my dear, any boxes will do; travelling is quite luxurious in India, now,' and 'Don't take many clothes; you can get anything you want there as cheap as at home, and the niggers are first-rate dressmakers.' And Mrs. Johnson says, 'You must have airtight, waterproof boxes made expressly for you, and you must lay in a large stock of every imaginable thing, and they must be packed in arrowroot and camphor and red pepper, or you will have nothing decent at the end of a month.'"

"Follow your own common sense," said he, "if you have any; if not, obey my instructions, and you can't go wrong," he added, laughingly. "Tin air-proof boxes *are* necessary. Remember the intense damp during the rains, and the immense variety of insects

all the year round, ready to bore their way through any material short of mineral; but Agnes's things all went right, didn't they?—why not trust to Mrs. Turner again?"

Ellen told him she was going up to Mrs. Turner for her final preparations; but he must not tell Arthur, as she didn't care to go and be patronized by Mrs. Arthur. "I want to say good-bye to dear old aunty," she said —"there is no one else."

Before he left he asked her if she would like him to see her safely on board ship.

She hesitated, but said No, she would rather not; she would rather say good-bye now, when he went away.

"And so get rid of it!" he exclaimed, lightly.

She made no answer. Mr. and Mrs. Miller were with them. They had all just finished tea, and William's train was nearly due. In their presence Ellen dare trust

neither eyes nor voice, but her silence was to him painfully eloquent. He turned away, and bade the Millers good-bye. Then he asked Ellen to walk with him to the station, and her aunt and uncle promising to follow so as to be her escort home, allowed the—to them—doubtful propriety of the proceeding.

Till the last moment no word was spoken between the young people, beyond commonplaces; then as the passengers began hurriedly to take their seats in the train, Ellen broke down. In the few instants they had stood silently amidst the hurrying throng of excursionists, the knowledge had come to her that her whole heart and soul were given to her companion, and she could no longer let her pride keep her silent.

"Oh, William, William!" she cried, with eyes no longer shy, but tearful and imploring, "don't leave me, don't leave me. I have no one in all the world but you."

Her tight grasp—her sweet sad eyes were too powerful for him. "My darling, my poor little Ellen!" he exclaimed, bending down with a world of tenderness in every tone and gesture; "it is best you should go—best for you, I mean. You will not forget me, love—my poor little darling—you will be happy there—you *must* be happy!"

"Now then—there's the last whistle, sir!" cried the guard.

William cared for no onlookers. His arm went round poor Ellen, his lips kissed her quivering, pallid mouth.

"I must go," he said. "Thank God you will not forget me."

She let him go, and stood, the picture of passive despair, as his face, straining from the carriage-window, passed slowly from the station. But when the train was out of sight she gave a deep, sobbing sigh of relief.

"I love him!" she thought, "and he loves

me! We can be faithful to each other for years!"

And so, feeling almost happy, she turned homewards. As for William, leaning back in a corner of the carriage, with his hat pressed down over his eyes, all the bitterness of the past came back again. Even the knowledge of Ellen's love for him but added to his suffering.

"I could bear it all by myself," he thought; "but now her life is saddened."

Men cannot hope and submit as women can. William could feel no comfort in what gave Ellen such intense relief. She could find comfort in anticipation. He could see nothing for them both but life-long sorrow.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW LIFE.

IN Bombay Harbour at last! and amongst all the rest of the passengers, Ellen stood on deck admiring the exceeding beauty around her. There before her lay the land of the Pagoda-tree, the land of violent contrasts—the land of death; the land of plenty, the land of revolting want; the land of beauty, the land of decay; the land of tyranny, the land of liberty; the home of sin, the land of promise, the land of cruelty—where there is so much and so little, where God's best gifts bring ruin, where the sun and moon are as deadly

as the wild beasts that make their lairs amidst the greatest luxuriance earth can yield; where English pluck, English beauty, and English worth are poured out as water, or as devilish sacrifices to a Devil-God; where the white face pines hour by hour, day by day, for the green lanes and fresh winds of the land he is doomed never to revisit; where the bravest deeds earth ever knew, the most unselfish actions, the most terrible sufferings, have been done and endured, unstoried, except in that great unerring book, to be made public only when Time shall be no more.

