A Man of Mystery

Mrs. HARCOURT ROE

Virden -

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April 1915

With loving Xmas
greeting from
her sincere friend
Bessie Gurst

Xmas 1899

THE BACHELOR VICAR OF NEWFORTH.

BY

MRS. HARCOURT-ROE.

'The Vicar is vigorously drawn, and the perplexities and difficulties in which he finds himself are imagined with some cleverness, and described with an ingenuity which keeps them, though somewhat sensational in themselves, within the limits of probability.'—*Guardian.*

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The 'Bachelor Vicar of Newforth' was reprinted in America by Messrs. Harper Brothers.

JAMES BLACKWOOD & CO., LOVELL'S COURT, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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MRS. HARCOURT-ROE,

AUTHOR OF
'THE BACHELOR VICAR OF NEWFORTH,' 'WHOSE WIFE?' 'DORIS,'
'A FRIEND IN TEN THOUSAND,' ETC.

LONDON:
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A MAN OF MYSTERY

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS DWELLING.

In one of the most secluded parts of Dartmoor, half-way up a towering, rock-capped hill, stood an ancient farmhouse, built of granite, the walls solid and of a tremendous thickness, but the whole aspect of the place was desolate in the extreme. The windows were small, their diamond-shaped panes admitted little light; the woodwork of the doors, casements and wainscots was rotting, the flooring broken from age. The ceilings were low, and grimy from the smoke of past fires, while the scanty furniture was of the oldest description. The kitchen, a large apartment some twenty feet by sixteen, contained a long worm-eaten oak table, a set of oak chairs, curiously carved, but black with dirt, a few rude and primitive cooking implements. The flooring was of flagged stone; the passages and numerous lower rooms were paved with stone also.

A straight staircase, almost resembling a ladder, led to the upper story, which was divided into a large number of small rooms, some with one tiny casement, some without any light save that which came through the imperfect roofing. The sides were sloping and the architecture most irregular, leading one to suppose that many a secret hiding-place might be contained within the walls. During wet weather the rain came through the holes in the roof, while large patches of damp, mould, and mildew were visible.

The furniture upstairs consisted only of a few very old wooden bedsteads, here and there a pitcher and basin, and several most uncomfortable wooden stools and chairs.

The farm outbuildings were large, and built of granite; they were entirely deserted and empty: even the rats seemed

to have forsaken them. The court-yard was grass-grown and moss-covered: what had been a garden was now a wilderness. The unpruned trees of the orchard were so choked with weeds and rank vegetation that they had long since ceased to bear, while even the oak-trees beyond were stunted, and, although thick and bushy, did not average ten feet in height.

The deep silence was broken only by the screams of the curlew, or the shrill whistle of the stone plover and the lapwing. The sparrow hawk, the different species of harrier, and the buzzard might at times be seen, otherwise of life there was none. In spite of the exquisite views afforded by the wild and rugged scenery, the dells and ravines below, the moorland stretching for miles around, it seemed a spot either unknown to, or avoided by, the pedestrian; for weeks, nay months together, no one climbed the rugged bridle-path leading to the farm gate.

One evening in spring, a man and a woman arrived at this house. She was tall and commanding-looking, about forty years of age, with a clever and resolute face, every feature expressing intense determination. Her figure was slight but wiry; to judge by her appearance she was a woman possessing great powers of physical endurance as well as strength. She had ascended the long steep hill without once pausing to take breath, although her companion, who was younger and very distinguished-looking, had stopped every now and then to admire the beautiful views.

They went through every room in the house in silence, and, the inspection over, stood facing one another in the old kitchen.

'Will it do?' asked the woman doubtfully.

'It must be made to do,' replied the man with decision.

'About furniture?' she asked, still with an air of irresolution quite foreign to her nature.

'Name what is absolutely necessary; let it be as little as possible.'

He laid some slight stress on the word 'absolutely,' and kept his eyes fixed on her face as he awaited her reply. She gave it with evident reluctance, not as if she were naming her own wishes, but repeating a lesson.

'Some mattresses are necessary, a few blankets and sheets, certain cooking utensils and tools.'

'They shall be sent.'

Books?' she asked doubtfully.

'None,' he replied firmly, 'save those of our faith.'

'Not for myself?'

'Not for yourself.'

'Carpets?'

He smiled and looked at her.

'We shall not require carpets,' she continued hurriedly.

'It is well you have remembered,' he said coldly.

She glanced at the doors with some uneasiness.

'None of the fastenings are secure. Ought there not to be locks and bars?'

'For whose benefit? To keep the inmates from going out, or the outside public from coming in?'

'Both. There is a convict prison on Dartmoor, you know.'

'I do. You shall have a couple of loaded revolvers, which you well know how to use' (she shuddered), 'to protect you from outside perils, but as to bolts and bars, I refuse them; if the inmates wish to go, by all means let them. You are not going to be Superior of a Roman Catholic convent.'

'Is *nothing* more to be sent?'

'Food and coal.'

'And when *you* come?'

'I shall fare as you do.'

'You could not have chosen a more secluded spot; is the seclusion to be complete?'

'Absolute for as long as I please, or, rather, until the lessons have been learnt, and the work—the real work—accomplished.'

'Do you think it will ever be accomplished in this busy, hurrying world?'

His eyes lit up as he replied, 'It *shall* be done.'

'And when do we take possession?'

'To-morrow evening. You will find the articles you requested already here when you arrive.'

She gave a slight sigh.

He held the door open and looked at her.

'The door is open, the world is before you; go now if you would rather.'

She fell on her knees before him.

'I will not go; I will never know any master but you.'

'Rise,' he said coldly; 'it grows late, we must return;' and, in complete silence, they departed.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHALLONERS' HOUSE.

From Mrs. Henry Worsley, Rosemount, Penlist, to Miss Ethel Hatton, Newforth.

'MY DEAR ETHEL,

'I arrived at Saltash without any accident, and found Mr. Challoner—looking the picture of middle-aged and somewhat fat good health—ready to drive me to Penlist. His first words were: "Why, Gertrude my dear, how remarkably handsome you have grown since your marriage!" This being an undeniable fact, I did not contradict him. I cannot tell why, but the mere fact of being engaged causes most girls to go off for a time terribly; sometimes I think it must be the worry of the lover, and sometimes of the trousseau. You yourself, Ethel, though you are so happy, have grown much thinner of late, and I am truly glad your wedding-day is fixed for next month.

'Penlist is a lovely little village, built on the slope of a hill, so that some of the cottages overhang one another. They are such charming, picturesque, tumbledown, dirty cottages, covered with ivy outside and full of confusion inside; the people are hearty, genial, somewhat proud Cornish folk, whose manners are primitive and their customs not always pleasant to strangers. But we grow used to everything in time. The church is on a little hill by itself; the graveyard slopes down all round it. There are queer old monuments and head-stones in the midst of rank grass, on which the horses and cattle are turned in to graze. The church is very ugly; it is cold, bare and neglected. But there are such lovely winding lanes, and such glorious sea-views and rocky shores and headlands, that one doesn't care much about architectural beauties.

'Talking of these, I must tell you such a good story. The

Challoners' house, Rosemount, is most comfortable to live in; there is a long large drawing-room, beautifully though not *splendidly* furnished: one doesn't feel afraid to sit down on the very comfortable chairs and sofas, and there are little alcoves in the walls with just room enough for two, with a hanging basket of flowers in front to prevent (I suppose) people's faces being seen too plainly by the public. (Sometimes I quite forget I am married, when I consider how charming those alcoves are for flirtation.) There is a large dining-room also, with massive furniture, and silver, and a few pictures, everything very good and very solid, but made homelike by the profusion of flowers they put about everywhere, as we should like to do at home, only, having no gardener and no hothouses, we cannot very well manage it in December; but the air here is so mild that even now we have quantities of winter roses. Then there is a charming breakfast-room, with pretty hangings, and water-colours on the walls; and as for the bedrooms, they are perfection: the freshest of furniture, the softest of beds, the most luxurious of sofas. Everything in the house is in keeping and in perfect order. Well, I was going to tell you that, delightful as Rosemount is, it has not the smallest pretensions to any sort of architectural beauty. It is a large, low, rambling stone building, presenting the appearance of a row of cottages; the kitchens and out-offices are at the back and form a quadrangle, in the midst of which is a small flower-garden and a fountain. The lawn in front is fringed with trees, and slopes down to the beach, and from all the windows there is a glorious view.

'I step from my room on to the veranda in the morning, and admire the beautiful little bays and headlands, and listen to the roll of the waves as they break on the shore.

'It is very pleasant for people, no doubt, to live in mansions of pure Elizabethan or Queen Anne architecture (poor Queen Anne! let us hope she cannot now see the erections put up as belonging to her period), but there are corresponding advantages appertaining to those humbler individuals who dwell in *houses*, and can study the dictates of convenience according to their own sweet will, without being bound down by the iron law of tradition of what is due to the estate or the family.

'Whenever Mr. Challoner wanted an extra room, he built one on to the end of his house, without caring in the least whether it were artistic or scientific; it was quite enough for him that it was useful. And yet the *tout ensemble* is really very pretty. Ivy grows thickly over the walls, and, as the seasons come round, there are Pyrus Japonica and Jachmaneye in blossom, and great clusters of splendid roses, and scarlet Virginia creeper, finally holly, so that altogether the Challoners are very proud of their abode.

'But pride goeth before a fall!

'Mr. Challoner praised his house so warmly one day at the Plymouth Club in the presence of an eminent architect, that the great man asked permission to visit Rosemount, and received a cordial invitation to lunch there the following day.

'During the journey, which he took in company with Mr. Challoner, he discoursed eloquently on the various orders of architecture, Greek, Egyptian, Indian, Arabian, Norman (all of which were quite unknown to his host), and at last asked him to which order his house belonged.

'"Oh," responded Mr. Challoner cheerily, "it is English, essentially English."

'"Ah, Early English," replied the architect.

'What he saw when he arrived in view of the much-vaunted dwelling gave him, Mrs. Challoner says, a shock from which he will never recover. He had taken a three hours' journey to see a simple rambling cottage! She declares that he instantly averted his wrathful gaze and rushed away, tearing his hair; but, as a very excellent luncheon was ready, and as even the most æsthetic of architects must eat to live, it is much more probable that he sat down and made a very good meal. It unfortunately was the first of April, and the great man firmly believed he had been made an April fool!

'Mrs. Challoner is charming. She is about forty-five, but looks younger. She has a bright, clever face and quick, energetic manners. Her husband thinks her perfection, as I am inclined to think a great many men would believe their wives (men with all their strength and supremacy being creatures easily led when the right means are used), if these same wives would make as much effort to be agreeable to their husbands as Mrs. Challoner does. I never could

understand why some women think that as soon as they are married they need be no longer entertaining, but must become old frumps and fogies. Every man likes a laugh and a little bit of fun, and I intend to keep up that system with Harry.

'As to Rose, she is greatly altered since we were at school with her. She has grown lovely. Her features are small and refined, but her whole soul seems to shine through her marvellous gray eyes. She is a most intellectual, spiritual (or *spirituelle* is the better word) looking girl, and seems to me as if she had too much mind for her delicate little body. She looks too ethereal, but she is *wonderfully* pretty.

'Someone else thinks so besides me, for who do you imagine is down here now, and is Rose's very shadow? Jack Ashworth—dear old Jack Ashworth. His father lives in the only other gentleman's house there is in the place, and is a dear old man. Don't you remember how we all used to play together years ago, and what firm friends our fathers were?

'Jack was delighted to see me. He took both my hands, and gave me a hearty kiss; he has grown *such* a fine fellow. Then he walked me off to his father, with whom I have fallen in love. He is a fine, stout, hearty old gentleman, just as thorough a sailor as father, only rather more polished. He has a very comfortable house and large garden, and, unlike most naval officers, has money of his own. I believe he has twelve hundred a year besides his pay, out of which he is so kind as to give Jack six. Think of that! almost half his income; but he adores Jack.

'They wish me to stay here as long as I like, and although dull is no name for the life we lead as far as amusements go, I am yet extremely happy. Besides, it is so convenient to be near Plymouth. The moment Harry's ship comes in he can telegraph for me to join him, which you may be sure I shall do upon the wings of the wind. You may imagine how little there is to do when I can write you such a long letter, but now at last I will conclude, and with best love to all remain,

'Your affectionate sister,

'GERTRUDE WORSLEY.

'P.S.—I wonder if there *could* be any excitement or mystery ever connected with such a sleepy place as Penlist.'

CHAPTER III.

DR. FELL.

'HERE comes Jack Ashworth,' said Mrs. Worsley, looking out of the window; 'it would really save a great deal of trouble if he lived in the house altogether.'

'He does not come every day,' returned Rose Challoner.

'He is certainly here six days out of seven,' said Mrs. Worsley with a slight shrug.

The subject of the conversation came up the garden with a quick step, and entered one of the French windows of the dining-room without ceremony. He was a tall, well-made young man, with a fair complexion and burnished locks. He possessed the man-of-the-world look and keen, bright expression of a clever young barrister of the present day. He had honest blue eyes, and he looked you straight in the face as he spoke. His voice had a hearty, genial ring. It was very evident that on the whole he found the world a good sort of place to live in, and that he had scant sympathy for those of his acquaintance who had discovered that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

A vigorous vitality caused him an immense amount of enjoyment in the mere fact of living, and made him think lightly of such minor troubles as darkened the days of some of his friends. He was great at all outdoor and athletic sports, and he lived the life of a healthy young English gentleman.

'Well, girls,' he exclaimed as he entered, 'I have a piece of news for you.'

'I am glad of it,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'for it will be the first I have heard since I have been here.'

'I told you Penlist was dull before you came,' said Rose.

'But *I* am not dull, and Penlist is charming, my dear. Now, Jack, what is it?'

'There is a gentleman rejoicing in the name of Fellerman come to stay here; a bachelor—think of that, girls!'

'But what is that to us?' asked Rose; 'I don't suppose we shall make his acquaintance.'

'I say you will, if I choose. He has brought a letter of introduction to pater from Major Lothian, and I am going to look him up this afternoon. I'm afraid he won't find his quarters at the inn extra luxurious, especially at Christmas-time. Should he be in any way presentable, I really think we must put him up ourselves. That is to say, on condition you leave him to Gertrude, and don't flirt with him yourself, Rose; for look you,' continued the young man with some earnestness, 'that won't do.'

'I am not aware that you have the smallest right to control my actions, Mr. Ashworth,' replied Rose, laughing.

'Not *yet*,' returned Jack significantly.

'And allow me to observe that I am married, and married women don't flirt,' said Mrs. Worsley.

'I am glad I have come down to Arcadia!' said Jack, raising his hands. 'Married women, who live in the world, and are young and handsome, don't flirt! Truly we live and learn.'

'Well,' returned Mrs. Worsley, instantly changing her ground, 'if a woman really love her husband, it doesn't matter if she flirt with one hundred and fifty other men, because she will never let them go too far, and will always keep them in their proper place.'

'And if she *don't* love her husband?'

'Then it's playing with edged tools—a sport best avoided.

'And suppose *they* break their hearts, madam?'

'Their hearts! Talk about Arcadia! *you* must have come from that region, Jack. Do you really suppose that men of the world in the nineteenth century, who go in for flirtations with married women, have hearts? If they have any (which is very doubtful, their affections having been mostly frittered away piecemeal), it would do them a great deal of good to find it out.'

'Upon my word, you are a moral young woman!' returned Jack. 'Pray what does your husband think of your sentiments?'

'He agrees with me, because he is so honest and true himself, and he knows he may safely trust me to enjoy myself.'

'Well, flirt away with Fellerman to your heart's content;

in fact,' with a glance at Rose, 'I shall be very much obliged to you for doing so.'

'Fellerman sounds foreign; is he English?'

'I know nothing about him. Major Lothian is merely an acquaintance of pater's, whom he has met at the "United Service," and his letter was very short. If I stay to lunch here, you girls may walk with me to the village afterwards, when I can pay my call.'

'*May* walk! How truly kind! I said you might as well live here altogether, Jack,' replied Mrs. Worsley. 'And are *we* to call also?'

'*You* may; you are a married woman, and can take care of yourself. It would be a slightly marked and unusual step in flirtation.'

'*I* flirt!' returned Mrs. Worsley, with some scorn; 'let us first see what he is like. If he isn't a man of the world, nothing will induce me to do so. I have some conscience, though you may not think so. Other men *do* take things seriously, and I have not the slightest wish to have a "blighted life" laid at my door. Now I will go and find Mrs. Challoner.'

'Jack,' said Rose gravely, as Mrs. Worsley went away, 'I wish you and Gertrude wouldn't talk as you do. It seems to me to dishonour love to make it appear as if, as if —you know what I mean.'

'I do know, dear,' he replied, with equal earnestness; 'but you also know that we say a great deal that we don't really mean in the way of small-talk. It is sometimes thought that in the present day we are hypocrites, and take pains to appear better than we are; but I assure you the fellows I visit with often go on just the other tack, and are ashamed to acknowledge how much real good is hidden away in their hearts. And as to Gertrude, where would you find a more honest or better girl, or one more devoted to her husband?'

'Exactly,' said Rose with warmth, 'and therefore I don't like her to do herself injustice in her conversation.'

'You are too particular, my dear; you mustn't take life too seriously. But I will do my best to conform to your views—one day.'

'That is another thing,' said the girl, interlocking her fingers nervously; 'I wish you wouldn't——'

'I wouldn't what?'

'You wouldn't——'

'I must teach you to finish your sentences,' said Jack, looking with honest admiration at the girl's delicate flushed face; 'you mean you wish I wouldn't take things so much for granted. Well, in truth I *don't* take them for granted. I am waiting before speaking plainly, because, on my honour, I am quite in the dark as to your feelings, and I am literally afraid to risk a refusal.'

At this moment Mrs. Worsley re-entered, an open letter in her hand.

'This is from my sister Ethel,' she said; 'she wants me to return shortly. She and Mr. Manly will soon be married. Ah, talking of men, there is a man for you. Who would wish to flirt with *him?*'

'Not fascinating enough, I suppose,' returned Jack coolly.

'Quite the reverse; but because one respects him so much. You frivolous young men can't hold a candle to him.'

'He is a parson; he ought to be good.'

'That isn't the reason. If you men only knew how often women would rise to your level if you were to take life a little more earnestly and truly, you wouldn't have to complain of us for being flirts.'

'I declare I will go home if this sort of thing is to be the order of the day,' said the young man good-humouredly. 'As a general rule I come here to talk and laugh, but to-day, while you were out of the room, Rose gave me a sermon, and you are now following suit with obnoxious good advice. Now, both of you, don't try to do me good. I haven't any moral strength of character, and I pity you if you are going to rise to *my* level.—Ah, Mrs. Challoner!' as a handsome lady came in, 'I never was so glad to see you in my life. These girls are pitching into me right and left, and, I give you my word, I haven't done anything at all.'

'Never mind them; I will take your part, Jack. And now lunch is ready, you might as well stay.'

'I am getting seriously uneasy as to the amount of food I consume in your house. Oughtn't I to send you a sheep or two every now and then?'

'Sheep?' said Mr. Challoner, coming into the room, 'we haven't room for them. They would get into the garden. Well, my boy, when are you going back to town?'

'My numerous clients must wait, sir. I believe I have once had a brief. I really shall be obliged to marry a lawyer's daughter.'

'I would,' replied Mrs. Challoner.

'But other paths of glory are open to me,' said Jack, laughing. 'I'm thinking of giving up the Bar and taking to literature; I have been writing for years past.'

'*You* have?' asked Rose. 'How is it we have never seen any of your works?'

'Simply because they have been going the rounds without managing to obtain the dignity of print. But I had one short story accepted by the *Family Herald*—I suppose they were hard up for copy at the time—for which I received two guineas. On the strength of this I gave a supper party, and I'm not at all sure that the transaction paid.'

'Go on with your lunch,' said Mr. Challoner, helping himself to more roast beef. 'If you were as hungry as I am after a hard morning's digging, you wouldn't have time to talk nonsense.'

'But why dig, sir? *cui bono?*'

'If there is one thing more than another that I dislike, it is Latin quotations, sir,' retorted Mr. Challoner testily, his face very red from his exertions; 'I always think that people who use foreign languages don't know English.'

'I don't know English,' returned Mr. Jack humbly, 'and that is why I want to take to literature. I can strike out a line of my own, as other young authors have done.'

'You are a young puppy, sir,' said his host, laughing.

The December sun was still shining feebly, the air was sharp and frosty, when the young people set out for the village. They had no great distance to walk, only some half-mile down a narrow lane, the hedges of which were bright with holly.

'We will go to the church, Jack, while you pay your visit,' said Rose. 'I promised to put up some holly. Will you call for us there?'

He walked up the churchyard and left them at the porch, whence his quick steps soon took him to the Rose and Crown, a primitive village inn built of weather-beaten stone, and thatched. The landlord, a fisherman formerly, was standing in the doorway, smoking the strongest of coarse tobacco in a clay pipe, his coat off, his shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbows. A long, untidy stone passage went

through the house from front to back, both doors of which being open, the draught was, as the landlord complacently observed, enough to blow your head off. Two very dirty children peeped forth from the bar on the left hand, while on the right was the inn parlour, a shabby low-ceiled room, with worm-eaten furniture, a worn drugget, a small diamond-paned window, and a chimney built presumably on the principle of the minimum of expense added to the maximum of discomfort. No one could prevail on the fire to burn continuously; it went out on an average four times a day.

The gentleman who rose to receive Jack Ashworth on his entrance was a strange contrast to his surroundings. He was a tall, elegant-looking man, some thirty years of age, with a dark, clear, brown complexion, very handsome, strongly marked features, and large dark eyes. He expressed his acknowledgment of Mr. Ashworth's visit in a few well-chosen words, spoken with the accent of a cultivated gentleman.

'You must find this place wretched,' said Jack, glancing as he spoke at a tray, a very old tray, containing half a glass of water, the remnants of a piece of bread, and the rind of an orange.

'Surely,' he thought, 'the man hasn't been lunching on *that*.'

Mr. Fellerman smiled; it was a most peculiar smile, and certainly not a pleasing one.

'I do not regard the discomfort,' he replied.

'You smoke, I suppose,' said Jack, hoping to find common ground.

'I do not.'

'Do you drive, ride, walk, how, in fact, do you get through your time?' asked the usually self-possessed young man, by this time conscious of a thoroughly uncomfortable feeling that Mr. Fellerman was deriving quiet amusement from his conversation.

'I have enough to occupy my time; I do not find it hang heavily,' he replied.

Jack looked round the room. There was neither a newspaper nor book in it, nor could he see any writing materials. He absently took up a china ornament representing an impossible shepherdess and put it down again; he did not know what to say next, and could not account for his own stupidity.

'Major Lothian—' he began, and paused.

'Major Lothian is only a casual acquaintance of mine,' returned Mr. Fellerman affably. 'I happened to mention Penlist, and he offered me a letter of introduction to your father, Admiral Ashworth. I am quite at a loss to know why he should have done so. He had been dining, I believe.'

This was scarcely a desirable opening for a Christmas invitation, and Jack felt it.

'I suppose Major Lothian knew what he was about,' he said somewhat hotly.

'Quite so,' replied Mr. Fellerman with a smile which seemed to convey to Jack, 'How very young you are!' 'I merely meant to convey that his dinner had made him kindly disposed; I believe he feared I should be lonely here.'

'You certainly would if it depended on *me*,' thought Jack, who had suddenly taken the most unreasonable dislike to the new arrival; and with a few formal words he took his leave.

Mrs. Worsley and Rose Challoner were decorating in a most primitive fashion, simply tying up bunches of holly to the corners of the high pews, encouraged in their work by the old clergyman, Mr. Morris, who lived in a cottage near and led a most secluded life.

'We are ready now,' said Rose, after some five minutes had elapsed.

It still wanted four days to Christmas, but in Penlist the custom of week-day service did not obtain; it would really have seemed to the fisher-folk an injury to the seventh day to make the other six religious, in their sense of the word. Mr. Morris occupied himself with his books, and worked in his garden, and chatted amiably with his neighbours, and his weekday work was done! On Sunday he held two services, and read two sermons from a printed copy of one of the divines. A better-hearted old man never lived, and Mrs. Worsley gave it as her opinion that, judging by his expression, he had quite enough religion to take him to heaven.

'Come and see pater,' said Jack, as they left the churchyard; 'you haven't been to our place this week.'

The windows of Ashworth Lodge were gleaming red, large fires were burning in most of the ground-floor rooms,

and the blinds were not drawn down. The Admiral was sitting in his armchair by the library fire, smoking his favourite pipe.

'Pray don't put it out,' said Mrs. Worsley; 'we like smoke. Father always smokes at home.'

But the Admiral's courtesy would not allow of this: he put his pipe aside and held her hand affectionately.

'I am not presentable to ladies, my dears,' he said, pointing to his coat and slippers.

'If pater had known you were coming he would have got himself up regardless of expense, wouldn't you, old boy?' said Jack, looking with admiring eyes at his father's really fine figure and handsome, honest face.

'He is much nicer as he is,' said Mrs. Worsley, seating herself on a low chair beside the Admiral, with whom she was a special favourite. 'I think you have the nicest father in the world, Jack.'

'And how about this Fellerman?' said the Admiral, when he had responded to the compliment.

Jack retailed his experiences, adding, 'It's out of the question to invite him here.'

'Isn't he a gentleman, my lad?'

'He is quite a gentleman; he has a very good manner.' And then Mr. Jack dilated on the subject of the tray with the glass of water. 'Were he to come, he would probably drink cold water on Christmas Day.'

'Not he,' returned Admiral Ashworth; 'he will know a good glass of port when he sees it.'

'Do have him,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'because we want to see him.'

'You hear what the ladies say, Jack,' continued the Admiral; 'ladies' wishes are supreme here. What harm can he do you if he knows how to behave like a gentleman? Are you afraid of your morals, my boy?'

Jack laughed.

'I suppose I must give in, but I tell you plainly I don't like the man.'

'If that inn were even decently comfortable I wouldn't urge it; but I couldn't eat my Christmas dinner in comfort if I thought any gentleman had to dine at the Rose and Crown. The whole place stinks of smoke and dirt, and what must the bedrooms be like?'

'Where ignorance is bliss——' returned Jack. 'Well, have it your own way, pater; but, mark my words, you will live to repent it.'

'Do you think he will steal anything?' asked Mrs. Worsley.

'I don't think he will steal the spoons,' said Jack, laughing.

'Perhaps he will steal our hearts,' replied Mrs. Worsley, glancing at Rose, who was standing by the mantelpiece, the firelight playing on her dress of rich dark-red and her delicate face.

'I will back myself against him,' said Jack, with some contempt. 'I hope you remember, Gertrude, that *you* are to flirt with him.'

'It takes two to make a bargain,' returned that plain-spoken young lady; 'and if Harry's ship comes in I would not stay for all the Mr. Fellermans in the world.'

It was getting very late, but the Admiral would not hear of their leaving until they had partaken of tea—not a company afternoon tea, but a real tea, with jam, and cakes, and sweetmeats, and cream, and apples, after which they declared dinner would be an impossibility. So by the time they really left the house it was late, and a brilliant moon was shining, lighting up the wide sea with silver, and whitening the bare branches of the trees.

The keen, frosty, exhilarating air made their voices ring; they were in absurdly high spirits, and opposite the church all three joined in a hearty peal of laughter.

As they turned the corner of the lane they found themselves face to face with Mr. Fellerman, who raised his hat.

'Introduce him, Jack,' whispered Mrs. Worsley.

'I can't introduce people in the dark,' returned that young man.

'It is as light as day.'

Jack saw no help for it; he performed the introductions curtly, and Mr. Fellerman walked down the road in a line with them, and between Rose and Mrs. Worsley. He gave a keen glance at the latter, looked her well over, yet withal with perfect politeness, and then turned his eyes on Rose. At this moment her full face was visible; she looked very lovely yet very fragile in the moonlight. A quick gleam almost of triumph passed over his countenance, and was instantly suppressed as he made some commonplace remark about the fishing in and round Penlist.

He took his part, but no undue part, in the general conversation until they reached Rosemount, when he bowed his farewell. He had strolled on a few steps, and was looking at the moonlit, peaceful little bay and shore beneath him when Jack joined him.

'My father hopes you will transfer your quarters from the inn to our place to-morrow, and spend Christmas with us,' he managed to say courteously, devoutly hoping and expecting an unhesitating refusal.

'I shall be most happy,' replied Mr. Fellerman readily.

It was a blow to Jack.

'Good-night,' he said quickly, 'and we shall expect you to-morrow morning.'

He turned his back and entered Rosemount with a quick step.

'You here *again!*' exclaimed Mrs. Worsley. 'Why, you said good-night to us only a minute or two ago.'

'You are very welcome, Jack, notwithstanding,' said Mrs. Challoner kindly; she was sitting by the drawing-room fire with a book in her hand. 'Stay to dinner, won't you?'

'I *do* live here, it's quite true,' replied the young man. 'Talk about sending a sheep! why, a whole ox once a week wouldn't keep me, to say nothing about what I drink! But the fact is, I came back because I couldn't stand walking home with that man.'

'I have yet to learn that guests pay for the food they consume,' said Mrs. Challoner with a smile. 'I have never grudged you a meal here, Jack, as you very well know.'

'I do know it. Well, Mr. Fellerman won't cost much—he drinks water!' said Jack with some disgust.

'And a very good thing, too, for a young man,' replied Mrs. Worsley with decision. 'Why do you dislike him so much?'

'I don't know.'

'"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell"—

and his name being Fellerman, that piece of poetry will just suit;' and Mrs. Worsley burst into a hearty, ringing peal of laughter.

'What is the matter, my dear?' asked Mrs. Challoner.

'I was thinking of our morning conversation—how I was

to flirt with him. In fact, Rose was afraid a species of "Sorrows of Werther" would be enacted, only I don't suppose she has ever read the book; and now, as it happens, he won't look at me.'

'You cannot possibly tell in this time,' replied Jack.

'Oh yes, I can; he gave me a look which said as plainly as words can speak, "Some people may call you handsome, but *I* don't admire you."'

'And what of Rose?' asked Mrs. Challoner.

'He scarcely spoke to her,' returned Mrs. Worsley, considerately mindful of Jack; 'but I think he liked her the best. Well, to tell you the truth, *I* don't like him.'

'Go and take off your things, girls, and never mind dressing to-night,' said Mrs. Challoner. 'It is long past the dinner-hour. Jack, you know your way to Mr. Challoner's dressing-room, and I wish you would ask him to come down.'

He went into the hall and laid his hand on Rose's arm.

'Tell me,' he said quickly, 'do *you* like him?'

She flushed crimson.

'I do not know him,' she replied.

CHAPTER IV.

ANTIPATHY.

'You will find the girls in the breakfast-room,' said Mrs. Challoner the next morning as Mr. Jack came up the lane. She was standing at the garden-gates, wrapped in a thick shawl, watching the gardener cutting some evergreens.

'I want you instead of the girls,' said Jack, linking his arm in hers affectionately. 'Take a turn round the garden with me.'

It was a beautiful winter morning: a slight frost had fallen in the night and outlined the branches of the trees; the air was cold, but clear. They took the path leading towards the beach, and stopped at the fence which separated the lawn from the shore.

'What had I better do?' he asked gravely. 'I must go back to town, and I don't want to go in this uncertainty. For the life of me I can't tell whether Rose cares for me or not.'

'I am sure she does,' replied Mrs. Challoner warmly.

'Oh, I know she is fond of me after a fashion,' said Jack doubtfully; 'living like brother and sister in the same place, as we have done all these years, it would be odd if she were not; but you see I want something more. If she can love me with all her heart, I shall make her a good husband, I know I shall, but a girl with only half a heart won't keep me straight. You know I always speak to you as I would to my own mother, and you know perfectly well that a fellow who goes out a good deal and mixes with society, which perhaps isn't always as good as it should be, wants a happy home as a set-off to the attractions which, rightly or wrongly, he meets with elsewhere. Now, I don't think I have ever done anything very bad, but, judging by other men, I can't tell what I *might* do.'

'I am sure you would not go wrong.'

'I don't know that. I feel that, if I once discovered

Rose didn't really love me, I should grow thoroughly reckless. In our set we all talk as if there were no such thing as real love, and yet I see fellows hard hit often enough. We don't go into raptures, and press girls' likenesses to our bosoms and weep over them,' continued Jack with a laugh; 'but I have seen men's faces grow very hard, and white, and lined when things have gone wrong with them. I fancy it's in me to be harder hit than most fellows. But in honesty I must add that the greater part of them recover to all outward appearance, and seem to enjoy a little unlimited loo, and so on, as well as ever.'

'You shall certainly never marry Rose if you play unlimited loo,' said Mrs. Challoner firmly. 'Six hundred a year won't allow of *that*.'

'I don't play unlimited loo: it's mostly the men whose affairs are not quite straight who go in for that—and other little diversions. Surely you can trust me.'

'I *can* trust you, my dear boy,' said Mrs. Challoner warmly, 'and in this matter you must use your own judgment. I have spoken to her on the subject, and all she says is that she does not know. But she knows how greatly we all wish it.'

'That's the worst of it,' returned Jack; 'it has been made too much of a family affair. Pater wishes it, Mr. Challoner wishes it, you wish it, I wish it; I, thou, he, we, you, they, we *all* wish it, except, perhaps, Rose herself. Perhaps I had better go away and say nothing. Couldn't you get up a report that I am paying desperate attention to someone else, so as to make her jealous?'

Mrs. Challoner laughed.

'I am afraid that plan would hardly succeed. She holds very determined views about the dignity of love; somewhat unpractical views, I am afraid.'

'I fear she *is* a little intolerant,' said Jack; 'we must take the world as we find it. Suppose we were married, and I wasn't quite up to the mark, what then?'

'I cannot answer for *her*,' replied Mrs. Challoner with feeling, 'but it seems to *me* that when a woman really loves a man she ought to forgive him until seventy times seven. It is not love, but sheer selfishness, for her to expect that every lawful pleasure must come through or in connection with her, and I have no patience with it. I quite agree

with you, Jack, that it is often the fault of good women when their husbands go wrong. It is an admirable thing to sew on shirt-buttons, and order your household well, and, if necessary, even with your own hands cook your husband some extra delicacy for his dinner; but if these good works necessitate your making his home dull, they will not answer. For myself, I do not see why these and brightness and happiness should not be combined.'

'Spoken like a book,' said Jack, 'and well spoken, too. But all the argument hinges on this: *does* she love me? I don't want to be conceited, yet somehow it does seem to me that a girl *might* like me.'

'I don't want a greater proof that you are really in love than your doubt about Rose,' said Mrs. Challoner kindly; 'if you were not, you would have no hesitation as to your own attractions. If I were a girl I would marry you,' she added, laughing. 'Well, think it over, and do as you think best.'

The young man shook her hand warmly.

'I won't go and see the girls,' he said. 'I will think this over.'

He placed his hands on the fence as he spoke, and jumped over on to the beach. After walking some little way along the shingle he climbed the rocks, on which, even on this calm day, the spray was dashing. The sea was a soft dull gray, the sun a vivid crimson ball in the now misty sky. Jack stood up and watched some fishermen passing in their boat. But his thoughts were not with the outward world just then, for all his heart was full of an honest love, a love that few but young men are able to give, interwoven with tender thoughts and fancies such as older men sneer at ofttimes and call 'romance.'

In the midst of his reflections he remembered Mr. Fellerman, and supposed it was incumbent on him to go round to the inn. He wended his way very slowly, stopping every few minutes to return the hearty greetings of the village folk. He inquired for Mr. Fellerman at the Rose and Crown, and was told that he had paid his bill before going out for a walk. The landlord, who to all appearance might not have moved since the day before, dilated wrathfully on the sins of the newcomer.

'Times is bad, Mr. Jack, but I'm glad to see his back,

that I am. And what sort of a bill do 'ee think hisn was?'

'I hope you didn't ruin him,' replied Jack.

'I had no sort of chance, sir. He come into this 'ere 'ouse night afore last, went to bed without no supper, except a glass of water. The next mornin' had a glass of water; yes, sir, *water* in December, for his breakfast, with a slice of bread and a bit o' fish. For his lunch bread and water and an orange, and, would you believe it! never broke his fast the whole day afterwards. This mornin' he had bread and water and a bit o' fish. Now, Mr. Jack, I don't hold with such ways.'

'You really shouldn't tell me all these private details, Polwheel,' said Jack, laughing. 'Depend upon it your wife's cooking wasn't good enough for him, and he dined elsewhere.'

'That he didn't, sir. He sat here the 'ole blessed day doin' nothin', and staring into the fire, and let it go out so many times that my missus were fairly driven frantic. I don't say as it's a good drawin' chimbley, I know it *ain't*; but if she lit that fire once she lit it twenty times. And there sat the gentleman as calm as you please, not makin' no complaint, but only sayin' at last, "Your fire seems a great trouble to you." At length I made so bold as to walk in and to ask him to ring if he wanted coals or anythink, but he only smiled peculiar-like, and said it was of no consequence. Certainly he giv' me five shillin's over when he paid his bill.'

Jack groaned in spirit. What manner of man was their Christmas guest?

'And when is he coming to my father's, do you know, Polwheel?' he asked.

'No, sir; his luggage is here all ready.'

Jack saw a couple of neat portmanteaus strapped up in the passage, portmanteaus which had no distinguishing mark, being neither old nor new, neither large nor small.

'Tell him we shall expect him to lunch, will you? and I will send round at once for these traps,' he said, inwardly rejoicing that Mr. Fellerman was out.

He found himself wondering what the man's Christian name could be as he walked on. The initial letter on the luggage label was A. What did A stand for? Anastasius,

Alfred, Albert, Antoninus. Pshaw! what did it matter? And yet this stranger was a source of profound worry to him. But that it would have breathed so strongly of distrust, he would have asked his father to write there and then to Major Lothian, asking him what he knew of Mr. Fellerman's antecedents.

Admiral Ashworth was in the dining-room, arrayed in his best coat, when the guest arrived. The Admiral held old-fashioned views, and was of opinion that any visitor of his was entitled to all honour. In spite of Jack's declaration that all preparations would be wasted save oranges and bread and water, a very good luncheon was on the table: a hot pigeon-pie, a cold chicken and a ham, and a piece of cold corned beef, sweets, cheese and celery. As for stimulants, they were not wanting. There were three decanters of wine, a jug of good old ale, and a jug of cider. The appointments of the table were good, handsome glass and china, and the most solid of silver.

Mr. Fellerman entered at once into easy conversation with his host, on whom, Jack perceived, he at once made a good impression. The talk ranged over the foreign countries the Admiral had visited when on service. But there was no country to which he had been that Mr. Fellerman had not lived in, and about which he did not know every manner and custom. Not only so, he was conversant with the language, he knew the public buildings, he was even acquainted with the names of the streets, showing that he had actually resided in the towns he mentioned.

'You are a great traveller,' said the Admiral at length. 'What countryman are you?'

'It would be hard to say,' replied Mr. Fellerman with a smile. 'I consider myself cosmopolitan. My father was of one nationality, my mother of another. I was brought up in strange lands, and my education finished in others.'

'Your accent is thoroughly English.'

'I have been told my accent is thoroughly French in France, and thoroughly national in other foreign countries.'

'I like a man to belong altogether to one country or another,' said Jack; but to this aggressive remark Mr. Fellerman deigned no reply.

On sitting down to the table, he had partaken without hesitation of pigeon-pie, and drank a glass of sherry, not

needing to be asked a second time, but without displaying any of the eagerness of a man who had lately lived at starvation-point. Jack began to think that, perhaps, Mr. Polwheel's statements ought to be taken *cum grano.*

'How were you off for a dinner at that wretched inn?' he asked bluntly. 'I should think Mrs. Polwheel's cooking was vile.'

'I did not trouble her,' returned the guest; and Jack fancied his lips formed the additional words, 'As you very well know.'

The Admiral, with the fine courtesy that always distinguished him, had said at the beginning of the meal, 'We are rather celebrated for our water here. This comes from a very deep well of my own'—pointing to a carafe of water—'but I am very glad to see that you, like ourselves, drink sherry.'

'I will also take a glass of water,' replied Mr. Fellerman. 'Your son is perfectly aware of my proclivity in that direction;' and Jack began to wonder whether it were possible that the landlord could have repeated their conversation, but decided in the negative. He looked up and saw the stranger's eyes fixed upon him, a smile on his lips, and Jack felt furious.

'I will not seek to entertain you,' said the Admiral, 'as doubtless business of your own brought you here. In that case, pray make use of my house as if it were a hotel; but should you have spare time at your disposal, I am sure my son will put you in the way of any outdoor exercise you may desire. I have a horse which is at your service, and Jack will doubtless lend his boat.'

'Certainly,' replied Jack formally.

'You are most kind, sir,' returned Mr. Fellerman gravely; 'but I am so deeply indebted to you for your spontaneous hospitality that I will not add to my obligations by trespassing either on your or your son's time. I shall not ride, and I shall not row.'

'What are you going to do, then?' asked Jack bluntly. 'I don't think life is worth living without physical enjoyment of some sort, and first and foremost give me riding.'

The former part of this speech Mr. Fellerman ignored; to the latter he replied:

'I differ from you entirely. It is my opinion that all *real* enjoyment is mental alone, and can be realized only through the brain and soul.'

'But that is absurd,' said Jack, who, quite against his will, found himself continually making uncourteous speeches to his guest; 'for as long as we have bodies we must enjoy ourselves with and through them.'

'I suppose you grant our wills——' he was proceeding to say, when Jack, to his own amazement, rudely interrupted him and said, with something of a sneer:

'Oh, you are one of the new-fangled will-worshippers, are you?' He looked up, and, seeing the expression of concern on his father's face, added hastily, 'I beg your pardon.'

'As to will-worship, it is a subject known but to few of us,' said Mr. Fellerman slowly. 'Still, I imagine he would be a foolish man who would deny the power of the human will.'

'That is all very fine,' returned Jack; 'but, as a rule, your people with very strong wills are simply supremely selfish people, who carry out their own wishes without caring what pain or inconvenience they inflict on others. Any man who does that can be known as a man of iron will; *my* name for him is a selfish brute.'

'Notwithstanding your remarks,' said Mr. Fellerman, 'I maintain that a man who has a right and good purpose should carry it out, though it be at any cost of suffering to others.'

'You wouldn't if you cared about people.'

'I would do it were my own nearest relatives to suffer,' returned the other with emphasis.

'Or your wife?' asked Jack hotly.

'Or my wife. I should not form a purpose did I not think it right; once formed, I should carry it out at all costs.'

'I am sorry for your wife,' said Jack, again with a slight sneer.

'I have no wife,' replied the guest.

That the conversation was drifting on to dangerous ground Admiral Ashworth plainly saw. To create a diversion, he rang the bell and ordered in his dogs, two splendid retrievers.

'You don't like animals, I imagine,' said Jack.

Mr. Fellerman smiled.

The dogs bounded in and received the pieces of meat given them by the Admiral and Jack with short barks of delight. Their meal concluded, Mr. Fellerman held out his hand. They ran to him and fawned on him, placing their great paws on his knees and rubbing their noses affectionately against his face. He looked so kindly at them that Jack, sorely against his will, was compelled to acknowledge that the guest had a marvellously attractive countenance when he pleased.

'I think we will ask the Challoners and Gertrude to dinner this evening,' said the Admiral. 'Run over, Jack, will you, and invite them. Will seven o'clock suit you, Mr. Fellerman?' he added.

'Any hour will suit me, sir,' replied Mr. Fellerman courteously. 'I have, in point of fact, no real business here at all, and I beg that I may in no way disturb the usual routine of your household. Were I to do this, I should feel compelled to leave your comfortable house.'

'Oh, I thought you only carried out your own purposes,' said Jack blandly.

'My purposes!' repeated Mr. Fellerman with scarcely veiled scorn; 'your father's arrangements are not part of my purposes,' and as he spoke he left the room.

'A truly pleasant guest!' said Jack. 'Well, pater, I hope you will allow I was right about him?'

'But I don't think you *are* right, my boy. You are very rude to him, you must allow——'

'I know I am,' interrupted Jack.

'And he sees that you dislike him, as, indeed, he cannot fail to do. But I find him a very well-informed, well-bred man; and see how the dogs like him!'

'Oh, if the *dogs* like him, of course there is no more to be said,' returned Jack, speaking almost for the first time to his father testily. In actual fact, he would have been rejoiced had the dogs turned away from their visitor.

'Dogs are wonderfully sagacious, my boy.'

'But consider, pater; by his own account he is a vagabond on the face of the earth, and utterly declines to give us any information concerning himself, except that he has no wife—and I'm sure on her account, poor thing! I'm glad of it. What made you propose having the Challoners to-night?'

'Simply to please you, Jack, and because I feared the conversation might come to a hitch between you two young men. But pray don't invite them unless you like: your wishes are my first pleasure.'

'I know, pater,' returned his son remorsefully; 'and I can't think what's the matter with me to-day. I'll be off at once and ask them.' And, taking up his hat, he went out.

The invitation was willingly accepted.

'And do you like Dr. Fell any better?' asked Mrs. Worsley.

'No,' said Jack, with whom the subject was becoming a very sore one. 'Come early, girls, and be sure you bring some music.'

'And what are we to do about Christmas Day?' said Mrs. Challoner, for it had been arranged that Admiral Ashworth and Jack were to dine at Rosemount. 'Should you mind our inviting Mr. Fellerman also?'

'Oh, I suppose he must come,' replied Jack ungraciously. 'He will ruin our Christmas for the whole of us, that's all.'

'Really, you are mad on the subject of Dr. Fell, Jack,' said Mrs. Worsley. 'To please you, I will really do my utmost to get up a second edition of the "Sorrows of Werther."'

'Yes, do,' he replied, laughing.

'It must be the Cornish air which makes me talk such nonsense,' she continued; 'at home I am a most sensible, strong-minded person. Why, during our late vicar's time I managed the entire parish.'

'You have sadly deteriorated, my dear,' said Mrs. Challoner. 'I am very glad your marriage has taken away your strong-mindedness, notwithstanding. I hope you may long continue so happy, for as a rule it is disappointed women who are strong-minded.'

'The law of compensation,' returned Jack. 'Now, Rose, look up all your best songs, and be sure you bring my old favourite, "When other lips."'

'I will certainly do so,' she replied; 'I will sing it twice over if you desire.'

There was a door of communication between Mrs. Worsley's and Rose's bedrooms; at the completion of the former's toilette she knocked and asked admittance from her friend. 'I want you to fasten my chain for me, dear,' she

said. She was dressed in dove-coloured velvet, and wore a sprig of holly in her dark hair and on her bosom. But at sight of Rose she held up her hands. 'My *dear* child!' she exclaimed, 'what possessed you to put on that white dress?—your best one, too! It won't be fit to be seen on Christmas Day, for you know we must walk there to-night: you will be crushed to pieces when your wraps are on.'

'There will be the same party to-night as on Christmas Day,' said Rose, 'and I thought I should like to wear it.'

She was looking rarely lovely; her delicate complexion was lit up with colour; her eyes shone; her white skin gleamed through the transparent folds of the tulle, revealing the outline of her beautiful bust; her arms were bare to the elbows.

'You certainly look very nice,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'but that frock is much too good to be wasted on Jack.' As she spoke, the idea passed through her mind that perhaps it was *not* put on for Jack. Being a young woman of prompt action, she at once sought Mr. Challoner, who, having dressed early, was standing with his back to the drawing-room fire, and wishing they were not obliged to go out.

'Are we to walk to-night?' asked Mrs. Worsley.

'Yes, my dear; and, bless me! how very handsome you are looking to-night!'

She made him a low curtsey. '*I* can walk well enough, Mr. Challoner, but you really must order the horse to be put in the brougham at once, for Rose has been putting on a thin white frock, and she can't walk in it.'

'Then she can take it off,' replied Mr. Challoner quickly. 'Highty tighty! *Must* have the brougham out for her! No, my dear, it can't be done.'

He looked up; his daughter stood in the doorway. At the sight of her his face literally beamed. As a ready, though most inelegant, mode of expressing his surprise and pleasure he exclaimed, 'My eye!'

'I hope you will now allow, Mr. Challoner, that the brougham is a necessity?' said Mrs. Worsley. 'Shall I ring the bell for you to give the orders?'

'Oh, I suppose so,' he replied, laughing. 'Poor paterfamilias has a hard time of it. Come here and give me a kiss, Rose.'

But when the brougham was brought round, Mrs. Worsley declined to enter it. The inevitable Jack had appeared on

the scene, and she elected to walk with him. It was a clear moonlight night, cold, but not cutting, the solemn white light bathed the lanes and church and graveyard and cottages. Mrs. Worsley stood still a moment and glanced upwards. 'Jack,' she said, 'doesn't it make you feel better, sometimes, to think of those great worlds moving above us? It does me.'

'I don't know,' he replied. 'I think men require to be either in great trouble or in great happiness before they bother themselves much about anything besides the world they live in: women are different, you know.'

The old church clock struck seven; they counted the strokes as they fell on the still air. 'We must make haste, Jack,' she said, 'we are late. Give me your hand and we will run.'

'Well done,' he exclaimed, as a very short run brought them to Ashworth Lodge, and almost into the arms of Mr. Fellerman, who, in evening dress, stood at the open hall door. He smiled, and to Jack his smile seemed again to say, 'You are very young; you are *both* very young.'

CHAPTER V.

THE ADMIRAL'S PARTY.

It was not often that a traveller above the social status of a fisherman arrived at the Rose and Crown, but scarcely had Mr. Fellerman departed than another visitor made his appearance. He had evidently walked some distance and looked tired; in his hand he carried a small portmanteau and he made no mention of any luggage to follow. His clothes were very shabby; there were shiny patches in the region of his shoulder-blades, and his cuffs and shirt front, though clean, were frayed at the edges. Notwithstanding, he looked like a gentleman, an out-at-elbows somewhat devil-may-care gentleman, who at the present moment was down on his luck. He wore a beard and moustache, in both of which a few gray hairs were perceptible; he had a good-tempered, rather handsome face; his figure was stoutly built and muscular, but his hands were the hands of a man unaccustomed to manual work; in age he might be about two-and-thirty.

The philosophy which Mr. Fellerman had displayed whilst in the uncomfortable inn was certainly wanting in the new arrival. He grumbled at the draught in the passage, at the shabby untidy room; he roundly abused Mrs. Polwheel for bringing in some bacon and eggs on a tray with a dirty cloth, and he almost swore at the smoky fire. His meal finished, he took out a pipe and began to smoke, laughing heartily as he remembered his previous bad temper.

It was the custom at Penlist for the village worthies to congregate after dark in the bar parlour, smoking the strongest tobacco, such as that favoured by Mr. Polwheel, and drinking the vile beer which that good man supplied them with. At present no one had suggested to them that they might in their leisure hours cultivate their minds, so as to entirely unfit them for their vocations, and they were under the impression that their time could not possibly be better

spent. Their talk ranged over a variety of subjects, delivered with a slow utterance, in jerky sentences, between the intervals of their pipes and beer. Newspapers they scarcely ever saw, and their ideas of politics were of the haziest; some sort of notion reigned among them, that one day there would be neither queen nor king, in which case bread would instantly go down to next to nothing in price, and meat would be reduced one half. Their chief interest lay in the local news: the take of fish, the doings up at the squire's—as Mr. Challoner was called—what the Admiral thought about the new way of curing the pilchards, how parson had set up spectacles and so on. The same amount of speech which would have been delivered by London workmen in half an hour, lasted these good folk some three hours, and they were evidently of opinion that their conversation left nothing to be desired.

When the cloud of smoke was at its densest the stranger entered the bar parlour, and sat down on one of the hard wooden settles. He noted in a moment the honest, weather-beaten countenances of the men, and, although he shuddered at the coarseness of the tobacco, he sat quietly on and listened to the conversation. A few civil remarks were made to him, and at length, when a nautical subject was introduced, the cause of some dissension, he gave his opinion freely.

'You have been to sea, sir?' said one.

'That I have,' replied the new-comer, 'for many years. It seems to me you are a little dull here; shall I spin you a yarn?'

The question was put to the vote and received universal assent. The visitor, who gave his name as Mr. Barnard, got up on to the table and sat there, swinging his legs to and fro, with his hands in his pockets.

His hearers were prepared to receive his narration a little disdainfully, but from the first he attracted their attention, and when he proceeded to describe a shipwreck, and the subsequent horrors and miseries endured by the captain's delicate wife, tears rolled down the faces of more than one man. It was evident that Mr. Barnard was a born orator; he was touching, he was humorous, he was passionate, he was grand. He ended his tale amidst breathless silence, which was terminated by a universal 'Hoo-ro-ar——'

Unheeding the demands for a second story made on all sides, Mr. Barnard alighted on the floor and went out. A breeze had begun to spring up, the clouds were rushing over the face of the moon, the waves were dashing on the rocks.

He walked through the village and stopped for a moment outside Admiral Ashworth's house, where lights were gleaming, and whence he could plainly hear the sound of voices.

'A nice Christmas *I* shall spend,' he said to himself bitterly; 'they say we reap as we sow, but when one makes a false step, it does seem an impossibility to retrieve it. They are probably happy enough in there.' But the situation within was not as happy as he supposed.

The first cloud had settled on Jack when the party went in to dinner. Admiral Ashworth had given his arm to Mrs. Challoner, Mr. Challoner his to Mrs. Worsley, while, naturally, the host directed Mr. Fellerman to take in Rose, intending that she should sit on Jack's left hand, and never dreaming that the young man would resent what was simply a compliance with the usages of society.

But he resented it deeply, and took his place at the foot of the table with a frown. The dinner was plain but good. There was no soup, but there was excellent cod, a pair of boiled fowls and a roast of beef succeeded, followed by a plum pudding, mince-pies, creams and other dainties, while the dessert was sumptuous. The table was decorated with holly.

'Christmas week,' said the Admiral, 'and to-morrow will be Christmas Eve.'

Without in the least intending to be rude, the eyes of most of the company turned on Mr. Fellerman at the commencement of each course. He partook of everything, not abundantly but sufficiently, and, as he received each different plate, he raised his eyes for a moment to those of Jack with a slight smile, who interpreted it as 'Did you think I did not eat at the inn because of stinginess?'

With Rose he entered into the deepest conversation almost at once. To her own surprise, although for a girl she was deeply read, she found herself discoursing with him on ethics, and at length drifting into such purely metaphysical talk that Jack looked at her in amazement, and heard quotations that astonished him, such as, 'There is in

man a higher than love of happiness,' and so on, until at last he could stand it no longer, and exclaimed:

'Whatever people may say, I think it's a jolly good thing to be happy!'

'And so do I, Jack,' returned Mrs. Worsley, who seemed to have made common cause with him against the enemy.

'Quot homines, tot sententiæ!' said Mr. Fellerman.

'Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret,' returned Jack, not to be outdone.

'I *detest* Latin quotations,' said Mr. Challoner.

Jack laughed, but Mr. Fellerman said courteously:

'I must apologize, sir, for being the first to offend you unwittingly; I was not aware you objected to them.'

This restored Mr. Challoner to high good-humour, and without further delay he cordially invited Mr. Fellerman to dine with them on Christmas Day.

'I shall be most happy,' replied that gentleman.

After dinner Jack secured Rose and talked to her during some half-hour.

'Who will give us a little music?' asked the Admiral.

Rose possessed a voice of unusual sweetness and power; she had received the best instruction, and sang really well. She now by universal request sat down to the piano. Jack unfastened her roll of music and took out 'When other lips,' or rather 'Remember me.'

Admiral Ashworth, Mr. and Mrs. Challoner and Mrs. Worsley were sitting round the fire; Mr. Fellerman was standing up at the other end of the room, his eyes fixed on Rose, who was looking, as before, rarely lovely.

She placed the music on the piano, played the opening bars of the prelude, when, turning round and giving almost an imploring glance at Mr. Fellerman, she shut up the music and left her seat.

'Are you not going to sing the song you promised me?' asked Jack.

'Don't be shy, dear,' said Mrs. Challoner.

Rose returned to the piano, reopened the music and played a few notes. Then, as before, she removed her hands from the keys, looked at Fellerman, who had remained standing at the other end of the room, and saying 'I can't sing,' walked away to the window, turning her back on the company.

They all looked at her in surprise, but their attention was quickly diverted from her to Jack, who, scarlet in the face, strode up to Mr. Fellerman and asked him in a furious voice what he meant by it.

'What *I* mean by it?' repeated Mr. Fellerman coolly. 'What do I mean by what?'

'Jack!' said the Admiral, in real concern at this uncalled-for outrage on the part of his son.

At this moment Jack, happy tempered as he usually was, felt that he would have given the whole world had he possessed it to have struck the other man in the face and knocked him down. Knowing that his self-control was entirely deserting him, he went out of the room, put on a rough pilot coat, and rushed down to the shore.

After a moment of grave dismay on the part of the company, Mrs. Worsley rose hurriedly and went to the piano.

'I can play without my music,' she said. 'I dare say Rose has taken cold with that thin dress on,' and she began to play some brilliant waltzes.

'Those are very pretty,' said Mr. Fellerman, joining her.

'Are you a musician?' she asked.

'No; but I understand something of music.'

The Admiral, who was more deeply chagrined than he cared to show, made an effort to join in the conversation, which turned on Christmas Day observances. Rose had left the window and joined the fireside circle.

'I like a good old-fashioned Christmas,' said Admiral Ashworth; 'holly and mistletoe, and feasting, both for rich and poor, and games and frolic, without losing sight of the religious aspect of the day first of all.'

'We have been religiously decorating,' said Mrs. Worsley. 'If you are an admirer of high art, Mr. Fellerman, you will scarcely find it at Penlist Church. We have tied up the holly in such a manner that I defy anyone who sits in the corner—and there are four corners to every pew—to lean back without wounding his head.'

'It will tend to devoutness,' said Mr. Challoner; 'but it was rather ill-natured of you girls.'

'I do not know that I shall go to church,' said Mr. Fellerman.

'Are you not Church of England?' asked Mrs. Worsley.

'I am not.'

'Roman Catholic?'

'No.'

The same unreasoning antagonism which Mr. Fellerman had roused in Jack was now experienced by Mrs. Worsley, also the same strange inclination to exceed the bounds of politeness.

'Are you any religion?' she asked bluntly.

'I am.'

'Gertrude, my dear, won't you play us something now?' Mrs. Challoner said hastily, and Mrs. Worsley gave a ready assent.