"India at last!" Ellen cried, drinking in the exquisite loveliness of the violet morning. "It is just what I imagined. The great masses of foliage on the low-lying shore. Malabar Point, with its houses and gardens, the queer-sailed boats, and the hazy atmosphere. Ah, this is the worst of living in an

age of progress; photographs and books rob all these scenes of their freshness. I feel as if I'd looked at this every day of my life!"

Where Miss Longley stood were crowded also most of the gentlemen. Young Mrs. Lomax, her chaperon, had let it be pretty generally known in the ship that her companion was no forlorn "spin.," intent on matrimony to better her estate. Indeed, in Mrs. Lomax's way of putting it, Ellen was quite an heiress—no need to name the extent of her fortune—and was coming to India simply and truly because her guardian was dead and her brother was her only near relation. So, though Ellen's youth and beauty, her charming manners—devoid of coquetry—her knowledge of good society, and her ability to talk of something else than mere small gossip, made her sufficiently attractive to the middle-aged man of experience as well as to the surface-judging-only young-

sters amongst the passengers, yet the knowledge that she did not need to marry for a home merely, and that she was not at all likely to fancy every passing attention meant a proposal close at hand, added considerably to her popularity; and from Suez, where, in calmer seas, she was able to take her place in public once more, to the end of the voyage, she decidedly distanced all other ladies in the estimation of the gentlemen.

And after the first half of the voyage Ellen had really enjoyed herself, though she never forgot how every mile she went separated her farther from him who was now her avowed lover. The peace that had come to her after the agony of their parting at Warwick was still upon her; no word had been written since mere friends might not have written, and she had not seen him again; but she felt she was very dear to him, and knowing him, she knew also he would never

swerve from his allegiance, though no lovers' oaths had passed between them. The day she embarked he had sent her a gift of a very elaborate church service, with her name written in it, and the date of their farewell, with "Ora pro me," the one little bit of sentimentality he had permitted himself to indulge in.

No doubt every reader of these pages has been in love, or has fancied himself in love—which is pretty much the same thing for the time—at least once in his life, and will not need telling how this prayer-book was prized and cherished as her most precious treasure, nor how rigorously and willingly the little petition it craved from her was granted; in her prostration from sickness, in the storm when daylight was excluded and she never knew day from night except by the hateful smell of soup and clatter of plates; and in the still midnight, when the lash of the water

against the ship and the ceaseless thud of the screw were the only sounds she heard, she would steal her hand up under her pillow where the book lay, and with an almost superstitious feeling of protection, sleep quietly, while her fingers remained clasped round her treasure.

"What a good girl you are, you never neglect your reading," Mrs. Lomax, who shared her cabin, would say, and Ellen would blush as her conscience asked her—Would she have been so heedful had that book not been given her?

"I'm so glad it's a fine morning for landing," said a "grif," about to join his regiment for the first time, a remark which caused a general laugh, considering it would have required a miracle to make an autumn morning in that part of India aught but fine.

They were watching the boats putting out from the landing-steps, and many eyes were

as eager as Ellen's to see her brother approach. He had promised to get leave to meet her at Bombay, for Mrs. Lomax was going off in a contrary direction, and as each boat hailed the ship, people asked, "Now, Miss Longley, there he is, isn't he, that stout young fellow in white?" or, "I'm sure *that's* your brother there twirling his mustaches;" or, "No; no mistake this time: here he comes up the ladder. By Jove! patent-leather boots before breakfast, too!"

And the owner of the patent-leather boots did ask audibly for Miss Longley; and though Miss Longley from the very first protested he was not her brother, and she had never seen him before, her friends persisted in assuring her he was, that he had grown out of knowledge, or his tight boots had altered his countenance, or he had had a sunstroke, and so laughingly asserting they cleared away from before her, and Ellen, hearing and seeing

herself pointed out to the stranger, advanced to meet him.