As she left the piano Mr. Fellerman said quietly to her:

'My faith is an almost universal one.'

'Does that mean you have none at all?' she asked sharply.

'By no means; quite the contrary.'

'But why do you dislike the Church of England?'

'I have never said I disliked it,' he replied calmly. '"A man ought to honour his own faith only, but he should never abuse the faith of others. There are even circumstances where the faith of others ought to be honoured, and in acting thus, a man fortifies his own faith and assists the faith of others."'

'Is that your own or a quotation?'

'It is a quotation.'

Mrs. Challoner looked at the clock on the mantelpiece and declared they must be going; it was a perceptible relief to everyone when the party broke up.

'Rose dear,' said her mother on the road home. 'Why were you so silent to night, and why would you not sing?'

'I did not feel inclined,' replied the girl wearily.

They had scarcely retired to their rooms when Mrs. Worsley knocked at the door of communication and entered, avowing her intention of having a chat over the fire.

'I am tired,' said Rose.

'No,' returned Mrs. Worsley, seating herself in a comfortable easy chair. 'That isn't the reason, my dear; you don't want me to say anything; but why put off the evil day? What in the world induced you to drive Jack frantic as you did to-night? Anything more insane than his onslaught on Mr. Fellerman I never witnessed, and yet, later on, I felt as if I could have done the same thing myself. Now, tell me, *why* wouldn't you sing?'

'If I told you, you would not understand; it is a thing I cannot explain.'

'You can try.'

'It was this, then,' returned Rose, flushing crimson, and turning away her face; 'Mr. Fellerman wouldn't let me.'

'Are you mad?' asked Mrs. Worsley; 'he never said a word to you.'

'I knew you couldn't possibly understand, but it is true. He *compelled* me to put down that music, the song that Jack had so specially asked for.'

'Stuff!' exclaimed her friend impatiently. 'I don't know which is the worst, you or Jack.'

'Jack knew why I couldn't sing.'

'You can't expect me to believe such nonsense, my dear.'

'Do you not know, Gertrude, how enormously one person can influence another; have you never felt it?'

'Certainly not in that way, and I don't believe in it. Well, good-night, my dear, and I wish you more sense for the morning.'

Downstairs Mr. and Mrs. Challoner were talking somewhat anxiously.

'He must have an outrageous temper,' said the former. 'Really, if this is what he is like, I don't care for him to marry Rose. He had absolutely no provocation to-night.'

'But he has *not* a bad temper,' said Mrs. Challoner earnestly. 'I cannot but think there was more than met our eye in this affair.'

'What could there have been, my dear?' responded her husband.

The guests had no sooner left Ashworth Lodge than Mr. Fellerman addressed the Admiral.

'I am greatly indebted to you for your kindness, sir, but I cannot but see that for some reason my presence annoys your son. It is my last wish to bring a discordant element into your house, especially at Christmas time, therefore I will, if you please, leave to-morrow morning.'

'Mr. Fellerman,' said the Admiral gravely, 'it is the first time in my life that I have ever had to apologize for my son, but I do so now. I cannot find the smallest excuse for his unwarrantable conduct to you to-night, and I beg you to overlook it; I am much pained that such an incident should have taken place in my house.'

'Pray don't mention it, sir,' replied Mr. Fellerman lightly. 'I suppose I must have offended him in some manner. I will now wish you good-night and good-bye, as I shall probably be off before you are down in the morning, and again allow me to express my acknowledgment of your kindness.'

'I cannot hear of your leaving,' said the Admiral, 'unless, indeed, you find my house uncomfortable.'

'Quite the reverse.'

'My son is all the world to me now, but in this instance he was plainly in the wrong, and I shall not hesitate to tell him so. I shall always feel it as a slur on my hospitality if you return to that comfortless inn.'

'In that case I will remain, sir,' and after shaking the Admiral's hand, Mr. Fellerman went upstairs to his comfortable bedroom, and sat in front of the fire, listening to the wind that was now shrieking round the corners of the house and making the ivy tap against the window-panes.

The Admiral remained lost in thought for a time, then rang the bell. It was answered by his man, who, with two maids, formed the entire staff of servants.

'Find Mr. Ashworth and ask him to come to me.'

The man returned shortly.

'If you please, sir, he isn't in the house; I have looked in every room; the maids say they saw him go out some time ago.'

The Admiral walked into the hall; Jack's favourite hat was missing. An unaccountable fear entered his mind. Was this extraordinary conduct of his the precursor of some illness? He had never known his son so unreasonable before; perhaps there was a cause for it.

'Go to the village at once, Stevens,' he said, 'and see if you can find him.'

'It's a roughish night, sir,' replied the man, who did not relish this task.

He had been comfortably settled in the kitchen, finishing the contents of the decanters, and as he told the maids while buttoning on his coat, 'he didn't think Mr. Jack wanted a nursemaid to bring him home of a' evening.'

He was absent half an hour; on his return he went into the drawing-room with his great-coat on.

'Couldn't find him nowhere, sir,' he said.

'Where did you look?' asked the Admiral anxiously.

'Everywhere, sir. It's as light as day outside, and the wind makes it bitter cold. I went all round by the church and the cottages, and called at the Rose and Crown, but no one hadn't seen him.'

Admiral Ashworth became seriously alarmed. He went upstairs and arrayed himself in a large wrap shawl and great coat, and ordered Stevens to precede him with a lantern in case the moon should hide herself.

'This ain't a night for you to be out, sir,' said Stevens; 'lor, sir, Mr. Jack can take care of himself much better than you. Who knows but he's off to Plymouth by way of surprisin' you with a Christmas present?'

The Admiral considered a moment; no, he felt sure his son would not be so unmindful of him as to frighten him thus, and, as he reflected, a deadly fear stole round his heart. What if Jack had missed his footing on one of the rocky points and was now lying helpless?

He wrapped his coat tighter round him, and walked on at a rate that made Stevens breathless.

'The old gentleman forgets his legs are longer than mine,' he muttered.

The village lights were all out, the church clock struck twelve as they passed. The churchyard looked very ghostly in the moonlight, and Stevens quickened his pace perceptibly.

'Did you call at Mr. Challoner's?' asked the Admiral.

'Yes, sir; they hadn't seen him neither.'

His last hope taken away, the Admiral hurried onwards to the shore, the wind blowing in his face and making progress a difficulty. On the beach he glanced round fearfully, holding the lantern himself, and throwing the light into every dark part, but there was no one there.

'Jack!' he called at length, 'Jack!'

There was no reply. Where indeed was Jack?

CHAPTER VI.

MR. BARNARD.

THE Admiral's shout was answered from above.

'Who calls?' said a voice, and Mr. Barnard jumped on to the rocks from the heights.

'I am looking for my son,' said the Admiral.

'Is he a tall, fair young man?' asked the newcomer.

Admiral Ashworth answered in the affirmative.

'I have been strolling about all the evening. I saw a young man come down here, and after remaining a short time he walked inland. Some hour ago I met him again, and watched him joining some fishermen on the beach. They were getting out their boat, presumably for fishing, and when she was afloat he jumped in after them.'

The Admiral looked out seawards. A heavy sea was running, the wind blowing on shore. In the cold clear moonlight he saw a boat in the distance pitching heavily. The same unreasoning dread again overcame the Admiral, who, as a rule, had always encouraged his son in many a dangerous expedition at sea. He now began to picture the wreck of the boat, her departure for a foreign port, or some other undefined calamity.

'I would give anything to get my son back,' he exclaimed.

'I think it might be done,' said the stranger. 'The boat is labouring to round the headland'—a small peninsula stretching far out into the sea—'by taking a smaller craft from the next bay one might cut across her as she runs in a little.'

'But the wind is against sailing.'

'The boat could be rowed.'

'I fear it cannot be done,' said the Admiral, with a sigh, 'those fishermen who are not out must have been fast asleep long ago, and by the time we could rouse them the boat would be past.'

A sudden gust of wind swept by, making him shiver.

'I will go myself,' said Mr. Barnard; 'I can manage a boat as well as any man, and I will borrow one of those from the further beach. You go home, sir, and leave it to me.'

As he spoke he began to cross the point separating one beach from the other. The Admiral and Stevens followed. By the time they were on the beach the stranger had selected a small boat, dragged her down, a feat requiring no little strength, and put off.

'Go home, sir,' he called out; 'it isn't a fit night for you. Your man can stay and bring you word.'

But this good advice the Admiral resolutely declined to take, although his hands were blue from cold.

'It's no manner of use for two of us to stay here, sir,' said Stevens. 'I will see to Mr. Jack; you ought to have been abed two hours ago.'

'*You* can go home, if you like,' replied the Admiral.

Stevens took him at his word, and departed at a brisk trot, reappearing, however, in an incredibly short space of time loaded with a fur coat, a rug, and some huge fur gloves, the whole of which articles he endeavoured to persuade the Admiral to put on.

The fur coat and gloves were donned with thanks, and the rug being declined, Stevens wisely put it on his own shoulders, shawl fashion. He had not entered Ashworth Lodge without making some noise—sufficient noise to disturb Mr. Fellerman, who put out his head and asked if anything were the matter.

'Mr. Jack hasn't come home, sir, and the Admiral is a-worreting, that's all.'

'Can I be of any service?'

'No, thank you, sir; he's in a boat off the shore.'

'I trust he will enjoy it,' returned Mr. Fellerman, shutting his door.

The boat with Mr. Barnard in her was getting on slowly. He rowed with all his strength, yet before he was any appreciable distance the other boat came round the point. Fortunately the bright moonlight caused her crew to observe him. He put up one of his oars, and signalled. In a moment her helm was altered, and she came flying in towards him. A short colloquy took place, and then Jack

prepared to leave the fishing-boat and join Mr. Barnard. But this was no easy matter, for a cross sea was running, and to bring the boats together was a work of some difficulty. They succeeded at last, and Jack, thoroughly drenched, got into Mr. Barnard's boat.

'Who could have believed that my father would have been in such a state of mind?' he said, as he helped to get up the sail, and then some conversation on the subject ensued.

'I knew it must be Admiral Ashworth,' said Mr. Barnard, 'from the description given of him at the Rose and Crown.'

'Oh, all our characters are hauled over the coals there,' replied Jack, laughing. 'I am sure, sir, we are awfully indebted to you; it's no joke to row on such a night.'

'Did you go out for pleasure?'

'Yes,' said Jack, with another short laugh, 'I suppose you would call it pleasure.'

The wind bore them on its wings. Before long the keel grated on the shingle, but in jumping ashore Jack was heedless in his impatience, and a huge wave broke over him. He laughed, and shaking off the drops, ran up to his father with outstretched hands. The old man grasped them, the tears standing in his eyes.

'Why, you dear, absurd old boy!' said Jack, 'what possessed you to come looking after a big fellow like me?'

But the Admiral's anxiety had been too real to suffer him to make a light reply. His son put his arm round him affectionately for a moment, and then went to Mr. Barnard, who, with Stevens's help, was beaching the boat.

'You are as wet as I am,' said Jack, looking at the other's dripping coat.

'It is not the first time sea-water has been over me,' returned Mr. Barnard, wondering the while how he should get his clothes dried in the wretched inn.

The Admiral expressed his warmest acknowledgments, and begged the stranger to return and sleep at his house, as the Rose and Crown would be shut up long before.

'In these parts they do not lock their doors,' said Mr. Barnard. 'I ascertained that I could get in at any moment before I went out.'

The invitation was again repeated, and again decidedly, though courteously, refused. The church clock struck two as they passed.

'Good-night,' said the Admiral, shaking the stranger's hand, 'and I shall call on you in the morning.'

'Good-night,' echoed Jack heartily. 'Now, pater,' he continued, 'what do you mean by your extraordinary conduct? An old man like you, who ought to know better, being out at this time of night!'

The Admiral detailed his uneasiness, adding:

'I never knew you act so unaccountably as to-night, my boy, and I couldn't think what was the matter.'

'I suppose I made an ass of myself,' said Jack, 'and I had better eat humble-pie all round. I can no more understand it than you do. Well, pater, if you catch your death of cold, it will be laid very justly at my door. But I never dreamt that you would know I was out. I thought I would go for a night's cruise with the lads, and be back before you were up in the morning.'

'Mr. Fellerman offered to leave the house, Jack. Do you wish it?'

'Oh no,' replied the young man carelessly; 'we must e'en make the best of him.'

'I am sorry he came.'

'Now, don't worry, pater. I'll be on my best behaviour after this. Go to bed at once, and I will bring you up some hot grog.'

The hot grog was quickly brewed by Stevens and Jack, both of whom partook of a tumblerful, and the Admiral went to sleep with a thankful heart. But at breakfast the next morning Jack's forbearance was not needed. Mr. Fellerman wished him a cheerful good-morning, and, making no allusion to the events of the night before, entered into general conversation. So agreeable did he make himself, that Jack asked himself at length whether it were possible that he had had too much wine and imagined the affront.

'I think I shall go to Plymouth to-day,' said Mr. Fellerman. 'Should I be detained, I shall probably dine there, if you will excuse me. I shall return before ten o'clock under any circumstances.'

'That was considerate,' said the Admiral, as he walked out with his son after breakfast. 'I really think he has good in him, Jack.'

At the Rose and Crown they stopped. The Admiral

said he would pay his visit of thanks, Jack that he would go on to the Challoners'.

'I must get the humble-pie over,' he said with a laugh.

Mr. Barnard was sitting by the fire of the inn parlour, dressed in garments still older than those of the day before. He looked remarkably shabby, but his face was fresh as to complexion, his beard and hair were carefully trimmed; that he was a gentleman the Admiral saw at once.

'This is a miserable place to spend Christmas Day in,' he said, after warmly thanking Mr. Barnard, and then a strong wish rose in his heart to invite this poor, or apparently poor, gentleman to stay with him.

'We cannot always choose our abode,' he returned. 'If I had a choice, it would not be for *this* place,' pointing to the old-fashioned ugly furniture.

'You handle a boat remarkably well,' said the Admiral. 'Have you been to sea?'

'For many years; and when in harbour I used to go out boating alone whenever opportunity offered.'

'Were you in the navy or merchant service?'

A perceptible shade passed over Mr. Barnard's countenance as he replied:

'I was, indeed I may say am, in the navy.'

'A brother officer!' said the Admiral warmly. 'I trust, then, that you will allow me to repay in part the very signal service you have rendered me by making use of my house. Come to us to-day, and stay as long as you like.'

'I thank you very much,' replied Mr. Barnard, 'but I must decline your kind invitation absolutely.'

'But why?' urged the Admiral earnestly. 'Surely you prefer my house to this inn. I have another guest whom I have rescued from Mrs. Polwheel's attentions, and you might entertain one another, to say nothing of my son, who, I am sure, will do everything in his power to make your visit pleasant.'

'You are very kind, sir, and I am quite certain I should enjoy my visit. It is, however, out of the question.' Seeing the grave look on the Admiral's face, he continued: 'Do you think my rig-out is suitable for a gentleman's house?'

'Dear, dear me!' exclaimed Admiral Ashworth, 'I don't care what your coat is like. Have you not already spoilt a suit of clothes in rendering me a service? My son

ruined his trousers, which belonged to his dress suit. You really ought to let me make you some compensation.'

Mr. Barnard laughed.

'If you had seen my suit, sir, I do not think you would say that any amount of sea-water would hurt it. *You* would not care about my coat, but your men, if you keep any, would care, and your maids would care, and I dare say your guest and your son would care. No, it is out of the question.'

The Admiral's face flushed red. He knew there was truth in Mr. Barnard's speech, and yet it was very painful to listen to it. He cast about in his mind whether he could offer him money, but was ashamed to do so, knowing what he would feel himself were a stranger to offer *him* money. His uneasiness was so perceptible that Mr. Barnard, moved by a sudden generous impulse, thought he would remove it.

'I may as well make a clean breast of it, sir,' he said quickly. 'My wardrobe is not the only reason I could not stay at your house. I should not care to stay at any naval officer's house.'

'I was wondering,' said the Admiral thoughtfully, 'whether your poverty arose from your being on half-pay, with perhaps a wife and children to keep.'

'I am on half-pay, but I am not a married man.'

A somewhat awkward pause ensued, during which Mr. Barnard poked the fire vigorously. Mrs. Polwheel appeared at the door, and exclaimed volubly, wiping her wet hands the while on her dirty apron:

'What will you be pleased to have for dinner, sir?—because you must remember as it's Christmas Eve, and we can't have much cooking about. What do 'ee say to a nice dish of eggs and bacon now?'

'I will speak to you afterwards,' replied Mr. Barnard, somewhat shortly.

The Admiral rose.

'I am sorry I cannot prevail upon you,' he said kindly.

The other man looked at his fine open, honest countenance, his benevolent expression, and took his resolution.

'If you will sit down again, sir, I will tell you my story. I am quite aware that you could find out all about me at Portsmouth or Plymouth if you chose. I am a naval chaplain.'

'Indeed!' said Admiral Ashworth, with some surprise; 'I should not have thought so.'

'Nor anyone else,' he returned bitterly. 'I am about as much fit for a clergyman as Polwheel is.'

'But why did you enter the Church?'

'I will tell you. I don't say it by way of excuse, but because it is a literal fact that I was almost forced into it. My father and mother were people comfortably off, but holding strong and gloomy views about religion. I never had a single enjoyment as a boy; but I was always forced to go to church three times on Sunday, and I hated church. The beauties of religion were never pointed out to *me*. As I grew up, my love of the sea, which had always been my strongest feeling, grew with me, and I determined that I would be a sailor. My parents were equally determined that I should be a clergyman. There was a very good living in the family, and they were very anxious that I should fill it. Many a battle did we fight, and more than once did I run away and join a merchant vessel, always to be found and sent back and punished. I was then too old for the navy, and the life on board the vessels I had joined was certainly of the roughest; still, neither I nor my parents would give way. I was a strong lad, full of animal spirits, and ready for any sort of fun and frolic, and the life of a parson appeared hateful to me.

'At last they suggested a compromise; it was that I should take orders and become a naval chaplain. After a time I consented to do this, having first been told that no money would be forthcoming to fit me for any other profession.'

'It was very wrong of your parents,' said the Admiral gravely.

'It was, and wrong of me to give in; but just then I didn't see my way to doing anything else. I went to Oxford, and thoroughly enjoyed my life there, much as other young fellows do. After the life of restraint that I had led it would scarcely have been natural had I not sown a few wild oats. However, I passed very good examinations, and after a time was ordained, with many qualms of conscience, I must own.

'I served in several ships, and the older I grew the more I hated my life. Had I been in the executive branch I believe I should have made a first-rate naval officer, and

been known very likely as a good sort of fellow; but as a chaplain I was a failure.

'Just because I knew I couldn't have it, I always felt a hankering after forbidden fruit, and every now and then I would join a card-party, where they were playing for far higher stakes than they ought, and sitting up till morning, when I knew I should have set them a better example. I used to feel like a hypocrite when I preached to them on Sundays, for I knew I wasn't any better than they were. When the men were ill I could go and talk to them genially enough; but all the time I knew I ought to have been talking to them on more serious subjects, and I had sufficient respect for religion to know that I could not do it. I heard them drinking my health one day, and the song added to the toast was, "For he's a jolly good fellow."

'Do you know, sir, that cut me more than anything. I knew I was a jolly good fellow, and that that was not the way in which the ship's clergyman should have been spoken of. As for the officers, I had worse than no influence with them; they all liked me, but they one and all estimated me at my proper value. I felt ashamed of my false position, and often and often resolved to give it up. And then this sentence would not go from me: "Once a clergyman always a clergyman." I had taken vows on me which could not be shaken off, and if I did not fulfil them I ought.

'It would have been easy enough if I had disbelieved in religion. I could then have gone on happily and carelessly enough, but I did and do believe in it.

'Well, I was wretched. Then one day I disgraced myself.'

'Don't tell me any more if you prefer not to do so,' said Admiral Ashworth; 'but I need scarcely say I will hold your confidence sacred.'

'I had better finish, sir. The long and the short of the matter is,' said Mr. Barnard, his face reddening as he spoke, 'that a woman got hold of me, an old hand, and a very designing one. I believe she thought I would have married her, as perhaps I ought. Well, anyhow the matter got known, and I was told no notice would be taken if I would go on half-pay, but I must never look for employment again.

'My father heard the news and was furious; he at once altered his will, leaving every shilling away from me, and I have never seen either him or my mother since; they have

both entirely given me up. I have got into debt, but as I have proved myself a scamp, is that to be wondered at?'

'And what are you doing down here?' asked the Admiral.

'I am looking about me to collect information on the Cornish fisheries. I have been asked to write a paper on them. I have occasionally contributed to magazines, and hope for permanent work. I have been told I should make a very good actor, but for a man who still is a parson that is scarcely seemly.'

'Have you told me all there is against you?' asked Admiral Ashworth gravely.

'I have: you will understand now why I could not visit at a naval officer's house.'

The Admiral stood up and considered a moment, then held out his hand.

'I repeat my invitation to you, sir; you have spoken out like an honest man. You have sinned, and you are reaping the fruits hardly enough; but who am I that I should judge you? What you have told me shall go no further. You have rendered me a signal service, and I should ill repay it by turning against you. You will be thoroughly welcome.'

Mr. Barnard shook his head sadly.

'Well,' continued the Admiral, 'you may change your mind between now and this evening, in which case I will send for your traps.'

Near the inn the Admiral met Mr. Fellerman, and spoke to him briefly of Mr. Barnard and his courage.

'But I can't persuade him to come to me,' he said, somewhat sadly.

'I think I will go and call on him,' replied Mr. Fellerman. 'I can condole with him as a fellow-sufferer from Mr. Polwheel's fire.'

He knocked at the inn parlour-door and entered. As for summoning anyone to announce him, that would have been quite useless. Mr. Polwheel was drinking his own beer in the bar-parlour, and Mrs. Polwheel was busy boiling the Christmas pudding in the imperfectly-cleansed copper.

Mr. Barnard was engaged in overhauling the contents of his portmanteau. Some old shirts lay on the floor, a hairbrush, from which half the hairs were missing, surmounted them, while all the garments in the portmanteau had evidently seen their best days.

Mr. Fellerman apologized for his entrance, and added:

'I am sorry you would not become my fellow-guest at Admiral Ashworth's.'

'Does *this* look like it?' asked Mr. Barnard, pointing to his portmanteau.

'Mr. Barnard,' said Mr. Fellerman abruptly, 'we are both men of the world. We both understand the circumlocutions of society. In this case I propose to set them aside. You want money. Will you accept the loan of twenty pounds from me?'

'I want money badly enough,' replied Mr. Barnard, 'but I cannot accept your kind loan. I have no means of repaying it.'

'I make it unconditionally.'

'Thanks, but I have no security to offer.'

'I do not require security nor interest. I ask you to take it to fit yourself out with. You may rest assured I shall not ask you to repay it until you can do so conveniently; in fact, I shall never ask you.'

'I do not understand,' said Mr. Barnard, with a searching glance at the other's face; 'you are a total stranger to me.'

'You mean what motive have I?'

'I do.'

'I couldn't do such a thing without an interested motive, I suppose?'

Mr. Barnard hesitated.

'Most men have motives,' he said doubtfully.

Mr. Fellerman smiled—it was a most unpleasant smile.

'This is Christian England!' he exclaimed. 'No man who lives in the world can believe that another does as he would be done by. *My* creed does not teach so.'

'What is your creed?'

'That is immaterial. Will you accept my loan in all good fellowship? I have plenty of money, and do not want it.'

'I will accept it,' said Mr. Barnard suddenly, 'and I thank you warmly.'

It was then agreed on between the newly-formed acquaintances that they should visit Plymouth together, where Mr. Barnard would renew his wardrobe, on the understanding that afterwards he should transfer his quarters to Admiral Ashworth's house.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTAIN WORSLEY ARRIVES.

JACK, meantime, had gone to Mrs. Challoner's. The sky was dark, threatening snow, but the wind of the night before had completely gone down. As he walked up the garden he saw Rose in one of the side-walks, and prepared to pass her by.

'It is either one of two things,' he said to himself; 'if Fellerman had nothing to do with her, and I had taken too much wine—though I don't believe *that*—she was very disobliging. If he coerced her in any way, then I was right in what I did.'

But she had seen him, and came to him with her hand outstretched and the sweetest smile on her lips. Poor Jack went down at once before the artillery of her beautiful eyes, and probably would have apologized humbly had she not said:

'I want you to forgive me.'

'Why, of course I will,' returned the delighted young man; 'and, to come to that, my dear, what have I to forgive? I was a brute to wish you to sing when you were disinclined.'

More conversation followed, and by slow degrees they entered the dining-room. But no one was visible; indeed, the whole house seemed turned upside down. This evening the servants were to have an entertainment, and both Mrs. Challoner and Mrs. Worsley were up to their eyes in work, giving out stores, putting up decorations, and so on.

'You are a great deal more use than Rose, Gertrude,' said Mrs. Challoner.

'Well, yes,' replied Mrs. Worsley; 'but my father's income is not as large as yours, and I was brought up to be useful, while Rose amply fulfils her vocation in being ornamental.'

'I wonder who that very nice-looking young man is, who

is coming up to the front-door,' said Mrs. Challoner, looking out of the window at a fair man with a clever face.

Mrs. Worsley put down the flowers she was holding, and her scissors, and fairly rushed into the hall, where the stranger was now standing. Regardless of the presence of the servant, she threw her arms round his neck, exclaiming in delighted tones:

'Why, Harry, Harry! who could have believed it?'

The dining-room door was open; Jack Ashworth came forth.

'I really hope that is your husband,' he said with a laugh, being just in time to witness the embrace returned with equal ardour.

'Of course it is,' said Gertrude, laughing, 'and you two must shake hands with one another.'

Rose came forward, and Mrs. Challoner also arrived on the scene. For some few moments there was nothing but hand-shaking and confusion.

'And now are you ready to go with me to Plymouth?' said Captain Worsley, as soon as he was allowed a hearing.

'Certainly not,' replied Mrs. Challoner promptly. 'Can we not induce you to spend Christmas with us instead? We shall be delighted if you will do so.'

'What do you say?' he said, turning to his wife.

'I should like it *so* much, Harry.'

'Then, thanks awfully, Mrs. Challoner; I shall be delighted. I have heard so much about you from my wife that I cannot look on you as a stranger.'

And then the confusion began to abate a little, and Mrs. Challoner was heard to whisper to Mrs. Worsley that Rose should have another room, and Captain Worsley should take hers for his dressing-room. Finding domestic details were being discussed, both Jack and Rose thought fit to retire to the dining-room.

'I would not think of such an arrangement,' said Mrs. Worsley with decision. 'What an idea!'

'We don't want to disarrange anybody,' said Captain Worsley; 'we don't want a dressing-room.'

But this Mrs. Challoner declared to be a necessity, and a room across the gallery upstairs was indicated. And then, her presence notwithstanding, Captain Worsley gave his

wife another hearty embrace, and proceeded to tell her and his hostess that, the boilers of his ship being faulty, they had been compelled to put in to Plymouth for repairs, and would remain some days.

'And shall you be able to stay here, Harry?' asked Mrs. Worsley anxiously.

'Yes, for three days, my darling. How well you are looking! what good care Mrs. Challoner must have taken of you!' And then he burst into a hearty laugh.

'What is it?' said his wife.

'Here's a sell; I have no clothes with me, except what are in a dressing-bag. I must return at once to Plymouth and fetch them.'

But this also Mrs. Challoner would not hear of; she said it would waste his whole day, and that they would readily excuse his dressing for dinner. Then Gertrude insisted that he should come upstairs to her own room and have a chat over the fire.

'Isn't it a charming room, Harry?' she exclaimed in her excitement; 'look at the splendid sea-view, and at the beautiful carpet, and the easy-chairs, and all the pretty hangings and furniture.'

'I would rather look at you,' said Captain Worsley.

Their conversation was interrupted by the announcement at length of luncheon, to which meal Admiral Ashworth also sat down, having been brought in by Mr. Challoner. The Admiral proceeded to mention Mr. Barnard's refusal to stay with him.

'Should he change his mind, you must bring him here to dine on Christmas Day,' said Mrs. Challoner.

'My dear lady, I am under very great obligations to you,' returned the Admiral.

'Should this gentleman come, I hope he will have the good taste to admire *me*,' said Mrs. Worsley; 'don't you, Harry? for at present no one else does.'

'*I* do,' said Mr. Challoner.

'And I do,' said Admiral Ashworth.

She laughed and shook her head.

'No, neither of you will do for the "Sorrows of Werther," I am afraid.'

'Well, my dear,' said Mr. Challoner, 'if I went down on my knees to you, and declared I was dying by inches, you

certainly wouldn't believe me, and I'm sure neither Mrs. Challoner nor your husband would be jealous. Added to which, it would be a great trouble to me to get up again.'

'Therefore, on second thoughts,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'I promise to be amply satisfied with Harry's admiration.'

Luncheon over, the Admiral begged Captain Worsley to give him a few moments alone.

'Do you know anything of a naval chaplain called Barnard?' he asked.

'Barnard—Charles Barnard? I knew him well. Got under a cloud three years ago, and had to go on half-pay.'

The Admiral then detailed part of his story, seeing that Captain Worsley knew it already, and asked his advice as to bringing him into ladies' society.

'Well, sir,' returned the kind-hearted young man, '*I* shan't say a word against him. Let bygones be bygones, and Christmas time and all. I always liked him, and I have no objection to bring him into my wife's society. As far as that goes, there are hundreds of worse men, only you see he was the chaplain, and ought to have set a better example.'

The Admiral was greatly relieved.

'I will try again to persuade him,' he said; 'for I like him.'

'And I'll tell you what I'll do,' said Captain Worsley; 'he might feel a little awkwardness in meeting me. I'll just call round and tell him it's all right as far as I am concerned.'

'You are a good fellow, Worsley,' he replied, 'and worthy of your wife; and that is saying a great deal.'

Captain Worsley kept his word; about six o'clock he called on Mr. Barnard, and found him at home; he had just returned from Plymouth.

Captain Worsley shook him cordially by the hand, saying:

'Well, Barnard, old fellow, who'd have thought of seeing you here? I'm awfully glad to see you.'

'You are very kind,' said the chaplain gravely.

'You will come up to the Admiral's, I hope; the old man has set his mind on it.'

'Do *you* say come?' returned Mr. Barnard, whose face had clouded at the sight of his old friend.

'I do—I say so heartily; come up with me now and get

out of this beastly hole. And, old fellow, remember one thing: bygones are bygones, and *I* shan't let out anything. I mention this,' said Captain Worsley with some hesitation, 'because you might imagine, perhaps——'

Mr. Barnard looked at him attentively, and said:

'You are the second good Samaritan I have met with to-day. Rest assured that if the day should ever come on which I can repay either of you, I will. I swear it.'

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

In the night snow fell heavily: Christmas Day opened on a white world, a beautiful world. The branches of the trees were thickly cased; the roofs of the houses and church were covered. There are few among us who are insensible to Christmas influences. It is not only that the bells ring peace and good-will, but that a certain real atmosphere of something better than our every-day world seems to descend among us. Who can be churlish on Christmas Day?

As to the roast-beef and turkey, the plum-pudding and the mince-pie aspects, it must be confessed that to the grown-up mind these are something of a trial, and yet even they can be tolerated, although plum-pudding is amongst the luxuries not appreciated by everyone.

It is seldom that a group freer from care meets than that under Mr. Challoner's roof on Christmas Day. Everyone had gone to church in the morning, to begin with.

The old church was a long, low building, with a very small transept and low tower; the spire, indeed, was almost imperceptible. A large yew-tree stood in front of the porch, giving an air of picturesqueness, while the old snow-covered tombs were not wanting in solemnity.

As the service was about to begin, Mr Fellerman walked in and seated himself at the extreme end of the church, underneath the old organ, which was in a small gallery above.

The arrangements at Penlist being of the most primitive, Mr. Morris stopped in the middle of his opening sentence, and, without the least consciousness of being irreverent, told the old clerk—who sat beneath him—in an audible whisper, to invite the strange gentleman to a seat at the top of the church. The clerk departed on his errand, the eyes of the entire congregation fixed on him, and returned shortly, saying, in tones which could be heard half

down the church, 'The gentleman says as he would rayther remain where he is, sir.'

Captain Worsley and Jack Ashworth checked themselves in a laugh, and Mr. Barnard covered his mouth with his hand. Mrs. Worsley looked grave and nudged her husband, who fortunately at this moment was sharply pricked by the holly when he leant his head back.

The good old clergyman proceeded with the service quite composedly, and after a few hymns had been sung, in a manner which threatened to again upset Jack and Captain Worsley's gravity, and the prayers were finished, he mounted the high pulpit and began his sermon.

Up to this time the eyes of Mr. Fellerman had been directed to the church and all the congregation. He had noted the ugly architecture, the defaced graystone, the plain bare little Communion-table, the three-decker pulpit, and most especially the countenances of the fisher folk who sat in the back pews. As to joining in the service, he had not attempted to do so; he had looked on with the air of a reverent spectator. But when the sermon began he looked at Rose, the back of whose head was visible above the high pew. She turned at once and met his eyes. He gave her a steady glance, a cold, critical glance, and then removed his gaze. She became crimson, and Jack, from his pew, marked her confusion. He turned towards Mr. Fellerman, but that gentleman had his eyes fixed on the very hideous roof. Jack scowled and moved his feet impatiently.

Rose was looking very lovely in a new dress and bonnet of violet velvet, and from the moment the sermon began Mr. Barnard seemed quite unable to take his eyes off her.

After church the party met at the porch, and the Admiral introduced Mr. Barnard to each one in turn. Mrs. Challoner and Mrs. Worsley made a few gracious remarks, and Mr. Barnard then approached Rose, who was standing a little apart, and walked by her side down the snow covered path. He was well dressed in a new and fashionable great-coat, and was vastly improved in appearance. Mr. Fellerman looked at Jack and gave a smile, which not only infuriated that young man, but made Captain Worsley (who was quite ignorant, as, indeed, was everyone else, of Mr. Fellerman's recent kindness) detest him on the spot. But Jack was mindful of the unhappiness he had recently caused

his father, and, resolutely placing his arm in Admiral Ashworth's, he walked on, talking and laughing.

Good old Mr. Morris joined them; he too was to dine at Mr. Challoner's. He wished them a merry Christmas, saying, 'And I trust the New Year will fulfil your heart's best desire, Mr. Jack,' for the old man had known Jack from his childhood, and was well aware of the direction of his hopes.

At six o'clock they all met in the drawing-room, which had been lavishly decorated with holly and mistletoe, while the number and variety of the Christmas cards was overwhelming.

Mrs. Worsley was arrayed in rich brocade, and looked her best, while Rose was her loveliest. She had chosen to appear this evening with her splendid golden hair hanging down her shoulders, and reaching far below her waist in wavy masses. It was only by an effort that Mr. Barnard seemed able to turn away his eyes from her, to Mrs. Worsley's great amusement.

'You are the only young man in the room who will look at me, Harry,' she said to her husband.

'It is just as well, my dear,' he replied, 'or I might break their heads.'

'But Mr. Morris is captivated by me.'

'Make *him* your "Werther," then,' said Captain Worsley, with a roar of laughter.

The dinner was sumptuous, and went off well. There were neither Latin quotations made nor quarrels picked. Mr. Fellerman sat between Mrs. Worsley and the Admiral, and was equally courteous to both. Even Jack could find no fault with his behaviour.

To Mr. Barnard this day was a great delight. He had so long been accustomed to think of himself as a pariah and an outcast from naval society, and had formed such an exaggerated estimate of the disrepute in which he was held, that the special attention paid him, both by the Admiral and Captain Worsley, was very welcome, while his feelings towards Mr. Fellerman were those of the most unbounded gratitude and admiration.

'Could anyone have believed such a thing possible in this self-seeking world?' he said to himself more than once.

Dinner over, he suggested some charades; but these

falling to the ground, he offered to recite, and sent the company into roars of laughter over a comic piece, and melted them into tears over a pathetic one. Mr. Challoner sat and openly sobbed until another comic piece was insisted on to raise the spirits of the company.

Then Rose sang. On opening her music she glanced at Mr. Fellerman, but his eyes were averted. She then selected a new song, and sang it magnificently. On this occasion Jack stood at the other end of the room, and did not venture to turn over for her. Captain and Mrs. Worsley were seated in one of the alcoves, Mr. Barnard was talking to the Admiral, while Mr. Fellerman stood near the piano. The song concluded, he joined her, saying in a low voice, 'Make the most of your Christmas: it is the last you will spend with your own people, perhaps in your own land, for many a long year to come.'

Her face grew white, her lips formed the words 'Spare me.'

'I?' he replied. 'It is my faith, not I.'

'You cannot read destiny,' said Rose.

Mr. Fellerman's dark eyes lit up.

'I am not a seer,' he replied, 'but there are some things I understand. If thou art in a foreign land the same moon will shine on thee.'

At this moment Jack came forward.

'Are we to have no more music, Rose?' he said quickly.

'Miss Challoner is about to sing "When other lips,"' replied Mr. Fellerman for her, and without another word she produced the song and sang it through to the end.

CHAPTER IX.

JACK'S JEALOUSY.

It was New Year's Eve: a clear, frosty night; the stars were shining brilliantly. Captain Worsley had departed for Plymouth, taking his wife with him, on the understanding that as soon as the Channel Squadron—to which Captain Worsley's ship belonged—had departed she was to return to Mrs. Challoner's house, and stay there until the time of her sister Ethel's marriage to Mr. Manly, the Vicar of Newforth.

Mr. Barnard still remained Admiral Ashworth's guest; but Mr. Fellerman had departed, whither he did not say. Jack was going the next day. Mr. Challoner had entirely declined to sit up to see the Old Year out and the New Year in.

'Young people like to moralise,' he said, 'and theoretically it is a capital good thing to reflect on all your sins of a year past; but practically, I am afraid, your reflections send you to sleep—at least, mine do.'

Mrs. Challoner also decided on going to bed. Rose sat in the dining-room alone, meditating, as girls generally do, more on the future than on the past. After a time she wrapped a warm shawl round her head and shoulders, unfastened the French window, and stepped out into the garden.

The stars gave their trembling light, the moon was faint. Rose could dimly discern the outline of the trees and the glimmer of the sea. The air was so still that the plash of the waves resounded on the stones of the beach. She looked up at the sky, and all its grandeur overcame her. She was not a religious girl; she did not exclaim with David, 'When I consider Thy heavens,' but, with all the unspeakable awe of space unlimited oppressing her, she said aloud, '"Is not immensity a temple? Is not man's history, and men's history, a perpetual evangel? Listen, and for organ

music thou wilt ever, as of old, hear the morning stars sing together."'

A dark form emerged from the trees and stood beside her, and Mr. Fellerman's voice said, 'I will add another quotation from the same author, "Pierce through the time element, glance into the eternal. Believe what thou findest written in the sanctuaries of man's soul, even as all thinkers in all ages have devoutly read it there."'

She had believed him miles away, but she expressed no surprise at his sudden appearance. In truth she felt none. She knew him to be a mortal man, and yet she credited him with almost miraculous powers, which she had not the slightest ground for doing. Her imagination had already transfigured him into something of a hero; not a man to be loved, but a god to be worshipped. It was not the glamour of love that surrounded him, it was the halo of mystery.

To Mrs. Worsley he was simply a rather disagreeable man with good manners; to Rose he was a Being.

'Do *you* know Carlyle?' she exclaimed. 'I mean, know him well?'

'I do.'

And then he began to talk to her in mystic fashion, drawing her thoughts to the intangible things of the universe, showing her the mysteries that surround us, vaguely hinting at the methods and means of annulling life's miseries, until her imagination was fired, her soul entranced.

But there was never a gleam of love in his eyes; as her beautiful face was raised to his in the earnestness of her conversation, he looked at her critically, approvingly, but always coldly. Not once did his talk verge on lover's words, not once did he manifest the smallest consciousness that he was talking at night to a young and lovely girl.

While they stood in the garden the bells of the old church clanged loudly; a hearty peal was rung. The clock struck twelve in the midst of it.

'It is very late,' said Rose.

'Come to the headland and look at the sea.'

'I cannot do that now.'

'Come,' he repeated, and without a word she followed him.

The villagers were mostly asleep; Penlist was very quiet. As they walked down the lane and on to the grassy headland, Mr. Fellerman did not speak. The great quiet and the solemnity of the night oppressed Rose; she was glad when the stillness was broken by the noise of the waves dashing against the point.

'Mr. Fellerman,' she said tremblingly, 'you ought not to have brought me here. Let me go home.'

'Thou hast followed where I have led,' he replied, speaking to her as the second person singular, as he habitually did when deeply in earnest; 'if thou wilt now lead, I will follow thee.'

She looked at him; his dark eyes were fixed on her face.

'I *can't* lead,' she said appealingly.

'Then thou must follow;' and after this he relapsed into silence.

She stood on the greensward some three or four feet away, her eyes, piteous in their entreaty, turned on him. After some ten minutes she took a few steps forward, paused irresolutely, and stopped. Again she turned to him, and said:

'I *must* go home.'

'I am quite ready to attend you,' he exclaimed, in the courteous tones of a man of the world, and walked on by her side.

A third person appeared on the scene: it was Jack Ashworth, his face white with rage.

'Is this a nice time of night to be out with a stranger, Rose?' he said scornfully.

She made no answer to his question, except to place her hand on his arm and say entreatingly:

'See me home, Jack.'

'In that case,' said Mr. Fellerman, 'I will wish you good-night;' and, raising his hat, he walked away in the contrary direction to the village. Jack had turned his back on him. As soon as he was out of sight, he shook off Rose's hand from his arm, saying formally:

'Are you alone?'

'Don't speak to me like that, Jack,' said the girl piteously. 'Why are you so angry?'

'I angry?' he repeated coldly. 'As you once were good enough to inform me, I have nothing to do with your actions. I do not pretend to the smallest right.'

'I am quite aware I have done a very odd thing,' said Rose, 'and yet perhaps you will understand me when I tell you that I could not help it. I was in the garden when he joined me, and when he told me to go out on the point I felt I dared not refuse.'

'If I thought *that*,' said Jack furiously, 'if I thought you were really under the power of his will, I would run after him and break his neck.'

'What is it you think?' she asked with some pride in her voice.

'I think,' he returned quickly, 'that you are like all the rest of the girls one reads and hears of, a thorough-paced flirt. I think that you are now encouraging this man as you encouraged me, and I think that you are not fit to be named in the same day with Gertrude, who is outspoken and honest, and says more than she means; whereas with you it is a case of "Still waters run deep." It was the dearest wish of my heart to make you my wife, but for anything I care now you may marry Fellerman or anyone you please;' and he began to sing loudly:

'"If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?"'

'You need not insult me, Mr. Ashworth,' said Rose proudly, although the tears were in her eyes.

'Insult you!' said Jack. 'I am congratulating you. I wish you joy of Mr. Fellerman, and I hope he will make himself more agreeable after marriage than he has done before. I am only congratulating you, my dear. We don't break our hearts for women in the nineteenth century.'

Rose stood and faced him.

'I will thank you to leave me,' she said sternly.

Jack came to his senses as he saw her troubled face.

'Rose,' he answered with a grave expression in his honest eyes, 'there is something in this business I do not understand. It was a bad day when that man entered my father's house. Forgive me for my hasty words, but you cannot expect me not to feel hurt, most of all at your lack of trust in me. I withdraw all claim to you, and I see I never ought to have made any.'

The church clock struck one as they entered the gates of Rosemount.

To their surprise, the upper part of the house was alight; the butler, with a lantern in his hand, was going out at the front-door, while Mr. Challoner, in a long wadded dressing-gown and slippers and smoking-cap, had his head out of the dining-room window.

'They are looking for you,' said Jack in a low voice.

'What do you mean, sir,' said Mr. Challoner very angrily, as soon as he perceived him, 'by taking my daughter out at this time of night?'

Jack at once made a rule of three sum in his own mind thus: 'If Mr. Challoner is so angry at *my* taking out Rose, how much more angry will he be when he discovers it is Fellerman?' The sum total represented such a high figure in his thoughts that he took his resolution.

'Really, sir, you need not be so angry,' he replied coolly. 'Rose was in the garden, seeing the Old Year out and the New Year in, and after awhile she strolled outside. I had been with the bellringers, and I went for a stroll also, and, quite accidentally, met her. I have not been ten minutes with her.'

He turned to Rose, saying in his lowest tones, 'You will *greatly* oblige me by saying nothing further than I have already stated.'

'I had better,' she replied.

'You had better not. Promise me,' he said earnestly.

'I promise.'

'I won't have it,' said Mr. Challoner, still angrily; 'it will be the talk of the place.'

Mrs. Challoner had already entered the room clad in *her* dressing-gown and slippers. She had fancied she heard a noise in Rose's room, and, finding it empty and the dining-room window open, had given the alarm.

'Never mind, my dear,' she said hastily, being quite aware the maids were listening outside the door; 'it was very imprudent of Rose to stay out so late. I am afraid she will take cold, and we ought to be extremely obliged to Jack for bringing her home. Thank you very much, Jack.'

The butler and the maids had now entered the room. Mr. Challoner sent them away, and then began to laugh.

'Why did you frighten us all so, my dear?' he said to Rose. 'When your mother found you were not in your room, I believe she fancied some ruffian had carried you off

and murdered you. Jack, I beg your pardon for having spoken to you as I did, but I was woke out of my first sleep and glad to pitch into the first person I came across.'

'Don't mention it,' said Jack heartily; 'appearances were certainly against me. Good-night to you all, and I will come round to-morrow morning and wish you good-bye before I go up to town.'

His meditations were gloomy as he walked home; it seemed to him clear that Rose had no love for him. He mentioned the circumstance of his taking her home to his father, knowing that he would hear of it from Mr. Challoner.

'She ought not to have been out so late,' said the Admiral; 'there are sometimes rough people about.'

'And worse than rough people sometimes,' thought Jack, but he said nothing.

It was with no small gravity on his face that he went up to Rosemount; he was, indeed, in great trouble. The fact of Rose going out with a stranger did not trouble him at all; had it been with Mr. Barnard, he would have been quite satisfied, late hour though it was, but he could not shut his eyes to the fact that in some unaccountable manner she was influenced by Fellerman, and he felt that had she really loved him, Jack, no other man would have obtained this influence over her.

He called at the Rose and Crown, and was informed that Mr. Fellerman had not been there, while a stray customer at the bar told him he had that morning seen him at Saltash Station taking a ticket for London.

'And a jolly good thing too,' said Jack to himself.

'I think the household was scandalised last night,' said Mrs. Challoner in her bright, cheery manner as Jack entered. 'The servants have done nothing but condole with us this morning. Rose would rather have taken cold than have endured so much sympathy on the score of her health.'

Rose was sitting at the window; a flush overspread her face. 'I am quite well,' she replied, 'I took no cold whatever.'

'In that case,' said Jack, when he had bade Mrs. Challoner good-bye and given her a warm kiss, 'perhaps you will walk as far as the garden gates with me.'

She hesitated.

'Go by all means, my dear,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'but put on something warm.'

Rose went upstairs and returned fully equipped for walking.

'I will walk further than the gates with you, Jack,' she said; 'I want to thank you for last night. But why did you wish me to say nothing?'

'I thought it best.'

The young man was very grave; he walked on in silence for a few steps, then turned to her, a look of concern on his handsome face.

'Rose,' he said earnestly, 'it has been a great blow to me to discover that you do not care for me.'

'But I *do* care for you!' she replied.

'Yes, after a fashion, but not *my* fashion. Tell me,' he continued hotly, 'do you feel as if I were the only person in the world? Do you feel you would give everything you possessed to be in my arms?'

'Oh no!' she answered with surprise.

'I knew it, my dear—I knew it. Well, that's how I feel about you, because I love you. You don't love me, and there's an end of it.'

'But I don't feel that about anyone; I never could.'

'I am glad of it. Now, may I say a word before I go? We are living in a commonplace, everyday world. Don't run away with any ideas of occult influences and such-like rubbish; there are no such things. But, by turning your mind to certain thoughts you are put in the position to become a tool for a designing man, and may fall under his influence simply because you imagine that you are bound to do so. Think of what I have said, and give up all your metaphysical reading and get cook to let you help her to make the puddings, or Wilkins to let you weed the garden, rather than spend your time in perpetual thinking. You are not strong enough for it. Now good-bye, and I wish you a very happy New Year.'

He took both her hands, and bent his head so as to look into her eyes. Never had she liked him so well. Jack at her feet was not of half the value of Jack who had relinquished her. She felt very kindly towards him, and showed it in her face. Something of hope dawned on him as he looked at her. He paused irresolutely for a moment, shook her hands with a firm grasp, and turned round and walked away. She gave something of a sigh as she watched his stalwart figure go down the road.

CHAPTER X.

PENLIST GOSSIP.

MR. BARNARD had left the Admiral's house and taken lodgings in the village. The free, quiet life in Penlist suited him, and at this time, hampered as he was with debt, it was absolutely necessary that he should live as cheaply as possible.

He obtained lodgings in the house of a fisherman and his wife, two very small but clean rooms, for which they charged him ten shillings a week, including attendance. He laughed as he did the honours of his small sitting-room when Mr. Challoner and Admiral Ashworth came to visit him, and pointed out with great pride the shelves and contrivances he had made in order to imitate a ship's cabin. From both gentlemen he received a great amount of kindness, to which he cheerfully responded. He was still writing on the fisheries and making a small addition to his income. His admiration for Rose was unbounded; he talked to her whenever opportunity offered. He would have certainly tried his chance and proposed to her had his means been sufficient; as it was, although he did not make love to her, he sought her society on every possible pretext. With regard to him she was totally indifferent. She thought him a friendly, kind, agreeable man, but beyond this he never entered her mind.

Jack's farewell had greatly impressed her; she found herself thinking of him very often. He had been very good to her, and she was grateful. A certain amount of anger mingled with her thoughts of Mr. Fellerman, but towards Jack she felt far more kindly than she had ever done in his presence.

Mrs. Worsley had not yet returned. Her sister's wedding-day was so near that she had gone straight to Newforth on her husband's departure. She now wrote that the marriage was over, concluding her letter thus: 'And now I must tell

you that they are going for a long tour in the West of England, and may probably take Penlist on their way home. Should they do so, father says he should very much like to go there also, and see Admiral Ashworth.'

On receipt of this letter Mrs. Challoner set out for Ashworth Lodge, and found the Admiral in the library reading. He looked very lonely, and seemed dull; he missed his son more than he would allow. He welcomed Mrs. Challoner warmly, and bade her take a chair beside him.

'I shall be truly glad to see my old friend Hatton,' he said when he had heard her news, 'and I shall write off at once and invite both him and his wife. They have nothing to keep them at home now, and may enjoy a change.'

'And I shall of course invite Mr. and Mrs. Manly and Gertrude,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'we shall live quite in the world in Penlist.'

'I wish Jack could come, too.'

'Write for him.'

The Admiral shook his head.

'I don't like to unsettle him. Of late he tells me he has really begun to work, and through the kindness of a friend, a solicitor, has had more than one brief given him, which he has conducted really well, I believe. I know he is anxious to see us all, but I don't like to ask him.'

But before the advent of Mr. and Mrs. Manly a circumstance occurred which sent Jack to Penlist as fast as he could travel.

It was in this wise. In spite of Mr. Polwheel's grumbling assertion that the Admiral was taking away all his customers, and that people who were fine enough for Ashworth Lodge were too fine for the Rose and Crown, Mr. Barnard often made it a custom to stroll in at the bar when the fishermen were spending the evening there, and entertain them with a song or a story. He was highly popular, and seemed also to enjoy the efforts he made in their behalf; these relieved his solitary hours. He would sometimes go out fishing with the men, and more than once had accepted a meal at their houses. In this way he heard all the news of the place, and though they treated him with all respect and had not yet toasted him with 'For he's a jolly good fellow,' it was still in the light of a 'good fellow' that they regarded him. Had they been told he was a 'parson,' they

would not have believed it. He strolled in one evening, unobserved amidst the dense cloud of tobacco which just then filled the place, and this was the conversation to which he was a listener.

'A thought Mr. Jack would have been down here afore now. Admiral seems lost-like wi'out 'im, 'ee does. Never been so long away afore to *my* rekleckshun.'

A loud laugh followed this speech.

'Dont 'ee know now the rights of this?' said Mr. Polwheel. 'How he took Miss Challoner out in the dead o' night, and the 'ole 'ouse was rowsed up a-lookin' for her. And when they come back, Mr. Challoner said, he did, that Mr. Jack might go about his business, and shouldn't never darken his doors no more. And Mr. Jack he spoke up and said he hadn't no opinion at all of Miss, and wouldn't marry her at no price; and then Mr. Challoner he shoved him out o' door, and Admiral he ain't been the same man since.'

The assembled company were startled by the sound of a clenched fist coming down on the table with tremendous force, and a loud voice exclaimed:

'Silence all!'

Mr. Barnard was standing up amongst them, his face on fire.

'Now listen, all you men,' he said; 'if anyone of you dare to repeat such confounded and malicious lies, I will knock him down or else give him a thrashing. There is not a word of truth in what Polwheel has just said. The Admiral and Mr. Ashworth and Mr. Challoner and his family are all the best of friends.'

'He *were* out with Miss Challoner at night,' said Polwheel sulkily. 'I saw him.'

'I know it,' said Mr. Barnard; 'he saw her home one night, about the distance of her garden, I believe, as I or any gentleman would have done. I strongly advise you for your own sake to refrain from speaking again as you have done to-night;' and the ex-chaplain went out.

He walked up and down the headland for some time, smoking his pipe, and thinking uncomfortably of what he had just heard, and then he went off to the Admiral's, repeating the substance of the conversation at the Rose and Crown.

Admiral Ashworth looked greatly disturbed.

'Both Rose and Jack ought to be able to disregard such gossip,' he said; 'but Polwheel has a long tongue. When

once he takes up a report, he spreads it all over the place. He is a dangerous man.'

'Ask Mr. Ashworth down for a short time, and tell him the reason,' suggested Mr. Barnard.

'I will tell him what has been said, and then he will do as he likes,' said the Admiral.

He wrote at once, and Jack, without answering the letter, came straight down to Penlist, arriving late at night. Directly after breakfast the next morning he went to the Rose and Crown.

'Now, Mr. Polwheel,' he said with determination, 'I wish to repeat Mr. Barnard's words that there was not a word of truth in what you said about me and Miss Challoner the other night. I am quite aware that such men as you are always ready to believe the worst of everyone. As far as I am concerned, I should laugh at you; but remember this, that if you mention Miss Challoner's name disrespectfully, you will have me to settle with as well as Mr. Barnard, and between the two of us you won't have a very pleasant time of it. Please to bear that in mind.'

Jack walked away, far more seriously discomposed than Mr. Barnard had been. Small a village as was Penlist, he knew that the inhabitants had long memories, and were very fond of gossip, and that every story increased as it was repeated. In spite of his eagerness to see Rose, he preferred to think over what he had heard before calling at Rosemount. It was a lovely day in early spring; the trees had put forth their first tender leaves, the hedges had budded. He walked through the village out on to the top of the hills at the back, where the grass was short and crisp and sheep were grazing. He had been looking out at sea, and, on turning, beheld very near him *Rose*—Rose, dressed all in some light-coloured cotton, which looked the perfection of dainty neatness and freshness. She came towards him, a brilliant colour on her cheeks, a light in her eyes.

'Jack!' she said, 'dear Jack!' and held out both her hands.

He took them in his own, but he did more, for he put his arms round her and held her fast.

CHAPTER XI.

ROSE'S ENGAGEMENT.

THE sun had been high in the heavens when Jack and Rose met; it was well on its way towards the west ere they returned home. When it is mentioned that the young man had had no lunch, and had entirely forgotten the circumstance, even the most unromantic reader will concede that he must indeed have been desperately in love. In moments of excitement most girls can abstain from food without feeling the want of it, but in a man it argues a depth of feeling reached at but few stages of his existence, the word 'food' in this case being held to include both tobacco and wine.

Jack had neither eaten, drunk, nor smoked, and yet he was perfectly happy. To all candid readers this fact will speak for itself, and it would ill become his biographer to enlarge on it.

The young man's face glowed with love and pride as he looked at his promised wife: as yet he could scarcely believe in his good fortune.

'But you know, Jack,' said Rose, in answer to words of great extravagance, 'you mustn't expect *me* to feel like that, because I don't.'

'No, my darling,' returned Jack, 'I won't.'

Although his words of love seemed as if they would never come to an end, the pair arrived in course of time at Rosemount. Mrs. Challoner, who was quite unaware of his arrival, was looking out at the entrance for Rose, wondering what had detained her so long.

Jack had scarcely time to open the gates before he had told his news, which was received as warmly as he could have wished. Mr. Challoner, who was digging in the garden, came forward and wrung his hands, declaring the while that he was rejoiced—oblivious to the fact that the gardener was listening to every word.

Rose escaped amidst the general congratulations, and

ways and means were discussed by the remainder of the party in the dining-room.

'I have six hundred a year of my own,' said Jack; 'that is to say, my father allows it to me, and of course I hope eventually to make money by my profession. Then at pater's death—and may he live to be a hundred!' ('Hear, hear!' exclaimed Mr. Challoner)—'I shall have everything belonging to him, which will be more than another six hundred, as he is living within his income.'

'And my girl shan't come to you empty-handed,' said Mr. Challoner; 'and when my wife and I are gathered to our fathers, she will also have everything, and you will be rich people.'

'Yes,' added Mrs. Challoner, 'but you must begin prudently, and in a small way. Be sure you remember this, Jack. The only pleasure of an income arises out of having ready money. If you live up to the exact limit of your means, you are as much hampered with ten thousand a year as five hundred. If it all goes in household expenses, you never really enjoy it. Take my advice, and keep a third of your income as ready money. You can give away, or enjoy yourselves, and always feel you have money at command, which rich people often do not.'

Jack promised he would remember it.

'And you shall choose our house for us,' he continued, 'and then you may be quite sure the rent will not be too high. *I* might select a house in Queen's Gate, or some place of that sort, if left to myself.'

'No, no,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'you shall never have it in your power to say that your mother-in-law interfered with you. There is scarcely a man in the world who looks on his mother-in-law with unprejudiced eyes.'

'I will be that man,' he replied; 'you see if I won't.'

And then Mrs. Challoner asserted that they would waive ceremony, and in place of allowing the Admiral to first call at Rosemount, they would all go in a body and call on him.