He was a very jaunty young gentleman, with a swing and a swagger that inferred he was no small personage, in his own estimation at least. His figure suggested stays, just as his boots suggested corns. His complexion might owe its brilliancy to the Indian sun; or, it was possible, it had borrowed a little from "the bloom of Ninon." A vermilion-coloured necktie corresponded in hue with the gay geranium in his black velveteen coat; and his gloves were of the same colour as his pale-gray trousers. He carried an enormous white umbrella, with a deep flounce to it; and as Ellen hastened to get out of hearing of the titters she heard amongst the watchful untravelled youngsters behind her, she had much difficulty in keeping her own gravity. But she was London bred, and so equal to most emergencies on a like small scale.

"Are you Miss Longley?" asked the gentleman, after a profound bow, and looking at an open letter in his hand as if he were a detective comparing an original and a negative.

Ellen allowed that to be her present rank and title.

"I think you have a brother in the 190th?" he next observed, again closely regarding the letter.

Again she replied in the affirmative.

"Ah, I thought so," he added, composedly. "Then I'm come to say he can't get leave."

"Oh," cried Ellen, in sudden terror at being cast on her own resources so unexpectedly; "then, what am I to do?"

Then came the shadow of a smile over the gentleman's face as he observed, "That's just what I'm come to say; perhaps I ought to tell you I'm Brigade Major."

"Indeed!" said she, innocently, wondering what that might mean.

"So you see," he continued, "of course your brother wrote to me in the emergency. The C. O. cut up rough, I imagine, and wouldn't give him leave. I don't know Longley of the 190th well, I just saw him pass through last year. Lately married I think to a sweet, pretty creature. Some fellows have such luck. Beg your pardon; I forgot he's your brother." And he broke off as if overcome with his thoughtlessness.

"Never mind," she said, glad of an excuse to laugh. "But what am I to do?"

"Longley writes as if I ought to be a married man too," he went on, after bowing his thanks for her forgiveness; "whereas I'm only a wretched bachelor; and I suppose, even if I could put up a young lady she wouldn't let me. So I went to the General

and explained, and Mrs. General said, 'Oh, bring her here, and we'll pass her on.' Now, may I have the pleasure of putting you under Mrs. Willis's care, for to-day at all events? Longley says I'm to let you rest, and then pop you into the train to Nagpore, and you are sure to meet some one who'll see you safely on to Jubbulpore by dāk, and then you are close, at least within a hundred miles or so, to Dooliejuldi."

In her despair at these forlorn arrangements she turned to her fellow-passengers, who now seemed like old friends, and explained her disappointment and dilemma.

Two or three enthusiastic youths started forward, and placed themselves at her disposal.

"Might they see her safely home? They would be so glad if she would trust herself to their care," &c.

At whom Mrs. Lomax sagely laughed, as she

asked since when had they become acquainted with the language and the ways of travelling in India, to consider themselves eligible pioneers? leaving them blushing and discomfited.

Fortunately, however, Mrs. Lomax persuaded her to accept the Willises' hospitality, for they would be sure to see she had a safe and pleasant and suitable escort for the remainder of her journey.

"You'll see Bombay under favourable auspices, too," added the woman of the world, "and you'll make good friends at starting, *that* is the main point. No one knows the importance of starting well in *this* country, acquaintances are always turning up so unexpectedly."

And after seeing Ellen leave the ship, under the care of the gallant brigade-major, little Mrs. Lomax prepared to start off alone on her fortnight's journey of some hundreds

of miles, by river, by rail, by horse-dāk, by doolie, undaunted by the knowledge that she had to fight against negligence, stupidity, sickness, and cupidity perfectly alone.