'Pater will jump for joy,' said Jack.

Mrs. Challoner put on her bonnet, and called Rose, and they walked through the village in procession, Mrs. Challoner, at Jack's request, on his arm.

Mr. Polwheel stood at the door of the inn, lounging about as usual.

'Good-afternoon, Mr. Polwheel,' said Jack in clear tones, a smile on his face; 'I hope your business is looking up. I had no time to inquire this morning.'

'Good-afternoon,' echoed Mr. Challoner, who had no conception that anything had gone wrong. 'Fine day, isn't it?'

'Ah,' muttered Mr. Polwheel as they passed, 'on one o' these days I may pay that young master out, and Mr. Barnard too.'

To say that the Admiral was pleased would be vastly to understate the case. He kissed Rose warmly, he shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Challoner, while as to his son, he put his arm round him and congratulated him with tears in his eyes.

'It is the desire of your heart, Jack,' he said, 'and for myself my daughter-in-law is all that I can wish.'

Then wine and tea were brought in, and everyone's health was drunk. The young people strolled into the garden while their seniors again discussed ways and means.

'I have little use for money,' said the Admiral; 'I will make Jack a further allowance of two hundred a year.'

But this scheme both Mr. and Mrs. Challoner strongly opposed.

'They don't want it,' said the latter, 'and it would be most wrong, Admiral Ashworth, to make their private income larger than yours. We shall allow Rose a small sum.'

'Not much,' added Mr. Challoner, 'because we want them to be prudent. Then when children come, and perhaps they may outrun the constable a little, either you or I may be ready with a twenty-pound note or so to help them.'

'Perhaps you are right,' replied the Admiral; 'I will say nothing about it.'

And then the young people were recalled and questioned as to which locality they would live in, for Jack had begged for a speedy wedding, and so much business was talked that Jack said the whole of the romance was being destroyed, and that in future he must have Rose to himself.

On the road home they all called on the good old Vicar, Mr. Morris. He was training a creeper up the walls of his small but pretty cottage; his garden was blooming with primroses and violets, and all the humbler spring flowers.

His face lit up with a smile as he saw his visitors and invited them into his only sitting-room.

It was such a strange untidy room, proclaiming at once the bachelorhood of its occupier. Books littered the floor and the chairs, a pair of slippers were thrown carelessly on the table, while newspapers, an old coat or so, with various other articles, reposed on the small sideboard or chiffonier. The paper was dingy, so was the furniture, and the window was small. 'Fancy our having a house like that!' said Jack, as they entered. Yet the old man's welcome atoned for the deficiencies of his abode, and when Mr. and Mrs. Challoner told him the news, he expressed unfeigned pleasure, adding, 'A good wife is of the Lord, Mr. Jack, you know.'

'Amen,' replied the young man, feeling the answer in some way appropriate as addressed to a clergyman, and in truth not knowing what else to say.

Mr. Morris rang the bell, which was answered by a stout Cornish woman, his sole domestic. Her sleeves were rolled up as if she had been washing, although it was now late in the day.

'Do you think, Keziah,' said the old man in his mild tones, 'that you could get us a cup of tea? These ladies would probably like a little bread-and-butter also.'

Mrs. Challoner hastened to declare that they could not possibly drink tea just then. Keziah, who had waited in the room, replied:

'And it's a good thing, ma'am, as you can't, for I ain't got no kettle boiling; master have had his tea, and I couldn't be lighting of my fire again.'

'Certainly not,' said Mrs. Challoner, who was sitting in an uncertain position at the edge of a pile of books.

'I am sorry to show you such poor hospitality,' said Mr. Morris; 'but Keziah always has her own way.'

'You have shown us the truest hospitality, by offering us what you thought we would like best,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'and I cannot but tell you that we have just taken tea at the Admiral's.'

And then Mr. Morris begged that whenever the wedding took place he might assist to perform the ceremony.

'Doubtless,' said the humble-minded old man, 'you will have someone of far more importance than I to take the principal part, but I should like to help.'

'Of course you will,' returned Mr. Challoner, 'and if I mistake not, both Jack and Rose will wish you to take the principal part.'

'Penlist is an ugly church for a wedding,' said Mrs. Challoner, adding, with a laugh: 'Really we are making the arrangements so far in advance that I can scarcely believe the engagement is only a day old.'

'Not so very far in advance,' said Jack; 'if Rose will consent, I should like to be married in May.'

'Much too soon,' said Rose: 'and May is an unlucky month.'

'There will be plenty of time to talk about that afterwards,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'and we must go home now.'

On the road they met Mr. Barnard, who stopped to speak. He was looking very careworn, and had on one of his old coats; his appearance was very shabby. He looked at Jack, stalwart, handsome, happy, and dressed in the perfection of country costume, irreproachable best-quality Scotch tweed suit, faultless linen, thick but well-cut boots, while a straw hat somewhat pushed back became him admirably. From Jack he glanced at Rose, but he asked no question; he seemed to understand the state of the case at once.

'Some people have everything,' he said to himself bitterly as he left them, 'while other poor wretches haven't a chance.' He called at Admiral Ashworth's, and at once heard the news confirmed. 'And this is *my* doing,' he said as soon as he had left the house; '*I* must needs call this young man from town. Yet, were he away, I should never venture to ask for such a girl as Rose.'

His face grew older; he looked still more careworn. 'Luck is against me, and always has been,' he continued, 'and I suppose always will be.'

The news of the engagement was at once sent to Mrs. Worsley, who, with her husband, was staying at Plymouth for a few days; she sent her love and warmest congratulations.

That same day Captain Worsley, in walking down George Street, met Mr. Fellerman, who had just arrived, and at once told him. He made no reply, except to give one of his most peculiar and inscrutable smiles.

'Did you know it before?' asked Captain Worsley, irritated, he scarcely knew why.

'I had not been told, but I imagined it would take place,' Mr. Fellerman replied suavely.

'I don't know why,' said Captain Worsley later to his wife, 'but there is something about that man which makes me long to punch his head.'

'And yet some people like him!' she returned. 'I hope and trust he will keep away from Penlist *now*.'

CHAPTER XII.

VISITORS.

THE fact of their engagement had been somewhat of a surprise both to Jack Ashworth and Rose Challoner. It had been accomplished without any premeditation on either side. On calm reflection, the parties most concerned viewed the matter very differently.

Jack thought he should now attain the desire of his life and live happily for the remainder of his days, becoming a model husband, and perhaps father, and giving his mind to his work and to pleasing his wife.

As for Rose, she had no exalted ideas. She had no romantic fancies connected with her lover; all she imagined was that he was very much in love with her, while she loved him dearly but without exalting him at all. He had been kind, good Jack Ashworth before, he was kind, good Jack Ashworth now; in no degree had he altered in her estimation. But he was her first lover, and to every girl a lover in the flesh is something totally different to a lover in a book; she was both proud and pleased, and she seemed very happy.

The wedding-day was fixed for the beginning of June, and already nothing was talked of but the preparations. It was at present April, and Mr. and Mrs. Manly, who had not been able to come before, were now to pay their promised visit, accompanied by Captain and Mrs. Worsley. On the same day, Admiral and Mrs. Hatton were to arrive at Admiral Ashworth's. Mr. Barnard was still staying in Penlist. He seemed to have some care about him; his face had become habitually gloomy when alone. He requested Admiral Ashworth, as a special favour, that the fact of his having been a naval chaplain might not be made known to any of the coming visitors.

'I thought I should be out of the world when I came here,' he said, 'but there will be a naval colony. From

what I have heard of Mr. Manly, I should be thoroughly ashamed for him to know that *I* was a parson.'

'There is no occasion for him to know it,' said Jack; 'it isn't any business of his.'

'And how are you going to amuse your guests, pater?' he added, turning to his father.

'I do not suppose that my old friend Hatton will need much amusement at his age,' he replied.

Jack laughed.

'Now really, pater, you ought to know better. Everyone isn't like you, you know. Young fellows like me are content with simple and decorous pleasures—a walk in the lanes, a scramble over the rocks, a quiet tea-party; it's the old boys who require excitement and naughty pleasures, cards till three in the morning, and so on, isn't it, Mr. Barnard?'

Admiral Ashworth laughed.

'A greater libel on Hatton could not well be; he will like to do whatever I do, while Mrs. Challoner will entertain Mrs. Hatton.'

'Ah, yes,' returned Jack; 'she and I will be out of the way, and you two old gentlemen will be having any amount of larks. Keep your eye on them, Mr. Barnard.'

Mr. Barnard promised he would keep an eye on them, and if he found their pleasures very tempting, he might perhaps join them.

'Oh, ho!' said Jack, '*particeps criminis!*'

It was scarcely with unmixed pleasure that Mr. Challoner looked forward to the arrival of Mr. Manly; in truth, he was prepared to stand a little in awe of him. The accounts of his abilities, his intellect, his goodness, had been, in fact, a little overpowering, and Mr. Challoner confessed to himself that he should be relieved when this paragon had departed. To the ordinary mind too much goodness in another person is certainly ruffling. He pictured long conversations on clerical or theological subjects after dinner, and in secret began to read, as the most appropriate book he could think of, Butler's 'Analogy,' which was so puzzling and difficult to him that he invariably went to sleep over it. Not being in the habit of meeting clergymen, with the exception of Mr. Morris, he had some undefined fear lest he should be questioned as to his belief, not knowing that, as a rule,

the very last person to converse on such a subject is a clergyman.

He had already begun to fuss about the wine, ordering in some special brands, when this anxiety was put an end to by Rose.

'I am sure I have heard that, though not a teetotaler, Mr. Manly never touches stimulants, for the sake of example to others,' she said.

'I am glad to hear it, but I am afraid his example will have no effect on *me*,' replied her father.

Captain and Mrs. Worsley arrived first; it had been arranged they should precede the other guests by one day. There was no ceremony observed at *their* reception: they entered the house as if they belonged to it, Captain Worsley being already a great favourite. He enjoyed the good wine given him, and by evincing no hurry to join the ladies after dinner, as he always had so much to converse about, delighted Mr. Challoner.

'I hear your brother-in-law, Mr. Manly, drinks water,' he said doubtfully; 'rather a wet blanket, isn't he?'

'Oh no,' replied Captain Worsley, 'he's a jolly fellow.'

Mr. Challoner at once thought of Mr. Barnard, and wondered if the renowned Mr. Manly could be anything in his style; if so, it was very astonishing.

'Ethel reminds me of you,' said Mrs. Worsley to Rose, 'she is so pretty; she likes poetry, and she is imaginative, and all that, but she couldn't understand the deep books *you* read.'

'Rose will give up all those books when she is married,' said Jack, who was present; 'all she will think of then will be her fine dresses, and showing them at parties.'

The next day was warm and bright, almost a summer's day. A soft breeze was blowing, the trees were dressed in their freshest green, the hedges were flowering. Captain Worsley and Jack Ashworth went to Saltash Station to meet the travellers, the former driving Mr. Challoner's dog-cart, the latter on the box of Mr. Challoner's carriage. This gentleman sent a message to the effect that he would have come himself had there been room. But in truth he preferred to meet Mr. Manly in his own house, where his position as master would, he thought, place him on more equal terms.

The young men had not long to wait; the train came in punctually. Mrs. Hatton's good-tempered face was beaming with smiles.

'Ah, Harry,' she said to her son-in-law, Captain Worsley, 'here you are! And how's Gertrude? And, oh, the train is going on, and where *is* my large trunk? It isn't with the other luggage.'

'It's ridiklus,' said Admiral Hatton, who was not polished, 'to go about with a pack o' boxes.'

'The trunk is here, Mrs. Hatton,' said Mr. Manly with a smile.

'And this is Mr. Jack Ashworth, about whom I have heard so much,' said Mrs. Hatton, shaking hands heartily with him; 'you were a mere child when I saw you last, my dear.'

A cart was in waiting for the luggage, and then the question of the return journey was entered on.

'Would you like to drive the dog-cart?' asked Jack of Mr. Manly.

'Very much,' returned that gentleman, 'although if Worsley accompanies me he will probably criticise my style of driving.'

But Captain Worsley declared that Mr. Manly's driving was fully equal to his own.

The dog-cart took the lead; the carriage contained Admiral and Mrs. Hatton, Mrs. Manly and Jack. They drove through the leafy lanes at a good pace, the carriage going round by Penlist village to deposit Admiral and Mrs. Hatton at Ashworth Lodge. The gates of Rosemount were open; Mr. Manly drove up quickly; Mr. Challoner stood in the hall to receive him.

In place of the grave, somewhat gloomy-looking, stout, middle-aged man he had expected, he saw an active young man with a most genial manner, and one of the brightest smiles he had ever beheld. His fears were dissipated at once; he entirely forgot the formal speech he had prepared, and, holding out his hand, exclaimed heartily:

'How d'ye do, how d'ye do? Welcome to Rosemount, Mr. Manly!' To which greeting Mr. Manly most cordially responded.

'And where is Ethel?' asked Mrs. Worsley, coming forward.

'In the carriage. Here she comes,' replied her husband; and then Ethel was made much of, and taken over the house, and made to admire everything by Mrs. Worsley, seconded by Rose.

'How very young your husband looks!' said the latter.

'He is nearly forty,' replied Mrs. Manly.

'Is it possible? He looks barely thirty.'

'He is a most charming man,' said Mrs. Challoner, who had been talking to him in the drawing-room.

'He is as good as he is charming,' said Mrs. Manly simply.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POWER OF THE WILL.

THE two households at Penlist accorded admirably; as Mr. Challoner sometimes said, they were like one family, with all the pleasures and none of the pains of relationship. The two old Admirals amused themselves without any of the distractions suggested by Jack, and walked about by the hour together arm-in-arm, talking on naval subjects and about naval friends, and mourning and growling over the new systems of the service. Mrs. Hatton spent much of her time at Rosemount, and, while the young people were out, talked of Rose's approaching wedding with Mrs. Challoner.

'I am sure I am very glad my two girls are happily settled,' she confided. 'You know, Mrs. Challoner, if anything had happened to the Admiral, there should I have been left with only my pension, and nothing to look forward to. I dare say people ought to be resigned when they have next to nothing to live on, but it's so *much* nicer to be comfortable than resigned.'

'Rose will have money, but I am glad that she is going to be married,' said Mrs. Challoner. 'I think she will lead a more practical life; she and Jack are very dissimilar in character, still, I believe they will suit one another.'

'Well, you'll be glad when it's all over,' said Mrs. Hatton, crossing her fat hands on her lap. 'I'm sure, what with the worry about the dresses and the clothes and the furniture, one has no peace.'

'I do not anticipate any great amount of trouble,' replied Mrs. Challoner. 'Rose and I will join Jack in town before long, and choose the furniture together. They are not going to begin magnificently, and by ordering everything from one of these large firms we shall get everything done quickly. I shall buy a large part of the trousseau in town.'

'And where are they going to live?'

'In South Kensington. There is already a house selected subject to Rose's approval.'

'Perhaps our visits are delaying the preparations?'

'Indeed no. Mr. Challoner is delighted to have you, and so am I.'

There were excursions made in all directions—up the beautiful Tamar, to the Eddystone lighthouse, to the Land's End, to Plymouth, in fact everywhere, Mr. Challoner paying all expenses in a liberal manner that Mrs. Worsley said could only be designated as 'noble.'

An apparently trivial circumstance had great results.

On starting for the Eddystone in a large yacht, Mr. Manly excited the derision of the rest of the party by appearing in a pilot-coat, borrowed for the occasion, and leggings; furthermore, he insisted that his wife should take her waterproof cloak. The day was so fine and bright that these precautions were considered unnecessary. But when off the Eddystone a squall sprang up, a sea broke over the yacht, and the entire party were drenched.

'I'm very glad your mother and Mrs. Hatton are not here,' said Mr. Challoner ruefully, shaking his wet coat and looking at Rose's dress. 'How are we all to walk through Plymouth in this state?' For it had been arranged that they should land at Plymouth and finish the day there.

'We can't possibly do it,' said Mrs. Worsley; 'we look perfect sights.'

'But I *must* go,' returned Mr. Challoner, 'for I have business there.'

'You and Manly can land, and then we will return to Penlist in the yacht,' said Captain Worsley, who thought nothing of being wet, but did not care to walk through the streets of Plymouth with his trousers clinging to his legs.

'You must have known the squall was coming on, Harry,' said his wife.

'Of course I did; it's awfully jolly, I think, and adds to the fun.'

'Happy man!' said Mr. Challoner. 'You can afford to spoil a suit of clothes, and buy your wife a new dress: I can't.'

'I much question the new dress,' said Mrs. Worsley.

'Harry spends every spare farthing he has in hunting, so that there is not much for presents of new dresses over and above my allowance.'

'Take warning, Ashworth,' said Captain Worsley, 'and have your fling before you are married. Shall you stop his tobacco, Miss Challoner?'

Rose laughed, and said she would not go quite so far as that.

A stiff breeze was now blowing; the yacht heeled over considerably. The ladies were all seated on rugs on the weather side, the spray occasionally dashing over them.

Mr. Manly offered his coat to Mr. Challoner, but met with a positive refusal.

'I will sit down amongst the ladies,' said that gentleman, 'and cover myself up with rugs.'

The wind caused them to fly along.

'Shan't we take in a little sail, sir, on account of the ladies?' said the skipper to Captain Worsley.

'Not a bit of it,' returned that young man cheerfully; 'they are all capital sailors, and are as jolly as sand-boys.'

He looked at his wife, Mrs. Manly, and Rose as he spoke. They were all talking and laughing, their cheeks rosy, their hair somewhat untidy. Another yacht was coming up close behind them, with still more sail crowded on.

'They have too much canvas on for safety,' said Mr. Manly. 'That man who is giving the orders must be aware he is running a risk.'

A tall, commanding-looking man on board the strange yacht was talking to the helmsman. His back was turned to Mr. Challoner and his party. Mr. Manly made a few remarks to the ladies, and suddenly became aware that Rose's face had become suffused with vivid crimson, while Jack Ashworth was scowling furiously. He looked up and saw that the other yacht was almost alongside, and the strange gentleman was raising his hat. It was Mr. Fellerman.

'Hi, hi!' shouted Mr. Challoner, as the other vessel went by; 'we haven't seen you this age. Come to dinner, and sleep at Rosemount to-morrow, will you?'

'I will, thank you,' returned Mr. Fellerman, in clear tones; and then his yacht passed on and he was out of hearing.

'That is a friend of yours?' asked Mr. Manly.

'Well, yes,' returned Mr. Challoner, and then it suddenly occurred to him that perhaps Jack Ashworth might quarrel with Mr. Fellerman. 'You and he parted on good terms, I hope,' he said, turning to Jack.

'Oh, quite so.'

'And, of course, you'll look in to-morrow night as usual?'

'*No*, sir,' said Jack; 'you will excuse me to-morrow night. I will never meet that man if I can help it, for on every occasion that I have done so I have felt that I should like to murder him.'

'Don't be a fool, Jack!' said Mrs. Worsley.

'He has a most riling effect on *me*,' said her husband.

'Dear me!' said Mr. Challoner; 'I think he is a most agreeable man.'

'He is marvellously clever,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'and I should very much like to hear Mr. Manly's opinion of him' (for her brother-in-law had not been able to persuade her to call him by his Christian name).

Mr. Barnard was of the party; he now spoke suddenly, his eyes lighting up.

'If Mr. Manly is of my opinion,' he said quickly, 'he will recognise him as a man to be honoured and revered and admired.'

This outburst was so foreign to Mr. Barnard's usual mode of speech that the company looked somewhat astonished. He said no more, and, lighting his pipe, went forward.

'I will give my candid opinion after I have met him,' said Mr. Manly, 'I am a great believer in physiognomy.'

'All I can say is,' said Jack, 'that he always makes me feel as if I were no gentleman when in his presence, and that he causes me to appear like an awkward schoolboy.'

'It is not pleasant to feel thus concerning anyone,' returned Mr. Manly. 'I think you do well to avoid him.'

They had now passed the breakwater and Drake's Island, and proposed landing Mr. Challoner and Mr. Manly at Stonehouse. The water was smooth when the boat was lowered, and Mr. Manly entered her looking the picture of clerical correctness, having divested himself of his coat and leggings.

'Good-bye, dear,' he said to his wife; 'if I were not

going to call on a brother clergyman you should come with me.'

Mrs. Manly smiled.

'Depend upon it, he's up to some lark, and doesn't want you,' said Captain Worsley.

Mr. Manly replied that if so it was a very inoffensive one, and the boat pulled away. The first person they met in Union Street was Mr. Fellerman, whom Mr. Challoner at once introduced, and proposed that all three should lunch together.

It was late when they entered the nearest hotel, and the dishes supplied met with Mr. Challoner's hearty disapproval.

'We must make up for it by the wine,' he said; 'come, order what you please, both of you. Oh, I forgot; Mr. Manly drinks water.'

'And I, too,' said Mr. Fellerman. 'I *always* take it, except when by refusing wine I may offend the prejudices of my friends.'

'For the sake of principle or example?' asked Mr. Manly.

'It is one of the tenets of my creed.'

'May I ask what your creed is?'

'It is one that is not at all understood in England, and meets with scant favour. One day it will be better known.'

Mr. Manly forebore to press the question, and entered into general conversation, Mr. Challoner grumbling the while at the sherry.

'Perhaps you might entertain one another while I go to the club, where I have really some business.'

Both gentlemen declared their entire readiness to acquiesce in this arrangement, and Mr. Manly said he would pay his visit later on. He was already strongly interested in Mr. Fellerman, and greatly inclined to study his character. There was something about him which at present the clergyman could not understand; opposite characteristics revealed themselves in his countenance, and formed an interesting field of research to a man of strong intellectual and pyschological sympathies.

On Mr. Challoner's departure the conversation took a far more scientific turn, and many deep subjects were entered on. The topic of the present day, belief in spiritual affinity,

was discussed. Mr. Manly, who above all things was noted for his highly practical life, declared that there was a great deal to be said in its favour.

'That there are certain influences above and around us, to which three-fourths of the world are blind and deaf, is an incontestable fact; but that these influences are made the occasion of arrant deception, imposture, and charlatanism to those who fail to understand them aright is also true.'

'It is but seldom that an Englishman will acknowledge this,' said Mr. Fellerman; 'but as you do, I ask you what you think, then, of the mighty power of the human will?'

'That is a subject on which I am not prepared to enter,' said Mr. Manly; 'it is open to so many interpretations and to so many abuses.'

'I can speak to you as I would not to one other of your fellow-countrymen. Tell me, then——'

'Why do you say "my fellow-countrymen"?' interrupted Mr. Manly. 'I beg your pardon for checking your speech, but are you not English?'

'I do not consider myself so. Do you not believe, I was about to ask, that occasionally a man or woman may be met who is endowed with tenfold strength of will, and that, by cultivating the power of that will, in the same manner as you would cultivate any other faculty, its possessor may do almost anything he or she pleases?'

'It is a most dangerous doctrine,' said Mr. Manly.

'By this I do not mean mesmerism; I mean that, in some people, the will alone causes thought to be actually conveyed to certain other people (those who are mentally constituted for being recipients of ideas), just as clearly as by actual words, and that this communication may be brought to a high state of perfection.'

'Like a medium and mesmerist?'

'Not so—as between two perfectly conscious human beings.'

'Try it on me,' said Mr. Manly with a smile.

Mr. Fellerman shook his head. 'It would be no use. I question whether your will is not as strong as my own.'

'I have certainly felt on very rare occasions, and in moments of great intellectual activity, that I have communicated thought,' said Mr. Manly; 'but these times have been very infrequent, and, I repeat, such a doctrine is highly

dangerous. Everyone knows that, when two people are sitting together, the same thought may simultaneously occur to them both, but that is a totally different thing to your theory.' And then the conversation turned on other subjects.

'Why can't you come back with us to-day?' asked Mr. Challoner, on his return.

'I will do so if you like,' Mr. Fellerman replied. 'Mr. Manly and I have not nearly finished our conversation.'

'What were you talking about—churches?'

'We were talking metaphysics,' replied Mr. Manly.

'Then I hope the subject will be changed on the road home,' said Mr. Challoner, 'for I know nothing about 'em. Everyone at the club asked me if I had come from a sea voyage,' he continued, looking enviously at the younger men's scrupulous attire.

They had scarcely entered Rosemount on their return, when Mrs. Worsley flew to her brother-in-law and asked him privately what he thought of Mr. Fellerman.

'I think him a very wonderful man,' was the reply.

'If *you* think so, I will try to like him,' she said.

Dinner passed off quietly; the conversation was general. A messenger had been sent to warn Jack Ashworth, who did not thereupon make his appearance.

Mrs. Manly was looking exceedingly well. Mr. Fellerman observed her attentively; to Rose at present he had only said, 'How do you do?'

Mr. Manly was sitting in one of the alcoves in the drawing-room after dinner, when his wife came to him, pale and trembling. 'Phil,' she said, 'I am afraid of him.'

'You are not afraid of anyone with *me* here, my darling,' he replied, putting his arm about her.

'No, never when I know *you* are here.'

Mr. Manly set his determined mouth, and crossed over to Mr. Fellerman. 'A word with you outside, if you please, Mr. Fellerman,' he said sternly. 'What do you mean by experimenting on my wife?'

CHAPTER XIV.

METAPHYSICS.

THE two gentlemen went out into the hall, thence into the garden.

'I desire,' said Mr. Manly, still in the same stern tones, 'that you do not attempt to exercise your powers on my wife; I say "attempt," because I am very sure that I can defy you to have the smallest influence over her, but she is a woman of a delicate organization, and you alarm her. I expressly forbid it. Should you try any experiment on her again, I will take most certain steps to prevent its recurrence.'

'I will not affect to misunderstand you,' said Mr. Fellerman, without a shade of offence on his handsome face, 'for I understand you perfectly. It is, of course, quite open to me to say that you are talking nonsense, and that all I have done has been to look at your wife, which, of course, I am at perfect liberty to do, so long as my observation is not too marked. But I acknowledge that I *was* trying an experiment, and I further declare that it shall not be repeated.'

Mr. Manly's brow cleared; his mouth relaxed from its sternness.

'I am not saying this,' continued Mr. Fellerman, 'because I am quite aware that you are far more highly thought of in this household than I, a stranger, an unknown stranger, and that a word from you to Mr. Challoner would probably give me my *congé*; I know all *that*, but it does not influence me in the least.'

'What is your motive in so readily acceding to my wish?' asked Mr. Manly.

'Your wish?' repeated Mr. Fellerman with a smile. 'Say rather your command. I will tell you. I suppose it is quite certain in your eyes that I must have a motive, and that that motive cannot be a good one?'

'By no means,' returned Mr. Manly with decision, his

clear-cut, spare face lighting up as he spoke; 'I should say, if I may be allowed to express my opinion, that you were a man capable of extremely kind actions, and, what ranks higher, kind thoughts. I saw the way in which the dogs all fawned on you as you entered these gates. I marked the grooms' smiles as you spoke to them at the stables (and although grooms are accessible to half-crowns, they are not at all bad judges of character), and I heard Mr. Barnard's warm and enthusiastic encomium on you, added to which, and above all, there is the testimony of your countenance. Still, in this instance I do *not* think you were actuated simply by kindness of heart.'

'You are quite right,' said Mr. Fellerman. 'I respect you, and would not willingly offend you; but in this instance my experiment had failed already, and I did not intend repeating it.'

'What was it?'

'Mrs. Manly interested me extremely during dinner-time —you may remember I sat next her?'

'Yes.'

'I recognise in her a woman of delicate sympathies, and graceful, though not powerful, intellect.'

'You are quite right.'

'It is impossible to be in her society without recognising also the fact that her whole heart is full of love for you.'

'As it should be,' replied Mr. Manly, again with some touch of sternness.

'Exactly, as it should be,' replied Mr. Fellerman, with a slight shrug, 'but as all married ladies' hearts are not towards their husbands. I am quite aware that the power of love is a tremendous and absorbing passion, judging by what I have seen and heard; but I have never experienced it myself. I am therefore not quite in a position to decide on the effect it may produce on any man or woman. But I wished to ascertain whether my will would have power over a woman who was already completely under the influence of another man, a woman who without such influence would, I knew, be an admirable subject.'

'You are a bold man to confess as much to me,' said Mr. Manly, with the strongest disapprobation in his voice.

'Possibly; but I prefer to tell you the truth. I willed her to do some simple action, take up a book, or what not,

such as mesmerists and thought-readers cause to be performed by contact, and instead of doing it she went straight to you. Will you express my regret to her that I should have alarmed her?'

'I do not believe in such nonsense,' said Mr. Manly, with some impatience in his voice. 'You cannot expect me to credit you with supernatural powers, and to make me think that you can compel everyone to do as you please, unless he or she is already influenced by someone else. I will believe it if you coerce *me*—not otherwise.'

'I have already told you that I have no power over *you*. Neither do I claim to have any over those whose intellectual perceptions are dulled, or whose animal propensities are dominant. You must have read in all the papers how so-called thought-readers have tenfold more power with clergymen, barristers, cultivated men, than with farmers and such-like people whose imaginations are not called into play by their professions. It is my theory also, that people who are in what is called rude health are not actually capable of experiencing those higher flights of imagination which are life to poets, painters, and musicians. They have profound enjoyment in their animal spirits—miserable enjoyment as it is—and the thoughts of which I am speaking are as a sealed book to them.'

'I would not underrate physical enjoyment,' said Mr. Manly; 'it is a great power for good.'

'I will not contradict you,' said Mr. Fellerman, in a tone that plainly declared, 'I do not agree with you.'

'But may I ask for what purpose (supposing it to be a fact that you possess it—only *supposing*, mind you) do you exercise this will of yours—out of sheer love of power?'

'Certainly not,' replied Mr. Fellerman; 'a far deeper purpose underlies it. My will is exercised in order to work as a mighty power in the spread of my religion.'

'I should be glad if you would tell me what your religion is.'

The two men had been pacing up and down the lawn during this long conversation; the stars were out, there was a faint light. It shone on Mr. Fellerman's face as he replied with earnestness, 'My religion is the Ancient Creed.'

'Which means that you prefer not to tell me,' said Mr.

Manly. 'I have notwithstanding to thank you for a most interesting conversation.'

Their prolonged absence was exciting some comment in the drawing-room. Mrs. Worsley had remarked Mr. Manly's expression as he left the room, and felt uneasy.

'I hope there's no quarrel going on,' she said to her husband; 'with two such men it would be a serious matter.'

'I should rather like to see them squaring up to one another,' he replied, 'but there's no chance of *that*. They were on the best of terms after dinner, and talked almost exclusively to one another.'

Mrs. Manly had remained seated in the alcove—she was feeling far more uneasy than her sister—while Rose spent her time in looking anxiously out of the window, whence she could see the gentlemen walking up and down, still talking earnestly.

'I am somewhat surprised,' said Mr. Manly, 'that you should never have known love. There are few men but have been once in their lives under its influence.'

'I have never been,' returned Mr. Fellerman. 'I hope I never shall be. It would sadden my life, seeing that I can never marry.'

'Are you—pardon me, and do not reply if you feel my question a liberty—are you bound to celibacy by any vow?'

'No. Such vows as I take are voluntary, and can be laid aside at will. But marriage would injure my sphere of usefulness, therefore I cannot enter into it.'

'I hope, then, that you may never love,' said Mr. Manly kindly, 'or a great trouble will overtake you. I should say you were a man on whom love would take tremendous hold.'

'I agree with you; I see you are a reader of character. When one hears of the "eternal verities," I suppose most people imagine love to be one of them.'

'Most decidedly,' said Mr. Manly gravely, 'and that not only Divine, but human love.'

'Into that point I will not enter with you. I imagine that all men who think admit that the *possibilities* of life are infinite, and that we can realize through our brain alone conditions quite apart from anything in this world, the germ of which must come from *something*. Whether, in the present-day jargon, you term it spiritual exaltation, spiritual

affinity, occult force, or what not, it still remains a fact that to the thinking world there are more things in heaven and earth than this world's philosophy dreams of.'

'I agree with you there,' said Mr. Manly; 'I hold most firmly that our life, instead of breaking off at death, simply *goes on*, and that, even in this world, as our *real* life advances, tangible substances—body, circumstances, call it what you will—lose their hold on us to a certain extent. By life you must not understand me to mean length of years. A man at sixty who has led an uneventful, commonplace life may in reality be younger than a man of thirty whose mental and spiritual forces are strongly developed and exercised, and who leads a life of constant action. It is my view (which, not being ascertained fact, but simply my view, I do not therefore impart to my congregation) that death is our own life immeasurably developed, but still *our own*, and may possibly be only our release from the bonds of time and space.'

'Into this subject I will not enter,' said Mr. Fellerman; 'we should differ, to a certainty. You cannot alter my views; I cannot alter yours. I have never talked with an English clergyman except to enter into mere surface conversation; do all clergymen think with you? are all prepared to admit there is more around them than the material world while they are still living in it?'

'I do not think my views are shared by the majority,' said Mr. Manly; 'in point of fact, I scarcely ever declare them. My life is so full of work that my teaching is bound to be thoroughly practical. I do not think it advisable to allow theoretical subjects to take the place of everyday duties. But ought we not to return to the drawing-room? We shall be missed.'

On entering Mr. Manly at once sought his wife; the basket of flowers in front of the alcove almost screened them from observation. He sat down beside her and put his arm round her waist.

'My darling,' he said, 'you have no cause to be afraid of Mr. Fellerman—or anyone. But always come to me when you are troubled, as you have done to-night.'

She looked at him, her eyes bright with love.

'I will, Phil. I should like *always* to be with you.'

He rose, and, standing at the entrance of the alcove,

beckoned to Mr. Fellerman, who came at once. Mr. Manly walked away.

'Accept my truest apology for having in any way alarmed you, Mrs. Manly,' said Mr. Fellerman in a really charming manner and with easy grace; 'I have explained the matter to your husband and promised him you shall have no cause to fear me again;' and with a bow he left her.

She looked across at her husband and smiled; he saw she was completely reassured.

'Really you two gentlemen have been too bad,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'you might have tolerated ladies' society for one evening.'

'We are ready to atone in any manner you may think fit,' said Mr. Manly, laughing.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. BARNARD'S RESCUE.

'I SHALL not inconvenience your household, I trust,' said Mr. Fellerman when the ladies had retired, 'if I go out on the rocks for a short time.'

'Not at all,' said Mr. Challoner, 'stay out as long as you please. You can get in by one of the dining-room French windows. Perhaps you will be good enough to bolt it on your return.'

'I will certainly do so.'

Mr. Fellerman walked across the lawn and on to the beach, thence climbing the rocks of the headland. He took out no pipe or cigar, but stood looking out seawards, apparently lost in thought.

'Mr. Manly was right,' he said after a time; 'it is not my nature to be cruel, yet cruel I must be. There is no alternative if my mission is to succeed.'

As he spoke a figure which he could not recognise in the darkness came towards him.

'Is it our dear Mr. Ashworth?' he said to himself with a perceptible sneer; 'no, my friend, my cruelty towards *you* will not disturb me one whit.'

But it was not Jack, it was Mr. Barnard who came forward.

'What are you doing here so late at night?' asked Mr. Fellerman, struck by the look of care in the other's eyes.

'I was rather thinking whether I should not jump off these rocks into the sea and have done with it,' said the other bitterly.

'What is the trouble?'

'Every trouble. You know my history; you know that I have neither home, nor friends, nor reputation, nor love, nor money.'

'A strong man will rise superior to calamity.'

'Did I ever profess to be a strong man—in mind, that is?' said Mr. Barnard with some irritation.

'What is the most pressing trouble just now?'

'If I tell you you will not imagine I am either asking or expecting help?'

'I will not.'

'My worst trouble just at present is money: I owe fifty pounds and am daily dunned for payment. I *can't* pay it; I can barely live.'

'Supposing that trouble were removed, would you then jump off yonder rocks and drown yourself?'

'I do not think I should. No, I am sure I should not. I have given up all intention of doing so now.'

'It is well.'

Mr. Fellerman took out a pocket-book full of notes.

'I drew one hundred pounds from the Plymouth bank to-day,' he said, and, halving the notes, he handed one packet to Mr. Barnard.

'I can't take it,' said the latter. 'I accepted your kindness before, your very great kindness, but, deeply as I thank you, I can't live on charity.'

'It is a loan,' said Mr. Fellerman. 'You shall repay me.'

'I have never repaid one farthing of the former loan.'

'Your circumstances may improve, probably will.'

'Who would imagine that my father, my religious father, is a rich man?' said Mr. Barnard, still more bitterly; 'but he will leave me nothing, I know, and give me nothing.'

'Accept this loan from me as you would from a brother,' replied Fellerman; 'let it not trouble you in the least. I do not want for money.'

'I cannot understand it,' said Mr. Barnard. 'I will accept your kindness and ask blessings on your head. As Heaven is my witness, I will serve you one day if I can. Whatever may lie in my power to do for you, call on me to do it, and I will, no matter at what cost to myself.'

He bared his head as he spoke; he evidently looked on his words in the nature of a vow.

'I have had some idea of asking you to join your lot to mine. You might, perhaps, do better than you are doing now. You have been an English clergyman, I believe?'

'I am one now.'

'Your vows are still binding?'

'Certainly.'

'And your prejudices or beliefs are strong?'

Mr. Barnard hesitated.

'I believe in the truth of my profession.'

'Then you would be quite unsuitable to me. I did not know until I met Mr. Manly that clergymen believed as well as preached.'

There was no sarcasm intended, but the words struck Mr. Barnard as grim irony. *He* believed, but, alas! he did not practise his belief. He parted from Mr. Fellerman with a few kindly words. Mr. Manly was still up when the latter returned.

'I found my wife asleep when I went upstairs,' he said, 'and, not being sleepy myself, I returned to the library to read. In my bachelor days I never went to bed early; I cannot sleep too many hours.'

'I should rather like to call your attention to a case more in your way than mine. I refer to Mr. Barnard. Look after him; he needs it.'

'I will do what I can,' said Mr. Manly; 'but I know next to nothing of him. What help does he require?'

'Mental help and succour.'

'I will go and see him to-morrow.'

'I suppose you often hear strange histories in the course of your ministry?'

'Marvellous!' said Mr. Manly. 'Few people would credit the amazing family revelations made to clergymen and doctors about apparently happy households.'

'And yet,' said Mr. Fellerman scornfully, 'when other people hear something that is not about actual commonplace life, they say, "Absurd! Quite improbable! impossible!" believing that *their* petty bonds of custom must limit all things.'

'I should like to hear *your* history,' returned Mr. Manly.

'Perhaps you may one day.'

He spoke incredulously, little dreaming his words would be fulfilled. Immediately after breakfast the next morning Mr. Manly called on Mr. Barnard, but was told that he had paid his bill and left Penlist; neither did his landlady know his destination.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROJECTED WEDDING.

THAT Jack Ashworth was in a bad temper there was not the slightest doubt. He was moody and silent during dinner-time, and on Mrs. Hatton's rallying him on his preoccupation, he had scarcely roused himself to answer.

'As Master Jack has chosen to be absent from his sweetheart for one evening, we can have a rubber,' said Admiral Hatton after dinner, being quite unconscious of the cause of the young man's staying at home.

'Certainly,' said Admiral Ashworth; 'and Mrs. Hatton will, I hope, do me the honour of becoming my partner.'

Whist is an admirable game, but it may fairly be questioned whether even a saint would not be provoked did his partner decline to return his lead in trumps, and occasionally play, as third hand, the lowest card. Admiral Hatton became furious, and, disregarding Cavendish's most admirable advice never to scold your partner, rated Jack in fine style, till that young man at last laughed and declared that he could not even remember which was the turn-up card that evening.

'Stuff an' nonsense!' retorted Admiral Hatton. 'It's ridiculous to have your head so full of a girl, whom you will be able to see every day of your life soon, that you can't play a decent game with a partner like *me!*'

His stout figure swelled with indignation as he spoke, his face was very red, and in the exuberance of his feelings he pushed back his spectacles on to his white hair.

'Never mind, my dear,' said Mrs. Hatton calmly; 'we are not playing for money, you know, and young men don't care to play without, and with old fogies like ourselves.'

'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hatton,' said Jack; 'you are a charming adversary.'

'Yes, because she plays as badly as you are doing to-night,' growled Admiral Hatton.

'The fact of the matter is that I can't collect my ideas,' said Jack, 'and I know I owe you an apology, Admiral Hatton, for being so bad a partner. I can't play, and there's an end of it.'

He left the table as he spoke, the rubber having ended in his own and his partner's ignominious defeat, and walked out.

'My boy,' said Admiral Ashworth that night, 'what is troubling you?'

'It is that man Fellerman,' replied Jack, and detailed the fact of his resentment.

'There must surely be some cause for your feeling thus,' said Admiral Ashworth. 'I will write to Major Lothian and ask what he knows of him.'

He did so; the answer came by the next post. It was to the effect that Major Lothian knew nothing whatever about Mr. Fellerman beyond the fact of his having been introduced by someone whose name Major Lothian had forgotten; but that, finding Mr. Fellerman a very agreeable man, and knowing that the Admiral had no ladies in his household, Major Lothian had offered a letter of introduction, having himself once experienced the dulness of Penlist, and feeling sorry for any friendless man who should stay there. He hoped that nothing had occurred to make him regret having given the letter.

'I must write and say that we have nothing against Mr. Fellerman,' said Admiral Ashworth.

'By all means, pater,' replied Jack. 'Write and say that, on the contrary, we all find him quite too utterly charming.'

'You will feel happier when you are married,' said Admiral Ashworth. 'An engagement is worrying to a man.'

'Yes, pater, I shall be glad to be married,' said Jack. 'I don't suppose Fellerman will show his face inside *my* doors,' he added, with a laugh. 'But, of course, you must write a civil letter to Major Lothian. It would scarcely be in accordance with the usages of polite society to say only,

> '"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,
> The reason why I cannot tell."

But I never had the slightest idea before what a true bit of poetry that was. Who wrote it?'

On the day succeeding Mr. Fellerman's arrival at Rosemount, Jack made up his mind that to keep away from the girl he loved simply because another man was staying in the house was a childish course of proceeding. He would avoid Fellerman all he could, but he would no longer be kept away from Rose by him.

But on entering Mr. Challoner's grounds all Jack's anger returned. Not far from the beach he saw the young lady, and by her side was Mr. Fellerman. An earnest conversation was evidently taking place.

His first impulse was to go away; his second, on which he acted, was to walk up and say quickly:

'How do you do, Rose? I shall be glad if you can take a walk with me.'

Mr. Fellerman he entirely ignored.

'I am very sorry,' she replied quietly, 'but it is quite impossible for me to do so now. I am fully engaged with our visitors.'

'So it appears,' said Jack, turning on his heel and going away, but not before he had been, as usual, goaded to fury by Mr. Fellerman's smile.

'I have not congratulated you yet, Miss Challoner,' said Mr. Fellerman; 'am I to do so now? Is it a fact that you are going to marry that somewhat impetuous young gentleman?'

'Yes,' answered Rose, secretly chafing that Jack so invariably put himself in the wrong where Mr. Fellerman was concerned.

'Am I to wish you happiness—with him?'

She coloured and made no reply. He marked her pure and lovely complexion in the brilliant sunlight; her great beauty struck him.

For a single moment a warm gleam came into his eyes as he proceeded to say:

'Perhaps I will wish you happiness—if it be your view that happiness is desirable—without him.'

'What do you mean?' she asked; 'I am going to marry him.'

'That is your present intention,' he replied. 'You intend seeking happiness, I suppose, but whoever found it for the seeking?'

'It is good to be happy.'

'"Not to serve the foolish,
But to serve the wise,
To honour those worthy of honour:
This is the greatest blessing.
Beneath the stroke of life's changes,
The mind that shaketh not
Without grief or passion, and secure:
This is the greatest blessing,"'

he quoted.

'I do not remember those lines; where are they taken from?' she asked—'from Carlyle?'

'*Carlyle!*' he repeated, with some scorn; 'when Carlyle's name shall no longer be remembered they shall live, as they have lived in the long roll of centuries. Listen yet again:

'"Many gods and men
Have held various blessings
When they were yearning for happiness."

Do *you* yearn for happiness, Miss Challoner?'

'I do not know,' she replied. 'I never remember being *radiantly*, *excessively* happy.'

'I have heard that those who love do feel so when their love is returned. It is plain that other paths in the quest of happiness are still open.' His face had been dreamy; it suddenly changed as he said briskly, in a totally different tone, 'I have wearied you, I fear, Miss Challoner. Shall I go in search of Mr. Ashworth? Why would he not come last night?'

'He did not wish to meet you,' she replied with hesitation.

'In that case I cannot stay longer at your father's house. I ought not; but do *you* wish me to go?'

She looked up at him as she had never looked at Jack, with a soft light in her eyes.

'I do not wish it,' she said.

'Notwithstanding, I must do so; the laws of courtesy demand it. But I shall see you again before your marriage. Meantime, give up some of the ideas you have already formed, and think well over what I have said, remembering also that "he who formerly was heedless may afterwards become earnest."'

He bowed and left her, making his farewells quickly to those within the house on the plea of business, and shortly after leaving Penlist.

The time had now come for the departure of all the visitors except Mrs. Worsley, who was to remain for an indefinite length of time.

Mr. and Mrs. Manly were the first to go, under promise of returning in June for Rose's wedding, Mr. Manly having offered to assist in performing the ceremony. Captain Worsley went next, and lastly Admiral and Mrs. Hatton, who were also to return for the wedding.

'I'm sure,' said Mrs. Hatton, 'it feels as if Jack were our own son, considering my girls are such friends of everyone's.'

It was not a lucid speech, but Admiral Ashworth understood and thanked her, saying that he felt quite as warmly towards both her daughters, more especially Gertrude.

Jack went up to town on the understanding that both Mrs. Challoner and Rose would go there shortly on account of the preparations to be made, and so both households relapsed into quietness.

'If it wasn't for flirting with the Admiral,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'I really couldn't live in such a place.'

Still the days seemed to pass quickly; the house was gradually becoming filled with new dresses, and bonnets, and linen, and presents, until Mr. Challoner declared that life was too short to bear more than the misery of one wedding in a family, and threatened to live at his club altogether if any more parcels came into the house.

But in May, when the time for the visit to London had arrived, Rose begged her mother to go alone. There would be no pleasure in seeing Jack in the midst of so much business, she said, and she would vastly prefer trusting to her mother's judgment about the furniture to exercising her own. As Mr. Challoner was to pay for it, it followed as a matter of course that Jack would be pleased with so handsome a present, and would scarcely criticise anything; indeed, he could not even be prevailed upon to give an opinion as to the carpets, although Mrs. Challoner insisted on his going with her to choose them.

He was rather sore on the subject of Rose's refusal to go to town, but when it was explained to him that there was no love lost between her and the aunt, Mrs. Matthews,

with whom Mrs. Challoner was staying, he said no more. He was in high spirits, and every day bought some present for his bride, until Mrs. Challoner requested him as a personal favour to purchase nothing more, or he would never learn prudence and the highly desirable art of living within his income.

The house chosen met with her complete approval. It was compact, and not too large. There were a dining-room and drawing-room of very fair size, kitchens, etc., and five bedrooms.

'Ample for two young people,' said Mrs. Challoner. 'When your income increases you can move if you wish. It is much better to have a small house well kept than a large one looking shabby.'

'Do you think Rose will let me have a few fellows to supper sometimes?' he asked, as he inspected the comfortable armchairs in the dining-room.

'She will be very foolish if she does not,' said Mrs. Challoner.

'There is only one misgiving that I have concerning her,' said the young man thoughtfully. 'Shall I tell you what it is?'

'By all means.'

'I am sure I have every reason to expect the greatest happiness, and you know what I think of her, that she is a million times too good and too beautiful for me; the only thing is——'

'Well,' said Mrs. Challoner encouragingly.

'You know,' continued Jack, 'it's very delightful and very creditable, and all that, to have grand and splendid ideas, and I'm sure *I* haven't any of my own; but I hope she won't be always up in the clouds, and will have time to think about *me*, and be jolly, and, in short, like every other girl.'

'I quite understand you,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'I have sometimes a little dreaded her preoccupation myself. But depend upon it, when she is once married, and has you to think of constantly, and perhaps children, she will lose her unpractical ways. Girls' lives are so empty very often that they dream in order to have food for their thoughts.'

'I am sure I ought not to complain,' said Jack, 'for she has been sweetness itself to me, and the only tiff we ever

had since our engagement was when Fellerman was down at Penlist, and that was quickly made up, and was, I dare say, all my fault. By the way, has he been down since?'

'If so, we have not seen him; had he been in the neighbourhood I should think he would have called.'

And then Mrs. Challoner conducted Jack to his dressing-room, which was replete with every modern comfort, and which he admired so much as to entirely forget Mr. Fellerman.

There was now nothing further to keep Mrs. Challoner in town; the house was furnished, the trousseau completed, the wedding-cake and the bouquets were ordered. She returned to Penlist feeling that she had done her duty nobly, and that the plaudits of an assembled crowd would be simply her due. Rose met her at the station, looking blooming.

'How remarkably well and happy you are looking!' said her mother. 'I am sure Gertrude was wrong in saying that engaged girls always go off; you, on the contrary, have improved. The wedding-day is drawing very near, my child.'

And then a little tender conversation took place, after which, on their arrival at home, sundry packages were inspected in the drawing-room, until Mr. Challoner said that if he could not go to his club he should be obliged to ask Admiral Ashworth to receive him—that the house was becoming a pigsty.

Day after day went by until the week appointed for the wedding came round. Great preparations were being made in the village; the gardens were ablaze with flowers in the June sun; the cottagers were anxious and determined to cut their choicest blossoms to strew under the feet of the bride. A general holiday was to be observed, and Mr. Challoner was to pay for a feast in the afternoon, which was to include as guests all the fisher-folk with their wives and families. The church had been cleaned, and scarlet cloth put down the aisles; a covered way had been erected from the gates to the porch in case of rain, and old Mr. Morris had taken care to provide himself with a clean surplice for the occasion. He had written to Mr. Manly, asking him to take the principal part in the service; but Mr. Manly had replied that he should much prefer to assist, as already arranged.

Jack came down looking handsome and happy, and after him all the other guests, with the exception of the best man, who was to arrive in Plymouth the night before the wedding. Try as he would, Jack did not seem able to get Rose to himself, except for the first five minutes of his coming to Rosemount, when, although she had received him very kindly, she had struggled from his embrace, saying that people were coming, which was true enough, for in walked some visitors from Plymouth.

Whenever he wanted her he was told either that she was trying on dresses, or occupied in some other way. The bridesmaids had arrived, four pretty genial girls, her school-fellows (also those of Mrs. Manly and Mrs. Worsley), so that the chatter was incessant. Mr. Manly said that it was much worse than a meeting of district visitors, for they all listened to him and treated him with the utmost deference, while here he was looked on simply as a piece of wedding furniture.

'It is the only time then,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'in which a clergyman is not of much account, but I must allow that at a wedding the bride comes first.'

The day before the wedding opened brilliantly; directly after breakfast Jack sought Rose and asked her to go under the trees with him. They walked down a cool avenue, completely hidden from observation by the leafy branches.

'I am going to Plymouth, my darling,' he said, 'to meet my best man, McArthur. I shall sleep there and come down with him to-morrow morning, and meet you in church.'

'But why?'

'I am restless and unsettled; I cannot get through the time here. You know I shall not see you alone for a single moment after noon to-day, and I am counting the hours until to-morrow. Pater quite agrees with me that it is advisable. I shall spend a little time with the dear old man, and then go off to Plymouth. Don't keep me waiting to-morrow, Rose, will you?'

She said she would not.

'Pater has bought a new coat for the wedding; I feel quite proud of him in it, and I shouldn't wonder if Admiral Hatton didn't literally follow suit. I know that Mrs. Hatton will be gorgeous in a new silk dress and bonnet.

Just as if anyone would look at the other people when my beautiful Rose will be there!' Then he took her in his arms and spoke with deep feeling, his hands lingering lovingly on her head. 'May God bless and keep you, my darling, my darling!'

He walked away with evident reluctance, turning round still to look at her, and then he came back, and, once more taking her in his arms, pressed his lips to hers with a look in his eyes that was almost pain.

She withdrew herself, and, going towards the house, said lightly:

'Good-bye, Jack, and don't keep *me* waiting to-morrow.'

The wedding-dress was laid out, the wedding presents were displayed, a magnificent breakfast from Plymouth was prepared. The bridesmaids and guests laughed and chattered, and showed their dresses to one another, or compared notes as to our Foreign prospects; but while all this hearty, pleasant intercourse was going on, Rose kept her room, and after dinner stole out in the dusk on to the rocks, a white and strained look on her face.

A man came towards her; she saw it was not one of the fishermen, and would have gone away, but on recognising Mr. Barnard she stood still and allowed him to approach. He was looking old and haggard; his face was full of keen suffering.

'I came,' he said, in a voice hoarse with agitation, 'because I could no longer stay away. I felt I *must* see you before you were married.'

'Why?' asked Rose in surprise.

'Why? Because I *love* you, love you with my whole soul. I have not even enough manhood left to refrain from telling you this, though I know I ought not to say a word. I am enduring *torment* on your account. Tell me, could you ever feel so about Ashworth?'

'Certainly not,' replied Rose, who was beginning to think Mr. Barnard must be mad.

'Then, you do not love him, for love such as I feel is one perpetual torture. I will save you from him, there is yet time;' and, going on his knees before her, he made an impassioned appeal, and Mr. Polwheel, who was listening behind the rocks, heard it!

* * * * *

The wedding-day opened in brilliant sunshine: there was scarcely a cloud in the sky; the air was delicious; it was a fitting day for a bridal. The church was opened and garnished, the congregation assembled; Mr. Morris entered the vestry and robed, looking about for Mr. Manly. The guests from Plymouth arrived, all in handsome attire; then came Jack, with his best man, in a vehicle direct from Saltash Station. He walked up the church, greeting his friends and looking anxiously towards the door. The appointed time had arrived, eleven o'clock struck. He marked a confused crowd of guests at the porch, he noted that Mr. Manly was unrobed and was looking troubled; and then suddenly his heart sank within him as he saw the clergyman walk quickly towards him. The bridesmaids were there, but—where was the bride?

CHAPTER XVII.

WHERE WAS THE BRIDE?

MR. MANLY laid his hand on Jack's arm, saying very kindly, 'Come with me into the vestry.'

The young man's face turned white; as he followed Mr. Manly he saw the crowd in the church talking together eagerly.

'What is wrong?' he asked.

'Ashworth,' said Mr. Manly, placing his hand on Jack's shoulder and speaking with a depth of compassion in his voice, 'I fear there is trouble in store for you. We cannot find Rose.'

'Not find her,' echoed Jack—'not find her? What do you mean?'

'I will tell you all I can. Mrs. Challoner was up early this morning, as were most of us; I myself was out at six o'clock for my usual swim from the rocks. Mrs. Challoner would not allow Rose to be called, but at nine o'clock she herself entered her daughter's room. It was empty. She searched in vain for her all over the house, and then requested me, and everyone else, to look about the grounds and beach, and so on, thinking that she might have taken an early walk and forgotten the time. We have been searching ever since, every moment hoping to find her, and that she might still have time to dress and meet you here. Grooms have been sent in all directions on horseback, but they cannot meet with any trace of her.'

'Had her bed been slept in?' asked Jack hoarsely, in his eyes a look of fierce pain.

'Yes; her wedding-dress was laid out ready to put on, and everything was prepared for to-day.'

'Was there any letter left?'

'Nothing; we have looked carefully. Her hat and gloves are missing, and she must have worn her ordinary morning dress—something blue, her mother said it was.'

Jack remembered it well, a blue morning-dress trimmed with strong washing lace, which he had particularly admired.

'*I* will go and search,' he said. 'She *can't* have left me. There must be some accident; she has fallen down the rocks or something.'

'I trust she may be near,' said Mr. Manly kindly; 'but I must tell you that I myself have examined minutely every portion of the rocks where a lady could possibly climb, and others beside me have been looking also.'

'What are we waiting here for?' said Jack roughly, 'let us get out of this.'

'Mr. Jack,' said old Mr. Morris earnestly, 'I am truly sorry, most truly sorry.'

The two clergymen were startled by the sound of Jack's hand, brought down with tremendous force on to the table.

'By heaven,' he exclaimed loudly, 'I believe it is that man Fellerman's doing.'

'What grounds have you for saying so, Ashworth?' asked Mr. Manly.

'None.'

'I cannot think Mr. Fellerman has had anything to do with Rose; he has not been seen in the neighbourhood since you left, I believe!'

'Let us get out of this,' said Jack again roughly.

Mr. McArthur had joined them in the vestry; he placed his hand in his friend's arm, and walked with him and the two clergymen through the groups of wondering villagers to Rosemount.

'Poor fellow!' he heard someone say. 'And he such a handsome bridegroom too, and dressed so nice.'

The whole house was in confusion, Mr. Challoner interrogating everyone, the servants running in and out, the guests talking.

Jack sought Mrs. Challoner, who, pale but composed, was in the dining-room giving directions that the magnificent wedding breakfast should remain untouched. She held out both her hands to Jack, and kissed him.

'What do *you* think?' he asked.

'I do not know what to think,' she replied; 'all we can do is to go on searching. She *couldn't* have left us without a word or a farewell; besides, why should she do so?'

'So I say,' said Jack. 'Mr. Manly——'

'Call Mr. Manly here,' interrupted Mrs. Challoner; 'he is the most reliable man of all; I want to hear what he says.'

Mr. Manly came and detailed his search.

'And have you had any breakfast?' she asked suddenly.

'It is of no consequence; I will get something soon.'

But Mrs. Challoner knew the state of confusion the house was in; she insisted that he should at once sit down at the table, and with her own hands carved him some chicken and ham, and poured him out some milk, in spite of his protest that he would certainly look after himself a little later. So he, of all the wedding guests, sat down alone to the magnificent feast.

'Let me see her room,' said Jack, as soon as Mr. Manly had begun his meal.

Mrs. Challoner took him up to the pretty room, which, except that the bed had been made, was exactly in the same condition as when Rose had left it. There were the shoes she had taken off the night before, the dress she had worn thrown carelessly over a chair, her evening trinkets scattered about on the dressing-table just as she had taken them off.