At the top of the landing-steps stood a buggy, a tall, badly-hung conveyance, with an open back, drawn by a vicious-looking, wall-eyed, white horse, whose ears were well laid back, to show his determination neither to do nor to suffer patiently. Squatted under him was a native groom switching away flies with a long horse's tail, and fast asleep the while. He was dressed in a white shirt, open on one breast to show his creed, and bound in at the waist by a twisted, two-coloured cloth —his master's livery. His turban hat was decorated with the same colours, as also with an enormous silver brooch bearing his master's crest.

The brigade-major shouted, and the servant awoke, and bent himself in a profound

salaam to Ellen, who politely returned the salute—much to the man's amazement. The horse acknowledged its master's approach by a peculiar snort, as if to warn him by a preface for a tussle.

"You're not timid, are you?" the brigade-major asked, as he offered her his hand to assist her to stride up to the one step.

"Oh, no," cried she, making a dash and falling back ignominiously as the brute darted suddenly aside.

"It's only play," added he. "Now then, hold him in," he cried to his groom. But though the servant held on vigorously with both hands, each time Ellen tried to jump up, each time the beast pirouetted aside.

"If you *could* be very quick," cried the brigade-major, despairingly; "he's really a very quiet beast."

And Ellen, mentally wondering what an unquiet beast must be if this was a quiet one,

collected all her energies for a final bound; and, after taking off a large patch of leg against the scraper, to her great surprise found herself on all fours, but *in* the carriage.

"Brava!" exclaimed her companion, as if her ascent had been accomplished in the most easy and graceful manner; and, himself struggling in in almost as undignified a style, he clutched the reins and the whip, and off they started. For some minutes—hours they seemed to Ellen—the vehicle executed a series of bewildering evolutions; now in mid-air, now on the brink of the sea-wall; now backed into a bullock-cart, now apparently about to take a flying leap over a Shigram; then all at once the snorting and jerking and plunging, and rearing and struggling ceased, and the horse went easily and swiftly forward.

"You see it's only play!" said his owner, now able to return to his bland drawl. "I'm

afraid he made you a little bit nervous. He's a first-rate Waler, a capital beast if you treat him judiciously. He's kicked dozens of carriages to bits in unskilful hands; but he knows his master!"

"Are all horses in India like this?" she inquired.

"Ah. Yes. Some better, some worse. But, you see, they're badly broke. Get tricks by constantly changing hands. You'll hardly believe it; when I bought this creature I had to blind him while I mounted. He really was almost dangerous. And look at him now!"

He certainly went well enough now, but the ears constantly laid flat, the wicked eyes ever turning, and the inclination to attack every beast they met, made Ellen long for the drive to be over. It was only seven o'clock, yet the sun was unpleasantly warm, and as Ellen looked back and saw the ser-

vant running far behind, she asked her companion to stop.

"He can't overtake us," she said, "and he'll get so hot, poor fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed he. "I beg pardon; but new comers are so refreshing in their ideas. You don't think a nigger deserves a lift, do you? Why, he'll run like that for hours. It's cold weather now, too."

In this first drive in India, two things struck her; that all the horses were white, and that Bombay looked like an American settlement. Blocks of big houses stuck about here and there, immensely wide new roads without side walks, young avenues of trees, shops more like "stores" than European shops, and ugly, tumble-down native houses, looking like hotbeds for dirt and disease. Farther on, they came to bungalows in large compounds; some all stucco, neglect, and

waste; some—very few, comparatively—substantial, well-kept, and comfortable.

"Are these nice houses?" Ellen asked.

"I should think so," her companion replied. "You won't see anything like this in Bengal. Wretchedly uncivilized presidency that—excepting Calcutta, of course, and Simla, I suppose. You'd better stay here, and go no farther."

Then Ellen began to ask a little about the new friends she was about to make, and learnt how many thousand rupees the general drew monthly; what a jolly old chap he was, and what good dinners his wife gave.