On a sofa, carefully laid out, was the wedding-dress with all its accompanying finery, the costly veil, the valuable ornaments. As Jack looked at these the tears came into his eyes.

He began a frantic search for a letter, believing that, though no one else could find one, he would succeed. But he was unrewarded; there was not a scrap of writing of any kind.

'What is being done now?' he asked.

'Messengers are still out in all directions.'

They returned to the dining-room. Mr. Manly had finished his breakfast, and was going out.

'Come back,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'and tell us what to do. My husband seems almost off his head, and gives no directions clearly.'

'I had better give information to the police at Saltash, and also at Plymouth,' said Mr. Manly.

'What a terrible ending to what should have been so happy a day!' said Mrs. Challoner, on the point of tears.

Mr. Manly spoke a few soothing words and turned to Jack.

'Ashworth,' he said, 'will you come with me?'

'If I do,' he replied fiercely, 'it will be to supply them with Fellerman's description, and bid them search for *him*: that he is at the bottom of this I am sure.'

'Mr. Fellerman?' said Mrs. Challoner. 'Impossible!'

'Without grounds, I do not think you are justified in giving his name to the police,' said Mr. Manly.

'Why did she go out with him at night? Why did she obey his wishes? why did she talk so earnestly with him even when I was down here last, if she had nothing to do with him?'

'When did she go out with him at night?' asked Mrs. Challoner.

Jack detailed the occurrence of New Year's opening, adding that he had advised her not to mention Mr. Fellerman, as Mr. Challoner seemed so angry.

'That was foolish of you,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'her father would have known that meeting Mr. Fellerman was a mere accident.'

'But *was* it a mere accident?' said Jack bitterly, 'for I begin to doubt if it were.'

'It is too early to doubt her yet,' said Mr. Manly; 'remember we may still find her.'

'Send for Gertrude,' said Mrs. Challoner, and Mrs. Worsley, who had been one of the most indefatigable of the searchers, came in.

'When I was in London, Gertrude,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'had you any, even the slightest, suspicion about Rose, that she was not happy or anything else of that sort?'

'No,' returned Mrs. Worsley somewhat dubiously; 'but yet I remember wondering sometimes why she so often went out by herself on summer evenings, and why she looked so happy when she returned.'

'Had she met anyone the village people would have observed it.'

'How do we know what they observed?' said Jack. 'I'm off now to Polwheel, to find out what is said at the Rose and Crown.'

'I will accompany you,' said Mr. Manly.

Admiral Ashworth was at the door of Rosemount. He grasped his son's hands, but said nothing. With him were Admiral Hatton and his wife; the latter began to sym-

pathise volubly. Jack pushed his hat over his eyes and walked on in the midst of her speech.

'Very rude of him,' said Mrs. Hatton.

'The lad's in too much trouble to listen to *you*,' returned her husband gruffly; 'the kindest thing is to leave him alone. The girl has jilted him. She isn't worth her salt, evidently.'

'Why wasn't I warned before I went to the church?' asked Jack of Mr. Manly.

'We could not do so,' he replied; 'most of us were searching, and all hoped to find her. About eleven o'clock I went to the church in hopes of meeting you before you entered, but everyone gathered round me, and I was hindered. The bridesmaids and guests, being ready, started for the church simply for want of knowing what to do, and all were anxious to ascertain whether *you* had any news.'

They had left the lanes, and were passing the church, the gates and doors of which still stood wide open. On the tombstones and about the churchyard were groups of fisherfolk carrying baskets in their hands full of the flowers that were to have been strewn in front of the bride. From the eminence on which they stood the villagers could see Mr. Manly and Jack as they passed, and made audible comments on the latter.

'That coat must have cost a pretty penny,' said one. 'And look at his necktie, and his white handkercher, and his nosegay and all. Dear, dear, dear, dear!' said another.

Jack hurried on as fast as possible to the Rose and Crown, at the entrance to which stood Polwheel in his usual negligent attitude; he alone of all the villagers had not troubled himself to dress for the occasion of the wedding, and, dirty as usual, was without either coat or waistcoat.

This struck Mr. Manly. Before Jack had time to speak, he said suddenly:

'How is it, Mr. Polwheel, that you alone of all the village are not dressed in readiness to join in the dinner Mr. Challoner intended giving? Had you any reason to suspect that the wedding would not take place?'

'And why should I have any reason?' replied the man sulkily.

'I do not know,' said Mr. Manly genially; 'but I thought

you might, from your position as landlord, be able to obtain more information than anyone else. I trust you will help us if you can, as we are all very anxious about Miss Challoner.'

'If I was you, I wouldn't be anxious no more,' returned Mr. Polwheel quite amiably; 'she ain't broke her neck, if you want to know *that* much.'

Jack turned to him with eagerness, and demanded what he knew.

'I am sorry for *you*, I am, Mr. Jack,' said Mr. Polwheel with maddening deliberation, 'for I don't believe Miss Challoner cared *that* for you,' snapping his fingers, 'for all your mighty determination to settle accounts with the man as might speak against her.'

Jack's expression became ominous. Mr. Manly spoke a quiet word to him apart, pointing out how hopeless it would be to obtain information from Polwheel were he made angry.

'She were carrying on wi' someone else, and I know it,' continued the landlord, and then with much deliberation recounted how Mr. Barnard had met Rose the night before and how he had made love to her.

'That proves nothing,' said Jack contemptuously; 'I am very sure she would have nothing to do with him.'

Mr. Polwheel laughed.

'You don't know the ins and outs of these young misses, Mr. Jack; lor! I could tell 'ee fine stories about some of 'em,' he said in a tone that made Jack long to catch him by the throat and shake him, and caused Mr. Manly to exclaim sternly:

'Have a care what you are saying!'

'I won't say nothing further then,' said the man sulkily, resuming his pipe, and it was not until Mr. Manly had exerted his powers of persuasion that he could be induced to say what he knew further.

'She *can't* have gone with him,' said Jack.

'I heerd him a-tellin' her as how he could kiss the ground she trod on, and beggin' of her to let him only so much as touch her hand, and much more of that sort, till I said to myself: "I have seen a many fools, but never quite such a fool as *him*"; and if the truth must be spoke, I was right-down glad to hear about the torments he was a-endurin' of, for I have a grudge against him, I have.'

'Never mind what *he* said,' put in Jack impatiently; 'what did Miss Challoner say?'

'I can't rightly tell, she spoke so low,' replied Mr. Polwheel mendaciously, 'but I knows I heerd her say she hadn't no love for *you*; I'll take my davy on it.'

'It's a lie!' said Jack furiously.

'No, sir, it ain't no lie, it's Gospel truth. And then I heerd him beggin' and prayin' of her to let him save her from you, and I dare say he's done it, for at four o'clock this blessed mornin', when I were out between this and Saltash, I saw a brougham with closed blinds a-drivin' furious away from Penlist, and I says to myself: "I won't clean up for the wedding; I don't hold with too much washin' and dandifyin', and I don't want to waste time in cleanin' myself, for there won't be no wedding at Penlist to-day."'

In novels passages similar to the following sometimes occur, 'Surprise, emotion, joy, grief, appeared on his countenance in quick succession,' but, in truth, the present writer has never seen such a rapid change of expression. If, however, any man ever exhibited all these passions to the general public as a species of panorama in the space of a quarter of a minute, Jack must have done so now, being quite uncertain as to what he really did feel. He was conscious that a deadly fear of Rose's death was removed from him, he was vastly surprised at Polwheel's information, while at the same time grief and rage were struggling within him.

Had Mr. Polwheel chosen, he could have told a little more, but he did not choose. His information, however, was considered so important that Mr. Manly urged his going up to Rosemount to see Mr. and Mrs. Challoner.

'I'll be-after ye in five minutes,' he said.

'Have you any idea where the brougham came from? did you recognise the coachman?' asked Mr. Manly.

'Mayhap it were from Saltash, mayhap not,' was the only reply vouchsafed.

'I trust you have now given up your idea concerning Mr. Fellerman,' said Mr. Manly as they returned. 'I fear Mr. Barnard must be in fault.'

'If so,' said Jack fiercely, 'then there is some devilry in it which has been instigated by that brute.'

'Ashworth, you are unreasonable,' said Mr. Manly; 'you will think differently to-morrow. I distinctly remember Mr. Fellerman's telling me that he had not the slightest intention of marrying, and, further, that he had never loved any woman. He mentioned that his vows, according to the creed he held, were an obstacle to marriage, although they could be removed at will.'

'He was throwing dust in your eyes.'

'I am sure that he was speaking the truth. I was censuring him on that occasion, on a matter which is not worth repeating, and was surprised at his frank avowal of his intentions.'

'He didn't sneer at you, then?'

'Certainly not.'

'He was always sneering at *me*,' said Jack, 'and whether he has taken away Rose or not, I *hate* him, I *hate* him,' he repeated.

He expected some reproof from the clergyman, but Mr. Manly gave him none. They were repassing the churchyard at the time, and Jack fancied he again saw the expectant crowd in the church, the charmingly-dressed bridesmaids, the gay wedding guests. It seemed to him a year ago since he had stood in the chancel, a happy, exultant bridegroom. What had he done that such hard measure should be meted out to him?

The people had not dispersed from the churchyard; they were sitting about under the trees, shading themselves from the brilliant sunshine. On catching sight of Mr. Manly and Jack, they had one and all leaned forward to try and learn something of what was going on. Mr. Manly, being aware of this, remained silent until they had re-entered the lanes. Then he spoke, with a kind ring in his voice that went to Jack's heart.

'Ashworth,' he said, 'I am more sorry for you than I can tell. I have gone through more suffering than you, inasmuch as at one time I had neither home, friends, money, nor even reputation; but this I will tell you, that the keenest pang of all was when I thought, though I thought wrongly, that the girl to whom I was engaged—my wife now—no longer loved me.* You see, I can sympathize with you, and I do most truly. But give up this idea about Mr. Fellerman; it is

* *Vide* 'The Bachelor Vicar of Newforth.'

probably a delusion, and beware of cherishing this hatred in your heart. Murder has been committed before now from a similar cause.'

'I thank you warmly, Mr. Manly,' said Jack; 'but if I am to speak frankly, I will admit that at this present moment it would rejoice me to revenge myself on Fellerman. It may be wrong, but I can't help it.'

Rosemount was still in direst confusion; some of the guests were wandering aimlessly about, some had taken their departure. Mr. McArthur was suggesting all sorts of wild ideas, the foremost of which was that he and Mrs. Worsley, whom he greatly admired, should go to Plymouth and walk about the streets in search of Rose.

Mr. Polwheel made his communication to Mr. and Mrs. Challoner. It was received with utter incredulity by the latter, but Mr. Challoner was furious. He rushed off to Admiral Ashworth and Admiral Hatton, and poured out his account, interspersed as it was with maledictions on such a scoundrel as Mr. Barnard.

'He was always a scamp by his own account,' he said.

'But he had no money,' said Admiral Ashworth; 'no one can do these things without money. Besides, there was something honest about him which to my mind prevents such a thing being possible.'

'Then where *is* she?' asked Mr. Challoner.

The wedding breakfast was still spread, the wedding dress still laid out.

'Take it away,' said Mrs. Challoner, with a white face; 'put it where I cannot see it. It feels as if there were death in the house instead of marriage, and as if these preparations were for Rose's funeral;' and for the first time she broke down.

Meantime Mr. Manly had gone to Saltash and its neighbourhood and inquired at all the principal livery-stables whether a brougham for Penlist had been hired that morning. At the last one he visited he was told that a brougham had been sent to that direction early in the morning, and, on questioning the driver, heard that some two miles out of Penlist a lady and gentleman had entered the brougham and been driven to St. Germain's.

'What were they like?' asked Mr. Manly.

The driver didn't know; he had taken no notice.

Mr. Manly took out a sovereign and held it up.

'If you offered me ten I couldn't swear to 'em,' said the man, and Mr. Manly felt certain that he had already been bribed.

He took the first train to St. Germain's, and there made inquiries at the station. No, no lady and gentleman had been seen there early in the morning, or, indeed, at any time; certainly not two people so easily recognisable from their description as Miss Challoner and Mr. Barnard. Mr. Manly communicated with the police and then returned to Rosemount.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VAIN SEARCH.

THE dinner-hour was long past when the clergyman arrived; the party had reassembled in the drawing-room. By this time the whole of the wedding guests had dispersed, and only Mr. and Mrs. Challoner, Jack, Mrs. Worsley, and Mrs. Manly were present. Mr. Manly at once told them his news.

'Did you ascertain who conveyed the order for the brougham?' asked Mrs. Challoner.

'Yes; I was told that a man quite unknown to the livery-stable keeper had brought a note.'

'Did he show you the note?'

'Yes, here it is.'

Mr. Manly produced a small slip of ordinary white writing-paper, on which was written in printed characters, 'Let a brougham be sent from Saltash at half-past three on Thursday morning. The driver is to take the direct main road to Penlist and take up a gentleman who will meet him.'

'There is no clue in this,' said Mr. Challoner; 'the writing is of a nature to completely baffle recognition.'

'Our best hope is from the police,' said Mr. Manly. 'I suppose you will send for a detective?'

'Not I!' answered Mr. Challoner bitterly. 'If my girl, my only child, has deliberately left us, without so much as a good-bye, she who has never in her life had a wish denied her, then let her go, I say;' and Mr. Challoner left the room.

'He feels it terribly,' said his wife.

'Did Rose give you no kind of farewell last night? was there anything special in her good-night to you?' asked Mrs. Manly.

'Nothing whatever. If she has really gone away with anyone, I feel sure it was an unpremeditated action.'

'You must be very tired, Phil,' said Mrs. Manly, placing her hand on her husband's arm; 'and, oh! you are quite wet.'

'Nothing to speak of,' he replied cheerfully. 'A slight drizzle was falling as I returned from St. Germain's.'

'And you had neither coat nor umbrella, and have been walking about all day,' said his anxious wife.

'We have been most selfish, Mr. Manly, not to have thought of you sooner, instead of keeping you here all this time answering questions—in your wet clothes, too. I cannot thank you enough. And have you had any dinner?' said Mrs. Challoner.

'I will take something now, if I may,' he answered, with a smile. 'I intended to dine at Saltash, but I should have lost the train to St. Germain's had I done so. I beg you will not all look so concerned; it is by no means the first time that I have gone without dinner. I was really too busy to think about it. I do not want it now—just a small piece of anything cold you may have in the house will be best.'

And then it was arranged that Mr. Manly should have a supper-tray sent upstairs to his own room, and that his wife, to her great delight, should look after him.

Jack had remained entirely silent. He had only lately returned from Plymouth.

'Good-night, Mr. Manly,' he now said; 'I am sure *my* best thanks are due to you. I will wish you good-bye now: perhaps I shan't see you again.'

'Indeed!' replied Mr. Manly, 'where are you going?'

Jack laughed.

'To the dogs, probably.'

'Phil,' said Mrs. Manly, when her husband's wants had been well supplied, and she was seated by his side with his arm round her, 'my heart aches for poor Jack. Think what *I* should have felt had you failed me on our wedding-day. One cannot truly sympathize with others without applying a similar case to one's self;' and Mrs. Manly drew still closer to her husband, as if she were afraid that even now she might lose him.

'I feel with you,' he replied, 'and I should very much like to have him under my own eye for a little while. I don't like that reckless air he has to-night. My own opinion

is that Rose is quite unworthy of his love; indeed, I never thought she *really* loved him.'

And then he found it necessary to make a few loving speeches to his wife, knowing that she never would forget that time when she had failed him, and broken off her engagement.

The trouble was falling on Mr. and Mrs. Challoner in a very different manner. She was by far the stronger and braver character of the two, and had a larger heart. She argued with him in vain that night, urging that they must do all in their power to find Rose.

'I will not stir hand or foot,' he said doggedly. 'If I thought she had met with an accident, or been really lost, I would not rest night nor day until she was found. I would spend the last farthing of my money in the search; but after her disgraceful conduct I will have nothing more to do with her.'

'Whatever she has done, she is still our daughter,' replied his wife; 'and she is under age—only twenty last birthday.

'She is no daughter of mine now,' he returned angrily.

'That is not love at all,' said Mrs. Challoner firmly, 'which can withdraw itself should the object prove unworthy. It is Rose herself whom we love, and we cannot but continue to love her, although she has displeased us. Besides, I feel *sure* she could explain matters could we only find her.'

'I will hear nothing further about her, and I will do nothing,' said Mr. Challoner.

It was with great consternation that Mrs. Challoner heard the next morning that Mr. and Mrs. Manly were obliged to go that day.

'I don't know what we shall do without you, Mr. Manly,' she said; 'it feels like a tower of strength to have you in the house.'

'I would not go were I not obliged,' he replied warmly; 'it was arranged so all along.'

'Yes, but I had forgotten. You have had a miserable visit—and it is so seldom that you can spare time to go anywhere.'

'I will come again if I can be of any use. Do not fail to write to me if I can in any way serve you.'

Mrs. Challoner acquainted him with her husband's

decision, and while she was talking Jack Ashworth came in, looking brighter than on the night before.

'No letters, I suppose,' he said.

'No,' replied Mrs. Challoner with a sigh, remembering how anxiously she had watched for the postman, and how sick at heart she had felt when he went by.

'I can't give the matter up yet,' said Jack; 'until I know for a certainty that she has gone off with another man I shall continue my search for her. After all, we do not even know that she was in that brougham.'

'Whoever the people were, they got out at the entrance to St. Germain's town, and, the driver said, at once disappeared.'

'I shall do all I can,' said Jack; and then it was arranged that Mrs. Challoner and Jack should be in constant communication, the former supplying as much money as she could spare, and that should any need of Mr. Manly's counsel arise, he should be telegraphed to, and either come himself or reply by telegram.

'And, Ashworth,' said Mr. Manly kindly, 'if you *should* find that your worst expectations are fulfilled, and Rose has married someone else—I do not say this to pain you, but because I think you should be prepared for the worst—then come and stay with us for a time at Newforth. We will not trouble you in any way, but there are certain plans of my own which I should like to talk over with you.'

Jack thanked him, and the carriage coming up, Mr. and Mrs. Manly took their departure.

CHAPTER XIX.

MYSTIFICATION.

NOTWITHSTANDING Mr. Manly's advice, in communicating with the detective force Jack gave Mr. Fellerman's description, and, in stating his suspicions, made use of language which was perhaps more forcible than wise. His directions to the private detective were that Mr. Fellerman, Mr. Barnard and Rose were all to be found if it were possible. He had himself made every inquiry in and round St. Germain's, but had met with no success. He now spent his days in advertising, in communicating with the police and his own private detective, and in hunting up any stray piece of information he fancied might be useful. During the long summer evenings he would sit moodily in his furnished house alone, until it became quite dark, when he would lock the door and return to his chambers. Work he did not attempt, neither any kind of recreation. He shunned his friends, all of whom had heard of his misfortunes, and saw no one whom he could avoid. Mrs. Challoner had written to suggest that the house should be let furnished, but this had seemed to him like the overthrow of his last hope: he had begged that, for the present, things might remain as they were.

On returning one night to his chambers, he found the detective waiting for him. 'What news?' he asked eagerly.

'I think we have found Mr. Fellerman, sir,' he said.

'When—where? Is he alone?' said Jack hurriedly.

The detective gave the description of Mr. Fellerman's personal appearance, which was quite correct, and stated that he was staying at the Westminster Hotel, alone.

'I will try to see him this hour—this minute,' said Jack, seizing his hat.

'It is rather late, sir,' remarked the detective.

'He will slip through my fingers if I don't,' said the young man, going out.

It was ten o'clock when he reached the hotel and was shown up into the private sitting-room which Mr. Fellerman was occupying. Jack had feared he should meet him in the public room, and was glad of the privacy secured.

He found the object of his quest seated at a table, reading diligently some ancient-looking work in characters which Jack knew nothing of. A glass of water was beside the book.

'Mr. Ashworth!' said Mr. Fellerman, rising. 'This is an unexpected pleasure.'

His courteous tones were disappointing to Jack, who had almost hoped to be irritated.

'I have not come for pleasure,' he said brusquely. 'I want a plain question answered plainly: Is Miss Challoner with you? Have you made her your wife?'

Mr. Fellerman looked at him with an expression that seemed to Jack's excited imagination to say, 'Are you mad?' 'You had better be seated,' he replied soothingly, 'and I will endeavour to reply to your very amazing questions.'

'Thanks; I prefer to stand,' said Jack shortly.

Mr. Fellerman stood facing him. 'I will answer your questions categorically,' he said. 'Miss Challoner is *not* with me; I have *not* made her my wife.'

'Then, where is she?' asked Jack, who was fast losing his temper under the influence of the other's cool replies.

Mr. Fellerman smiled.

'You are a scoundrel!' said Jack furiously.

'Your language is unjustifiable,' returned Mr. Fellerman, 'and if you persist in it, I shall be compelled to show you the door.'

Jack became aware how badly he was beginning. 'I apologize,' he said sullenly. 'I want to know if you are *going* to marry Miss Challoner.'

'I am *not* going to marry Miss Challoner; I have not the slightest intention of marrying, or wish to marry her. Why do you ask?'

'It is now three weeks since she disappeared. Has she been with you? Do you know anything about her?'

'As, after my assurance that I was not going to marry her, you ask me whether she has not been staying with me, thereby crediting me with her seduction, I will thank you to go out of my room.'

Jack walked out instantly; in truth, he was afraid to stay, or he knew he should commit some violence. The tone of Mr. Fellerman's voice exasperated him beyond endurance. He knew that he had entirely mismanaged the interview, and put himself completely in the wrong. As soon as possible the next morning he telegraphed to Mr. Manly, begging him to come up at once: the reply was that Mr. Manly would start by the first train from Newforth. This was due in town at twelve.

Before going to the station to meet him, Jack saw the detective and ascertained that Mr. Fellerman's words had been corroborated, as, as far as could be known, he had not been seen in company with any lady, or, in fact, any woman, since his arrival in town. He had been staying for three weeks, off and on, in London, sleeping at the Westminster Hotel for perhaps three nights at a time, and going elsewhere for two or so.

The sight of Mr. Manly's bright face was most reassuring to Jack; he put his arm within the clergyman's, feeling that he had now found an adviser on whom he could lean. He detailed the account of his interview with Mr. Fellerman.

'I made a bungle of it from beginning to end,' said poor Jack. 'He answered my direct questions, and was in the right all the way through, while all I did was to insult him. But I couldn't help it. Can you tell me *why* he makes me feel so furious?'

To this question Mr. Manly did not reply. He was beginning to attach more importance to Jack's antipathy than he chose to allow, and to wonder whether there might not be some natural instinct telling the truth to the young man. He could scarcely think such dislike could be altogether without a cause.

'Tell me why you sent for me, and what I am to do,' he said.

'I want *you* to see him,' replied Jack. 'He likes you, and might tell you all he knows, if he knows anything. Anyhow, you can talk to him without flying into a rage, and you would know how to put the matter properly without affronting him.'

'I will call if you wish,' said Mr. Manly; 'but you must remember you are asking me to put very delicate questions, without any apparent justification in facts for doing so. I will, however, do my best.'

They had been walking from Charing Cross Station towards Westminster, and were now very near the hotel; but when Mr. Manly inquired at the box-office for Mr. Fellerman, he was told that he had left town that morning, saying he should not return for some time.

Jack made a gesture of impatience, then said:

'You see, he is afraid of us; he cannot face us.'

'My dear Ashworth,' returned Mr. Manly gravely, 'you forget he could not by any possibility have known that I was coming to see him; and to-day, being the first of July, a great many people go out of town as the weather i so hot.'

The sun was streaming on the pavements as he spoke, glaring fiercely on his face and that of Jack.

'I am a fool, and I know it,' said the latter. 'I can't think clearly on this subject at all. But I am so awfully miserable, Mr. Manly.'

The clergyman hailed a passing hansom, and asked his companion to accompany him to Hyde Park. Then, under the shade of the trees by the Serpentine, he talked to him for some hours, until it was time to return to Charing Cross; and when he departed the young man, though not more hopeful, was certainly less despairing.

The search for Mr. Barnard was now prosecuted with great vigour. Beginning from the time he first left Penlist, the detectives found traces of him, until at last they fancied they had discovered him in a remote village in the Lake district. By this time three more weeks had elapsed. 'Was a lady with him?' Jack asked eagerly. No; but a lady had visited him there. With a heart alternating between hope and fear Jack took a ticket for Keswick. He neither knew what he hoped nor what he expected. Should Rose be with Mr. Barnard she would have proved herself utterly false, and should she not be with him, then all their work would have been thrown away, and they would be obliged to begin all over again. He could not bring himself to regard this man with any enmity. 'And if,' he said bitterly—'if she has preferred him as a husband to me, why let her prefer him!' and he began to sing in a loud voice, unconsciously almost, and greatly to the annoyance of his fellow-traveller, an old lady:

'"If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?"'

The long night journey at length came to an end. He breakfasted at an hotel, and set out on foot for the little hamlet which was, he was told, some four or five miles distant, situated in a valley surrounded by mountains.

It was a lovely day, the air was clear; as he walked he could see the mountains for miles round, and, his road ascending, he looked down on beautiful Derwentwater. But he passed the boulders and little streams, and plunged amidst the trees and ferns, trampling on the rare mosses and wild flowers, without so much as heeding them. In one short half-hour perhaps he should see Rose, or if not Rose, he might hear news of her. What lady should have been with Mr. Barnard if it were not she?

He had no difficulty in finding the small hamlet. It was beautifully situated, and quite a place of renown amongst tourists. A child pointed out to him the house he was in search of. 'A broad-shouldered gentleman with a beard lodges there,' she said.

It was a stone cottage, with monthly roses climbing up the front, and surrounded by a small garden. Jack felt his heart beat as he knocked at the door and asked for Mr. Barnard. He was not in, said the good-tempered-looking landlady, but would probably return soon. Would the gentleman wait?

Jack said he would do so, and sat down in a very ugly little square sitting-room, the paper of which was hideous, the furniture of the scantiest. But everything was scrupulously clean, and through the open window the roses looked in. Jack took up a book and drummed impatiently on the table with it until he caught sight of Mr. Barnard. Yes, there was no deception—Mr. Barnard coming through the gate, and Jack saw also that he was recognised. But in place of the confusion on his countenance that Jack had expected, the chaplain came in saying gravely, 'How do you do? Is your wife here with you, Mr. Ashworth?'

CHAPTER XX.

MR. BARNARD'S ACCOUNT.

As Mr. Barnard asked Jack if his wife were with him, the expression on the latter's face became one of blank amazement. The question had obviously been put in all good faith, unless the chaplain were an arrant hypocrite.

'I have no wife; I came here to find her; I thought she was with *you*,' said Jack.

'With me?' asked Mr. Barnard in equal amazement; 'what possessed you to think such a thing as that?'

'Come, this won't do,' said Jack roughly; 'you know as well as I do that you met her the evening before we were to have been married, and urged her to go away with you.'

'Pray, who was the spy on my actions and words?' asked Mr. Barnard angrily.

'It was Polwheel; when Miss Challoner was missed, he told us what he knew.'

'But *when* was she missed? I am completely in the dark. When I came in I was under the impression that you and she had come to the lakes for your honeymoon.'

'Would that we had!' said Jack bitterly; 'do you mean to tell me that you know *nothing* of her?'

'Absolutely nothing; I will swear it if you wish.'

Jack scrutinized his face keenly.

'It is not necessary; I believe you. But in that case *where* is she?'

'Tell me all particulars,' said Mr. Barnard.

And Jack did so.

'She has not taken a single thing with her;' he concluded his narration with, 'neither money, nor jewellery, nor clothes, nor letters. Neither have any letters been found to throw light on the subject.'

'That certainly does not look as if she intended going,' said Mr. Barnard very gravely; 'I should rather fear some accident.'

Jack recounted Polwheel's assurance that that was not the case, adding:

'Is it true that she told you she did not love me, or is it a pure lie of that man Polwheel's, as probably all the rest of his story may be.'

Mr. Barnard reddened slightly.

'It is a somewhat hard thing that I should have to repeat the words I used, my mad words, for, as you well know, a man reveals his character and feelings to the woman he loves in a manner that no other man would believe of him, and in a way that he would not do in cold blood. But as you are in great trouble, Mr. Ashworth, and also because of your father's great kindness to me, for which I am very grateful, I will help you if I can. From the first day I saw Miss Challoner I fell in love with her, her beauty, her grace, but above all, the intellect indicated in her countenance completely conquered me. I knew she was almost engaged to you, I knew had she not been that I could not come forward; but yet I hung about her like a moth round a candle, thoroughly infatuated, although I do not believe she had a thought to bestow upon me.'

'I am glad of that,' said Jack quickly.

'I suppose so,' said the chaplain dryly; 'I suppose it would be quite impossible that she should. I heard that her wedding-day was fixed, and I felt that I *must* see her once again. I hung about the house the day before, and at last was rewarded by seeing her go alone on to the rocks. I am very much ashamed now of what I said to her; I allow I acted very unjustifiably.'

'Did she say she loved you and did not love me?' asked Jack in much excitement.

'By no means. She had not a spark of love for me, whereas for you she had a great affection. But I did not believe that she *loved* you, and I asked her if she could ever endure on your account the torment I was enduring on hers. Her reply was, "Certainly not," and this is what that rascal Polwheel heard.'

'I distrust him myself,' said Jack; 'but what took place afterwards?'