Ellen had never seen a live general, except at reviews; and, like the country bumpkin, who thought the queen always went about crowned, and holding the crown and sceptre, so she had a vague idea that she should find General Willis crowned with cocked hat and floating feathers, and his compound full of

aides-de-camp and buglers, with perhaps a few elephants carrying gorgeous howdahs waiting his pleasure.

"There's the bungalow," was the announcement at last; and, looking to her right, she saw a large, square, yellow-washed house with a flat roof and verandahed all round, standing in a sandy waste bounded by a plantain hedge. Through two yellow gate-posts, almost shaved into points at the bases by heedless wheels, the white horse swung rapidly, and by dint of dexterously clutching the hood, Ellen kept her place inside the buggy, and by the like manœuvre she kept her seat also when the vicious beast came to a sudden full stop under a projecting bamboo portico.

At first sight the place seemed deserted. Huge hanging blinds of grass or reed hung before all the doors, and large screens shaded the outside of the verandah. But as the

buggy stopped, a voice came from the dusk; and presently a gentleman of middle age appeared, carelessly dressed in morning wrapper and slippers, and holding a newspaper in his hand.

"Oh!" he said. "So you succeeded, Howth. Glad to see you, Miss Longworth. How will you get down? Fly, jump, or have a chair? Here, boy, Khidmutgar, Khansamah, Bootler, here, some one! Bless me, are they all asleep, I wonder?"

"Miss *Longley*," began the brigade-major, reprovingly.

"Ah, ah. Longley. Yes, I once knew a Miss Longworth; that's how I got it wrong. Oh, here's a chair," as three or four servants came running up, each carrying a chair.

And then he asked each man as he came up, if he'd be good enough to keep within call, and confine his sleep to twelve hours a day instead of twenty-four. And by this

time Ellen had got safely down, and was formally introduced to General Willis.

So this was the general? no military show of any kind. Yes. On the other side of the house waited two orderlies—native soldiers, to take the letters and papers through the dangerous sunshine scatheless. That was all.

"I always sit there in the morning," he said, pointing to a dark corner, where were a table, three chairs, a bit of matting to preserve the slippered feet from the stone floor, and—it must be told—a brass spittoon. "But come in. My wife's dying to see an English face with the bloom on. But I warn you. Don't give in to her, or she'll make you open all your baggage to see the latest fashions."

A blind being lifted, Ellen entered what was at first utter darkness, so strong was the contrast from the outer glare; but soon she saw she was in a large, lofty, whitewashed

room, full of beautiful furniture and exquisite flowers, lacking nothing but mirrors and windows to make it home-like.

"Oh, she isn't here," the general said, as he entered the empty room; "then she's either tubbing herself or the child, or making the butter or puddings, or cutting out my new pants. This is her busy time, Miss Longley; but come with me, we'll find her. Howth, we needn't keep you now. Come and breakfast at eleven, if you like."

Passing through an inner room totally unlighted, except from other darkened rooms, Ellen and her guide entered a bedroom—a bare, whitewashed barrack-like place, with only matting over the floor, and two plain unpainted bedsteads standing in the middle, under a large punkah. Round the room well away from the walls, and standing on frames, were ranged tin boxes. A few chairs, and two little tables—teapoys, as they are called all over

India, were the only furniture, if furniture it may be called, the room contained. Finding no one here, the general pushed open another door, without going through it, and Ellen caught a glimpse of a light outer room, containing dressing-table, drawers, and other comfortable necessaries; and beyond, again, was a smaller room—the bath-room.

"Not here! Oh, well, she must be in the godown," he added; "come along."

There were no less than six doors in the bedroom, some opening on the verandah, some into the inner rooms. Unceremoniously enough the general conducted her through his own dressing-room, where open portmanteaux appeared to perform the office of drawers, and where the dressing-table consisted of the top of a large rough packing-case on tressels, covered with a newspaper, upon which were displayed such hairbrushes, combs, and shaving apparatus as are fur-

nished to soldiers by Government. Thence they passed into the farther verandah, each end of which was walled in, to form two small rooms, one where the khidmutgar kept the crockery, and glass, and one the godown in question.

There was no room for them to enter this latter, it being already full. A lady, with a loose chintz jacket over her crinolineless petticoat, red slippers on her stockingless feet, and her hair à la chinois, or as à chinois is supposed to be, scraped upward, and twisted into a tight knot at the top of her head, was seated in the midst of every kind of grocery, grain, and liquor. Large scales were beside her, and weighing out different things according to her directions, were cook, mussalchee, and khamsamah, servants answering to our cook, kitchenmaid, and housekeeper, while outside stood two or three syces, waiting for the horses' food; a sweeper, waiting for the

poultry's food; and the cow-keeper, waiting for the cow's food, the daily consumption being given out by the mistress's hand, custom and method making the apparently tedious task easy and short.

"Mat, my dear," cried the general, before whom the servants were salaaming, "here's our young lady come; come, haven't you done yet? She wants chota haziri, and everything else; and she's got the latest fashions by heart."

Here he turned and nodded to Ellen, for her to appreciate his bait.

"Is she, indeed!" cried Mrs. Willis, jumping up. "Well, I've just done. I am very glad to see you, dear," she said, giving both her hands to Ellen. "I hope my appearance doesn't frighten you, but here in India we have lots of dirty work to do, so must dress accordingly. Matty," she added, darting back, and

bringing out a little pale girl, who had been amusing herself grubbing in a sack of grain, while a bearer stood over her flapping away the flies, "come along, and let us make ourselves smart. My dear Miss Longley, how glad you must be to feel firm land again. Come with me, your room is ready for you."

Her kind voice and words cheered poor Ellen. She was not amongst strangers any longer; the sallow face so grotesquely framed beamed with good nature, and the cordial way in which she was installed in her room did away with the forlorn impression she was beginning to feel. In less than an hour mother and child came back to her, both considerably improved by tubbing and dressing. Mrs. Willis wore pretty fashionable clothes, her hair had been considerably augmented, and she looked what she really was—a stylish, well-bred English lady.

The general had made a less elaborate

toilette, having merely exchanged his slippers and dressing-gown for dilapidated boots, and an equally dilapidated suit of gray alpacca. Captain Howth, coming in in brilliant staff uniform, brightened up the dark dining-room, where they all partook of a wonderful breakfast-dinner, the breakfast intimated by the tea and coffee, soup alone being wanted to make it a regular dinner. The pale child sat by her father, precociously observant of the servants; her bearer stood by her chair to keep off flies, to wipe her lips, to lift her cup for her, and to cool its contents occasionally by a vigorous blow with his mouth, while another servant brought her the various dishes to choose from.

She was never checked in her whims, never admonished when she made an impatient speech in Hindustanee at one or other of the khidmutgars. Her behaviour was a matter of course evidently, but Ellen thought to herself that the child's puny appearance was

due less to the climate than to her treatment, an opinion she often had occasion to repeat in her after-Indian experience.

Captain Howth was very amusing; he had plenty of local gossip for Mrs. Willis, and he was very facetious to his new friend.

"I nearly missed my breakfast owing to you, Miss Longley," he said. "My house has been besieged by curious friends to find out who you were. We evidently created a sensation this morning. We met nearly all the station, I think. You will have lots of visitors to-day, general."

"Poor lads," cried the general; "order a good tiffin, Mat."

"I'll do no such thing. I know these youths; they'll take any trouble to see a pretty face and get a good tiffin, but never trouble themselves to be civil on ordinary occasions. Miss Longley must be tired too; she shall rest all day, so as to enjoy a drive to-night."

"Nay, nay," the good-natured general pleaded. "Boys are but boys, Matilda, my dear; let them have a treat. Miss Longley, these poor lads left home too young to have learned all their manners correctly, but they mean well enough. You'll not grudge them an hour or two, will you?"

Ellen laughed and blushed. "Are young ladies so scarce as to be matters of curiosity here?" she asked.

"There are young ladies and young ladies," said the general, gallantly; "but I promise you this, I'll see all that call in my office first, and I'll only bring in the nicest; that'll do for you?"

Mrs. Willis laughed. "They are all nuisances," she said, "but I suppose we must be victimized sometimes."

Captain Howth evidently wished to make a good impression; he said he felt bound to act as Ellen's brother, Captain Longley having

placed such confidence in him; and then there was a long discussion as to the best way of passing her safely and pleasantly on.

Mrs. Willis advised the general to request a colonel and Mrs. Wallace, who were going in charge of detachments to Jubbulpore, to take her with them; but the general objected, that their progress must necessarily be slow, and that at two of the places where the men must rest between Bombay and Nagpore, there would be no extra accommodation.

But Ellen caught at the idea of going with them, "if they would take her. She didn't care how slow they went." And at last it was settled Mrs. Willis should ask them to dinner; and Ellen could make their plans agree, if possible.

"And I suppose you'll want to come and give your opinion," Mrs. Willis added to the brigade-major, as she rose from table, "so we'll find you a place at dinner."

He looked delighted, and expressed his thanks quite rapidly for him.

"He's a good creature," Mrs. Willis said, as she and Ellen seated themselves cosily in the drawing-room, "and has sterling qualities under all that finery; has private means too—not a mere soldier of fortune as the dear general was when I picked him up at Woolwich. We lived on captain's pay for years, and it was when I was obliged to look after things that I learnt how to do them properly at the least expense; and now, when we needn't be so particular, I keep up my old ways, from the mere force of habit. But in India, if you want things nice, you *must* do them for yourself."

It was quite a novel idea for Ellen. What, have to cook and work? It destroyed all her ideas of Indian idleness.

Mrs. Willis laughed. "Ah, you'll be let down easily, I hope," she exclaimed. "I was

the most helpless girl when I first came out, and nearly cried my eyes out for the first year or two, but now I enjoy the independence vastly, and don't at all want to go home. This is really a delicious climate, except just before the rains; but Bengal, of course, is very different. I do pity you going there, poor dear!"

Then the general brought in two young officers in undress uniform, who talked to Mrs. Willis, but looked at Ellen. After ten minutes of this the general started up.

"Now, boys, we mustn't interrupt the ladies' gossip," and off they had to go, without having dared to address a word to the young lady beyond good-morning.

Presently two more appeared,—one sucked his mustachio and said nothing, and the other talked very agreeably. They were allowed an extra five minutes, and then they also were dismissed by the general.

"Do they always go about in pairs?" asked Ellen.

"Well, don't you see it's rather warm for riding at noon even now, so two of them drive in a buggy."

There were no less than fourteen visitors, all gentlemen; but as three of them had been fellow-passengers, and Ellen was really glad to see them, it was not altogether a formidable morning. As soon as the clock struck two all danger of more intruders was over, canonical hours being strictly enforced in India.

At five the ladies drove out, the pale child having previously started in her bullock-cart with her ayah and bearer. Her pony was in attendance, in case she should wish to ride afterwards. A large slice of cake, a doll, and a book accompanied her, to prevent tedium; and the anxious mother ordered a warm cloak to meet her at the band.

"You'll think I spoil her," she said, "but

I can't forget the five little graves belonging to us in different parts of India."

"Five!" cried Ellen, in dismay.

"Yes," was the answer, while the kindly face became darkened. "Five of all ages. When I lost the first I said I should never be happy again, but I am no worse off than hundreds of others, and I try to think it is best for my little darlings."

They had hardly got out of the compound, when Captain Howth, in mufti more elaborate and striking even than his morning costume, came riding towards them.

"Going to the band?" he asked, gracefully saluting both ladies.

"Of course. You, equally of course, are not?"

"Well, they've a good programme to-night, so I think I'll go," and he reined his horse beside the carriage, and kept his place there throughout the drive.

The scene was not only novel but picturesque; the crowd of vehicles, some so dashing some so absurdly old-fashioned,—the badly-trained horses, either dangerously fresh, or jaded and broken-kneed,—the servants' gay dresses,—the uniforms,—the ladies' extravagant toilettes,—the fair children decked out like puppets,—the sea stretching away placid as the serene unclouded sky above it,—the islands, with their palmy crowns,—the long reach of low shore, and the sweet harmonious music, amused, delighted, and soothed Ellen's wearied senses. In such a scene she felt kindly towards every one, with a deeper feeling in her soul of gratitude for the love that had brought her so far in safety, and raised unexpectedly such good friends for her in her need.

With such feelings softening her beautiful eyes, and English bloom still on her cheeks, no wonder she was an object of general admi-

ration. There were plenty of pretty young women there, but she had the charm of novelty, than which, alas! to most of us there is no greater attraction.

"There are the Wallaces," said Captain Howth; "the colonel has turned out full fig to dine with the general. Look at the gold spike on his white helmet; it's twice as high as ours, to make him look taller."

Passing them at the moment Ellen only saw a little couple, both black-eyed, and of very upright carriage, the gentleman in uniform, and the lady in very gorgeous clothing.

"When we are going out to dinner," Mrs. Willis said in explanation of the flowers instead of a bonnet, that astonished Ellen, on Mrs. Wallace's head, "we dress before we drive, and go to our rendezvous direct afterwards. It's a very convenient custom, and saves time and making two toilettes."

"Colonel Wallace says he's of Spanish

extraction," drawled the brigade-major; "drank too much coffee in his infancy, as we say when the native blood shows markedly. Did you hear what old General Boyce said when he heard Wallace was going home last year, Mrs. Willis? 'Home!' he said; 'why, the bazaar is his home!'"

"They are so illnatured," cried Mrs. Willis while she laughed; "it's lucky you are not a brunette, Miss Longley. Every person who has the misfortune to have dark hair or eyes is declared to be half-caste in India. I was glad of my red hair for the first time in my life when I came out."

"I always judge by the knuckles," Captain Howth said; "they're unmistakable guides. Look at Wallace's to-night; they're black at the bone, you'll find. But he's a good little fellow, and she's really a brick."

Besides the Wallaces and Captain Howth were two civilians at the dinner-table. Ellen

fell to Colonel Wallace's care, but the brigade-major managed to be seated on the other side of her. After dinner, as the evening was voted cold—Ellen finding it hot enough for a midsummer night—they sat in the drawing-room instead of the verandah, the usual evening resting-place, and the Wallaces favoured them with a duet. It was astonishing what a volume of sound the little man brought out, and what energy Mrs. Wallace displayed with her thin little hands. The noise disturbed the pale child's slumbers on the farther side of the bungalow, and she presently came screaming into the drawing-room, pursued by ayah and bearer.

"I thought it must be a hati got in," she said, as she found security on her father's knee.

Hati being explained to Ellen to be the Hindustanee for elephant, she was able to join in the general laughter. The general

laughed till he cried. As for Captain Howth, he was obliged to go outside for a few minutes, to loosen his stays, Mrs. Wallace whispered; but the Wallaces themselves were well amused with the child's idea, and the interruption to the vociferous song was not unpleasant.

When Ellen sang, with a full, sweet voice, carefully trained by first-rate masters, the child sighed, and betook herself from her father's arms to squat, native fashion, on the carpet by Ellen's feet, looking up admiringly at her face. The general was delighted with the little girl's good taste.

"There, Miss Longley," he exclaimed, "there's sincere applause. You cannot have truer praise than she has unconsciously given."

"May I kiss her?" said the child, as her father raised her from the floor.

"I don't know," the general answered

gravely; "young ladies are not fond of kissing generally."

Captain Howth was standing meantime with a sentimental look of intense admiration; and when he bade Mrs. Willis "good-night," he said in a fervent aside,

"What a heavenly voice, what a sweet soul!"

"Whose—Colonel Wallace's?" was the malicious reply.

END OF VOL. I.

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