'She told me that I must be out of my mind to think that she would not marry you, that she should certainly do so the next day. And after that she bade me good-bye,

promising that she would forget my mad words, and never speak of them to anyone on condition that I would try to forget her.'

'Then Polwheel has purposely deceived us?'

'Yes.'

'Still his story about the brougham proved true.' A lingering doubt was in Jack's mind. '*Who* was the lady here with you, Mr. Barnard?' he asked.

The chaplain laughed.

'Oh! you don't believe me yet. But I will make allowances for a man in so much trouble as you are, especially as I am feeling much the same sort of thing myself (though my troubles are the worst, for you have money and prospects whereas I have none). The lady was my mother.'

'I thought you were on bad terms with your parents.'

'So I was; I am still with my father. But my people live in the North, and, in travelling about, my mother caught sight of me and ascertained my whereabouts. Her visit to me was most unexpected.'

'I trust——' began Jack, and stopped.

'You mean, you trust she did something for me. Well, she did. She gave me some affection and was kinder than she had ever been in her life, and I was glad to see her. And, if you wish to know, she also of her own accord gave me what money she had—though that wasn't much—and promised not to lose sight of me again. But she did not hold out the slightest hope of my father relenting. He is much too religious!'

'Much good may his religion do him!' said Jack; 'he ought to be ashamed of himself. Rather a contrast to *my* father.'

'Rather.'

And Mr. Barnard took out his pipe, signifying to Jack's mind that he considered this subject ended. After a time he reverted to Rose, and Jack imparted to him his suspicions concerning Mr. Fellerman.

'Impossible!' exclaimed Mr. Barnard.

'So Mr. Manly says; and yet I don't feel satisfied.' And Jack enlarged on his dislike to Mr. Fellerman.

'Does anyone else agree with you?

'No, except Worsley and Mrs. Worsley. Pater likes him, Mr. Challoner likes him, Mr. Manly likes him.'

'And *I* like him,' returned Mr. Barnard, putting all his force of emphasis on to the word I. 'Like him? There is no man I have reason to like so well. As you are hearing all my private affairs, listen while I tell you what he did for me, a total stranger.'

'Don't tell me,' said Jack quickly; 'I don't want to pry into your affairs, I am quite ready to believe that he did you a kindness. I forgot to add that the *dogs* liked him.'

But Mr. Barnard was determined to speak, and related how Mr. Fellerman had helped him in his dire necessity, helped him spontaneously, generously and delicately. 'I said then,' continued Mr. Barnard with vehemence, 'that I would repay him, no matter at what cost to myself if I could do so: I swore it, and I repeat my words now. I will render him whatever service may lay in my power.'

Jack forced himself to listen to this encomium in silence, and then said it was time for him to go. But Mr. Barnard was urgent that he should share in his mid-day meal, and the young man remained, eating with relish, notwithstanding his troubles, some very well-cooked mutton chops, and drinking a glass of milk, the distance from shops precluding any other beverage Mr. Barnard explained. But he was glad when the meal was over, and he was once more alone on his road to Keswick.

The sun was shining hotly; leaving the beaten track, he plunged into the depths of a fir-wood and sat down on some boulders. He plucked absently at the luxuriant moss, as he tried to think out the subject of Rose in its new aspect. Like Mr. Challoner, he did not know *what* to think. For the first time his trouble overcame him entirely, he leaned his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees, and remained thus for an hour.

CHAPTER XXI.

A HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

JACK returned to London at once, and from thence journeyed to Penlist. Rosemount was surrounded by a blaze of flowers; as he walked across the lawn he almost expected to see Rose coming out to gather some. But the house seemed strangely silent as he entered at the dining-room window. Mrs. Challoner was sitting with some work on her lap, her thoughts evidently far away; Mr. Challoner was reading the newspaper at the end of the room: he looked careworn and years older. Mrs. Worsley had left them and gone to Newforth.

Jack was, as usual, warmly welcomed. The effect of his news on Mr. Challoner was very startling. He had long repented of his decision, but Mrs. Challoner had in vain tried to get him to recall it and take active steps towards the recovery of Rose; having once adopted his line, he obstinately adhered to it, at no little cost to himself. But on receipt of this intelligence, he at once went to the opposite extreme, declaring that he would give a hundred pounds, a thousand pounds, to anyone who would prove his daughter was alive, that she had always been the dearest girl that ever lived, and that some scoundrel must have forcibly abducted her, or else she had accidentally met with her death. He would have bills printed at once, this very hour, offering a large reward.

'It would have been much better had you offered a hundred pounds at the time,' said Jack.

'Yes, so it would; but we were deceived by that scoundrel Polwheel. Come with me now, Jack, and have it out with him.'

'With all my heart,' said the young man.

But Mr. Polwheel was not to be seen at the Rose and Crown; he had gone to London that day, and his wife did not know when he would return. Would he write to her?

No, he was no scolard and would not be likely to write.

Would she inform him whenever her husband might return? asked Mr. Challoner.

'Yes, sir,' she replied civilly enough; 'I will send up and let you know.'

Mr. Challoner went on to Plymouth and had the bills printed, offering one hundred pounds reward to anyone who should give reliable information that Miss Challoner was now alive. They were posted the next day in Penlist and all the neighbourhood round, but no one replied to them.

Jack tried to seem cheerful in his father's society, but when apart from him he spent hours rambling about the lonely headlands and rocks, searching diligently for the smallest trace of Rose. He, too, was beginning to think that she was dead.

Mr. Polwheel returned late one night, apparently in a state of great excitement, holding one of the posters, which he had torn down, in his hand.

'Look 'ere now,' he said angrily to his wife, 'why couldn't 'ee have told me about these 'ere bills afore, and not let me be wastin' all my time in a wild-goose chase in Lunnon!'

'And why do 'ee want to know about 'em?' asked his wife.

'Just because it 'll be a hunderd pound in my pocket.'

Explanation ensued, and the first thing the next morning Mr. Polwheel repaired to Rosemount.

Jack and his father were already there. Whilst Admiral Ashworth was talking to Mr. Challoner, Jack had begged Mrs. Challoner to let him have a word with her apart. She led the way to a small room in which stood all the trunks containing the splendid trousseau, still packed, also the box in which the uncut wedding-cake had been replaced.

'What is it, my dear boy?' she asked kindly.

Jack produced from his pocket two small cases, containing the wedding ring and the magnificent keeper he had purchased for Rose.

'I want you to put these away,' he said; 'I wear them about me now. It's always bad enough, but the sight of them drives me mad almost. If I were to put them away in my chambers I should keep on getting them out to look at, or else I should feel as if someone were stealing them. You take care of them for me.'

'I will,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'our trouble is heavy enough, but the sight of all these things,' pointing to the trunks, 'is sometimes too much for me.'

By this time Polwheel had arrived, and was shown into the dining-room; before he had stated his business, Mrs. Challoner and Jack re-entered.

'I want to speak to you,' began Mr. Challoner.

'Yes, sir,' returned Mr. Polwheel aimiably, 'and I want to speak to you. *I have come to claim the reward.*'

For the space of a full minute no one spoke, the intelligence was so altogether unexpected and startling.

Jack was the first to break silence.

'Is Miss Challoner alive?' he said.

'Yes, sir, *she's* alive and right enough.'

Mrs. Challoner took out her handkerchief and wiped away the tears that rolled down her face, Admiral Ashworth grasped his son's hand, while Mr. Challoner grew scarlet in the face.

'Tell us what you know,' he said to Polwheel.

The latter proceeded to say that, as he was out very early on the wedding morning, he had seen Mr. Fellerman going towards Rosemount in the dim light.

'*Who?*' interrupted Jack in furious tones.

'Mr. Fellerman, sir.'

'I knew it,' said Jack.

'He was gone some time,' continued Polwheel, 'and when he came back Miss Challoner was with him.'

'You consummate scoundrel!' said Mr. Challoner, 'why didn't you say so before?'

'It stands to reason, sir,' replied the man in a deprecating tone, 'as I should serve them as offers me most. I had ten pound to hold my tongue; you offer a hunderd pound for speaking out: of course I speaks out.'

'The man is unworthy of belief,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'he gave a wrong version of Mr. Barnard's conversation, suppressing portions of it so as to give a totally wrong impression, and, on being questioned by Mr. Manly and Jack, told quite a different story about the wedding morning.'

'No, ma'am, beggin' your pardon, I did nothin' of the kind. I said I saw a brougham drivin' furious towards St. Germain's, or away from Penlist, with closed blinds. So it did, and Mr. Fellerman and Miss Challoner was in it.'

'You said nothing about him before.'

'Why should I go out o' my way to tell for nothin'?' retorted the man. 'If it had 'a been made worth my while I should ha' told long ago.'

'As you have concealed the truth in one instance, leading us wrongfully to suspect one gentleman, so you may be perverting the truth in another,' said Admiral Ashworth.

'I am speaking the truth, and I will prove it,' said the man. 'I believe that in Miss Challoner's description as were posted up there warn't nothin' said about her ornaments, eh?'

'Not a word,' replied Mrs. Challoner.

'Then I couldn't ha' invented that she had on a plain gold brooch, could I?'

'He is right,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'Rose must have worn it, as it is the only one of her ornaments that is missing.'

'"A hunderd pound" it said in the poster, and a hunderd pound I've earned this day,' said Polwheel, smoothing his dirty coarse face complacently. 'I know your word is as good as your bond any day, Mr. Challoner.'

'If I give you money it will be with more reluctance than I ever paid money in my life,' said that gentleman; 'but I suppose there is no help for it. I tell you to your face that you have acted the part of a villain, and when you want a renewal of your lease you won't get it.'

'Why did you go to London?' asked Jack.

'Private affairs; but I don't mind tellin' *you*, Mr. Jack. I went to see if Mr. Fellerman had anything more to offer me for holdin' my tongue.'

'You *precious* scoundrel!' said Jack.

'Did you see him?' asked Mrs. Challoner.

'No, ma'am; couldn't hear of him nowhere.'

'He wouldn't have given you anything,' said Jack contemptuously.

'Perhaps not, sir; but he spoke to me a deal more civil when down here than *you* do. With him, the day I last saw him, it were "Good-mornin', Mr. Polwheel; a fine day!" addin', after he come up with Miss Challoner, "Them as holds their tongue for a week or two will have ten pound sent by post," and sure enough it were sent.'

'What did Miss Challoner say?'

'Nothin'; not a word. She were very white, and looked scared-like.'

Mr. Challoner unlocked his desk and took out his cheque-book.

'More undeserved money could not be paid,' he said, before beginning to write; 'but I suppose you must have it.'

'If *you* please, sir,' said Polwheel, his face expressing supreme satisfaction.

'A moment if you please, Mr. Challoner,' said Jack. 'Your bill says the reward will be given to any person giving information that Miss Challoner is *now* alive; all that Polwheel has proved is that she *was* alive some weeks ago. Let him renew his proof now.'

'I fear that is a quibble,' said Mrs. Challoner.

'Not a bit of it,' said Mr. Challoner triumphantly, 'and not a penny of my money shall he have. Had you come forward like an honest man, Polwheel, or even had you held your tongue altogether at first, you would have been treated differently; but, as it is, you have shown yourself a rascal, and have met with your desert. You can go now, and I hope it will be a lesson to you.'

The man departed, but not before he had said, 'I'll be even with you for this one day, Mr. Jack.'

'What a villain that Mr. Fellerman must be!' said Mrs. Challoner. 'Did he not tell you positively he had not seen Rose?'

'I don't know that he said *that*. He said he had not married her, and did not wish to marry her.'

An ominous silence fell on the group.

* * * * *

Jack returned to town vowing he would make no further search. Mr. Challoner again angrily declined to do anything, and had all the bills removed. It was Mrs. Challoner alone who persevered and urged the detective to discover Fellerman, all trace of whom was now lost.

Jack put in an advertisement for letting the house in South Kensington, and begged Mrs. Challoner to allow the furniture to be removed and returned to the original vendors. But this she declined to do, therefore the house was at once let furnished.

Jack was one day returning wearily from settling the necessary business; the sun was glaring, and he was tired. A cab passed him in Knightsbridge, driven fast. He looked up mechanically, and in the cab saw—Rose. A moment, and she was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROSE AT DARTMOOR.

JACK stood still in unbounded surprise until the cab was hidden by the other vehicles, then hastily looked about for a hansom in which to follow. But not one was in sight, neither was there any cab-stand near. He ran a short distance. The spectacle of a well-dressed man running in the most crowded part of Knightsbridge is quite enough to attract attention; people thronged about him so that he was compelled to slacken his pace. He hailed a four-wheeler, which at last came up.

'Where to?' said the driver.

But Jack could only say that he wished to follow another four-wheeler in which was a lady.

'It is not in sight now, and I don't know which way it went,' he added.

The driver shrugged his shoulders, saying to himself that it was no business of his if the gentleman liked to throw away his money by chasing a four-wheeler about London that was not in sight. By Jack's direction he drove as far as the Fulham Road, thence to Victoria Station, but, as may be supposed, without meeting with any success.

The sight of Rose had restored all his former ardour. He was now determined to find her, Fellerman or no Fellerman, and hear from her own lips the truth about this incomprehensible business. As for hope, he had none, but a certain fixed determination was in its place.

He was not sure, but he fancied someone else was in the cab with her, though whether man or woman he had no idea. He telegraphed to Mrs. Challoner, and wrote to Mr. Manly, then repaired to the Westminster Hotel. No, he was told, Mr. Fellerman had not been there for some time. He next called on Mrs. Matthews, Mrs. Challoner's sister, with little hope it is true, but with the idea that he would leave no stone unturned. He was heartily glad when

this interview was over. Mrs. Matthews, who was the opposite of Mrs. Challoner in every respect, indulged in unsparing condemnation of Rose, and cordially congratulated Jack on having escaped from so unworthy a girl as she had proved herself.

'It is possible that what you say may be true, Mrs. Matthews,' said Jack, rising, his face both grave and pained; 'but I would rather not hear it. I do not wish to listen to a word against her. She was to have been my wife, and I feel anything said about her quite as much as if she were my wife now.'

'Poor young man!' said Mrs. Matthews; 'I'm sure I am very sorry for you. But she must be, as I said, altogether heartless, now that you tell me she is actually in London, driving about, in a place where there are thousands of post-offices, not even to drop a line to her mother!'

Jack, who had done his best to get away for the last ten minutes, now held out his hand.

'Tell my sister,' said Mrs. Matthews, 'that I shall expect her to stay here, and come to dinner yourself, Mr. Ashworth. Fanny will be at home this afternoon.'

Now, Fanny was a pretty daughter of Mrs. Matthews', who had been staying away; but Jack was deaf to the voice of the charmer, and peremptorily declined for himself on the plea of business, adding that in all probability Mrs. Challoner would go to an hotel. 'Which she will vastly prefer,' he said to himself.

Mrs. Challoner came up by the early train, having travelled all night, and by Jack's advice stayed at the Railway Hotel at Paddington. But now that she had come there was nothing that she could do. Renewed applications were made to the police, and London was searched by them in vain—not a sign of Rose could be found.

'Are you *sure* it was the young lady?' asked the detective, after having produced a great many young ladies in vain.

'Am I sure I am alive?' said Jack. 'Yes, she it certainly was.'

Mrs. Challoner remained a short time, departing dispirited and disheartened.

'My dear boy,' she said, as the train was on the point of leaving, 'I am beginning to think with Mr. Challoner that we must give up our search. Whenever Rose may wish to

return to us, she will find our doors and our hearts open; but it is vain for us to try and find her, and it would be useless to force her to return against her will. As to you, dear Jack, *you* must try to forget her. You are very young, and must not have your life spoilt. And should you ever form another attachment, come first to me, and I will be a mother to your wife, as I would have been to you had you married Rose.'

Jack pressed her hands and kissed her.

'Dear Mrs. Challoner, I thank you,' he said; 'but at present I cannot give up looking. Something within me seems to urge me to go on.'

'God bless you!' replied Mrs. Challoner, with tears in her eyes; 'I wish Rose had been worthy of you.'

It was not until a week had gone by that Jack received a letter from Mr. Manly, not answering his own, but begging him to go down to Newforth at once. Jack packed a small portmanteau and started, reaching Newforth at mid-day. The station was not far from the vicarage, but on the road thither he was met and stopped by Admiral Hatton, who, notwithstanding his impatience, would not suffer him to proceed for some ten minutes.

'I have an appointment with Mr. Manly, and shall be late,' he managed to say at last.

'Stuff an' nonsense!' said the Admiral heartily; 'Manly won't run away.'

After a few further words Jack was allowed to proceed, and walked on at breathless speed, fearing lest he should meet Mrs. Hatton, and be again hindered.

The vicarage was a pretty house facing the parish church, the back windows overlooking the sea and harbour. Mrs. Manly, who was looking very pretty, but very delicate, was in the hall. After a warm greeting she took Jack at once to the study, where Mr. Manly was sitting, and left them alone.

The study was handsomely furnished, as, indeed, was all the house. The furniture had been presented by the congregation on Mr. Manly's return from abroad as a token of their affection for him, and as a tangible mark of their regret for having ever believed ill of him.

'I only received your letter yesterday,' said Mr. Manly. 'We have only just returned from Devonshire. I, on my

side, have news for you, the substance of which I have already written to Mr. and Mrs. Challoner. But before I say anything further, tell me, are you resolved to still search for Rose?'

'I am quite resolved,' said Jack firmly.

'You must remember you may never find her, meantime you are wasting your life in unavailing endeavour.'

'I will go on till I find her,' said Jack, with still more determination.

'My wife and I have been away for our summer holiday: we were travelling about Devonshire. Last week we found ourselves on the borders of Dartmoor. She is not very strong just now.'

'Nothing serious, I hope,' interrupted Jack, who had been struck by the alteration in Mrs. Manly.

Her husband smiled.

'Well, no, nothing at all serious, I hope.'

And then Jack understood and smiled also, reddening slightly.

'I used to take long rambles alone sometimes in the afternoon when she was lying down,' continued Mr. Manly, 'and one day I found myself in a very wild part, with which I was quite unacquainted. I climbed the heights of some of the great hills, and, seated on a gray rock near the summit of a particularly lofty and rugged one, I caught sight, far below, of what looked to me like the chimneys of a farmhouse. Why or wherefore my curiosity was excited I do not know, unless it was from wonder at finding any building in so lonely a spot and so high up. Any way, I resolved to find it out.

'I had a long walk first, amidst hollows, and rocks, and furze, and heather, but the views were magnificent—I looked down into valleys and ravines over miles and miles of country. The silence was profound, I felt I should be glad to see some sign of human life.'

'Excuse me, Mr. Manly,' said Jack quickly, 'the scenery is very interesting, but *would* you mind getting on with your story as fast as you can?'

He smiled.

'I will omit the scenery, then. At last I found myself close to the wall of an old farmhouse. By climbing on to a boulder I looked over into the farmyard and orchard.

It was evidently a very old place, and I saw no trace of occupation about the out-buildings. I had not been there many minutes when a girl came out into the orchard, a slight girl dressed plainly in black.'

'Never mind her clothes, but be quick,' said Jack with feverish eagerness.

'The set of her shoulders reminded me of Rosè,' proceeded Mr. Manly, who for some purpose of his own evidently did not wish to finish his story too quickly, 'and, although I thought she could not be there, I waited until the girl turned. But whether she had seen me or not I do not know; instead of retracing her steps she ran towards the back of the house, and I only caught sight of a portion of her profile.'

'Of course you followed?'

'I did; I committed a trespass, for I jumped over the wall and walked quickly over the thick, tangled grass of the orchard, but I could see nothing of her.'

'Was it Rose?' asked Jack breathlessly.

'I think so; I feel almost sure of it.'

'What did you do next?'

'I made my way to the front and knocked at the door. A tall, commanding-looking woman opened it.

'"I want to see Miss Challoner," I said; "I know she is here."

'"There is no one of that name here," she replied.

'I proceeded to say she might not be known by that name, but I had just seen her at the back of the house. The woman shook her head. I think she was a lady, she spoke like one, though her manner was not pleasant.

'"Who lives here, then?" I asked.

'"I do," she replied—"I and some young ladies whom I instruct."

'"Let me see them," I said.

'"Impossible; it is against all rules."

'I argued and expostulated, pointing out that should there be any mistake I could do no harm, and if it were indeed Miss Challoner she would recognise me. My words were vain. Unless I had entered by force I could not get in.

'"I will not admit a man into the premises," she said firmly.

'"Will you admit my wife?" I asked.

'She hesitated. "Yes," she replied after a time; "I will admit your wife to-morrow."

'I was forced to desist, but I walked all round the farm, carefully looking about me. It was growing dusk, and I was obliged to go away, or I could not have found my way back. I knew it was a most unfit expedition for my wife, but, when I told her the circumstances, she was bent on making the attempt, and I did not feel it right to dissuade her. We hired a pony and started the first thing the next morning, but I had very great difficulty in finding the place notwithstanding the pains I had taken to remember it, and it was late ere we reached the farm.

'The same person came to the door. She spoke civilly enough; said my wife looked tired, and offered her a glass of milk.

'"Will you go over the house now, madame?" she asked.

'Mrs. Manly hesitated. "I do not like to go without you, Phil," she said timidly.

'"Now that the lady is here you may come also," said the lady of the house.

'I really do not know whether she had taken me for a burglar the night before; I don't think I look like one, but her manner now was very much pleasanter. We entered into a large sort of farmhouse kitchen of the plainest and barest description, but very clean. The walls were whitewashed, the ceiling also; I did not see a speck of dirt on the wooden chairs and tables. Round the walls, otherwise perfectly bare, were hung placards with various inscriptions which resembled texts, but were certainly not out of our Bible. I read: "Gifts are looked upon as seed which should be sown in the field of humanity." And again: "Rise up and loiter not. Practise a normal life and right. Who follows virtue rests in bliss both in this world and in the next." Also: "Virtue will live and work out its full effect in the decrease of the sum of the misery of sentient beings."

'Over the mantelpiece was printed on a board:

'"Right views.
Right aims.
Right words.
Right behaviour.
Right exertion.
Right mode of livelihood.
Right mindfulness.
Right meditation and tranquillity."'

'Never mind any more texts,' said Jack impatiently, 'but go on.'

'"I will call the young ladies," said the matron, and some nine or ten girls filed into the room. They were all grown up, some might have been four or five and twenty, all very pretty, and nearly all delicate and very intellectual-looking. Quite a remarkable set of girls. They all wore plain black dresses.

'"Are these all?" I asked.

'"Yes," said the matron.

'Some of them had the appearance of girls accustomed to society, and it puzzled me to think why they could be here. I began to wonder whether in the uncertain light I had been mistaken about Rose, but on reflection I became convinced that I had not been.

'"I see you scarcely believe me," said the matron; "you may search the house for yourselves if you please."

'It seemed a most unwarrantable thing to do, but my wife said eagerly, "Oh, I should *so* like to see over this queer old house."

'The matron led the way, and as she was going upstairs I spoke to one of the girls, a very clever-looking, handsome girl of some nineteen or twenty.

'"Has a Miss Challoner been staying here?" I asked.

'"I do not know the name," she replied; "we are known here by our Christian names."

'"Rose," I said, but she shook her head.

'I know I had no right to ask such a question as I did next.

'"Tell me," I said, "are you all here of your own free will?"

'She looked surprised. "Most decidedly!" adding, "Did you think this was a reformatory?"

'I apologized and followed my wife up the steep ladder-like staircase which led to the upper story. The rooms there were very small, bare, and containing only the merest necessaries. In some of them there was no furniture at all, except a small mat: neither had these unfurnished rooms any windows. More texts hung in the rooms, which were light. Some of them read as follows—I took notes in shorthand—"The consciousness of self is a delusion; the organized being, since it is not infinite, is bound up

inextricably with ignorance, and therefore with sin, and therefore with sorrow. Drop, then, this foolish longing for personal happiness; yourself will pass away like everything else; there will only remain the accumulated result of all your actions, words, and thoughts. Be pure, then, and kind, not lazy in thought. Be awake, shake off your delusions, and enter resolutely on the path which will lead you away from these restless, tossing waves of the ocean of life—the path to the joy and rest of wisdom and goodness and peace."*

'The matron opened every door; she even explained to us that, owing to the thickness of the walls, there were secret cupboards, all of which she showed us; indeed, she seemed anxious that we should see everything.

'I saw no trinkets, no gay dresses, all the et ceteras which formed part of most girls' lives seemed wanting; the dresses and necessary clothes were neatly folded and put into the cupboards or shelves. One text, a very suggestive one, said, "Mental culture, not mental death. Each one is to conquer self by himself; the observance of no ceremony, the belief in no creed, will avail him who fails in obtaining this complete mastery over himself."'

'Yes, yes,' said Jack, 'but go on about what happened.'

'I expressed my thanks to the matron for the courtesy shown us. She smiled, and asked if we were satisfied, or whether we would like to come again. "We can't come again," said Mrs. Manly ingenuously, "for we return home to-morrow." I may have been mistaken, but I fancied I saw a look of relief on the matron's face at these words.'

Here Mrs. Manly came in and said that lunch was quite ready.

'I have been telling Ashworth,' said Mr. Manly, as soon as they sat down to table in the dining-room, 'about our going to the farmhouse that day.'

'And did he tell you, Jack, how tired I was going down, and how he took me in his arms, and carried me down the steep parts, until we got down to where we had tied up the pony?' said Mrs. Manly, looking at her husband as if he had been a demi-god.

'No,' said Jack, 'he did not tell me that.'

'And how he would not have his dinner until he had written full particulars to the Challoners?'

* The quotations are strictly accurate.

'Nor that, either.'

Mr. Manly laughed.

'Ethel dear,' he said, 'your husband is not a very wonderful man, all said and done.—Ashworth,' he continued more gravely, 'I thought it my duty to write to you without delay and tell you everything. But, looking at the matter in all lights, I now earnestly counsel you to give up your search. If Rose wishes to return, she will return; if not, why look for her? I myself saw that escape was quite feasible from this farmhouse; there was not a single bolt or bar.'

'Mrs. Challoner said the same, but I can't help it, I *must* find her. I shall go down to Dartmoor to-morrow or to-night, and will stay there until I ascertain something. If necessary, I will sleep on the hill you told me of. I will haunt the place, but something I will find out, sooner or later. Any bad news is preferable to this horrible uncertainty.'

The date of Rose's appearance in London was then compared with that of Mr. Manly's first visit to the farmhouse; it proved to be the day after that on which he had seen her, the same day on which he had been at the farm with his wife.

'She has probably returned there,' said Jack, 'and find her I will. I start to-night.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

ROSE'S FLIGHT.

We will now return to Rose on the eve of her wedding-day, after her conversation with Mr. Barnard on the rocks at Penlist. She fully intended marrying Jack on the morrow, and was prepared to stifle certain feelings which, against her will, had taken deep root in her heart. The occasions to which Mrs. Worsley had referred, when she had returned from walks, looking radiantly happy, had been those on which she had accidentally met Mr. Fellerman one evening, and when a note from him had been given her.

Mr. Fellerman had spoken in his usual manner to her, chiefly on metaphysical subjects, avoiding altogether the topic of her marriage. The note had referred only to certain quotations mentioned in his conversation.

But by this time one of those marvellous and irresistible infatuations had overtaken her, and she was desperately in love with him. The power of her love had made her thankfully accept such small crumbs as he offered her; the whole loaf, or, in other words, Jack's heartfelt devotion, had no power to satisfy her hunger. She knew that Fellerman had no intention of marrying her, and therefore she purposed wedding Jack; but even now, could she have had her will, she would have put off the marriage. The knowledge of her own heart, however, had come too late to enable this to be done.

She went to bed at her usual time, ten o'clock, as did all the household, and slept, after a time, soundly.

She woke suddenly with a feeling that someone might be in the room. She listened attentively. There was a slight tap against her window as if a small pebble had been thrown against it. She rose and opened the window, and heard a voice, Fellerman's, say softly, 'Dress yourself thoroughly, and come out with me.'

It was early dawn, the sky was soft before the flush of

sunrise, the air deliciously fresh. Rose dressed herself quickly, even to her hat and gloves. It never occurred to her to dispute the direction given her. Mr. Fellerman was waiting on the lawn. As soon as she joined him he led the way outside the grounds into the lanes. In her joy at seeing him again she asked no questions, but listened to his talk.

'Is this to be your wedding-day?' he said at length; 'but I know it is. You are about to commit a grievous mistake: you are going, you think, to marry a man you do not love; you are going to run after a vain mockery of happiness.'

'But what else can I do?' she asked. 'I thought I should be happy when I said I would marry him.'

'And even now you have discovered your mistake. How comes that?'

He fixed his dark eyes on her face as he spoke; a burning blush was her only reply.

'Such intellect as you possess—and you possess much—will soon be lowered to his level if you marry him; you will live in the daily round of amusement and dress and food, having no high aims, no mental culture. "The fruitless cares and empty hopes of ordinary life are incompatible with, and distasteful to, the highest degree of self-culture," says a high authority. Do you not believe that?'

'But what am I to do?'

'"Man never escapes from the delusion of self,"' said Mr. Fellerman, continuing his quotation, '"but spends his life in a constant round of desires and cares, longing for objects which, when attained, produce not happiness, but fresh desires and cares. These cares are mean, petty, and contemptible, but even those whose ambition urges them to higher aims are equally seeking after vanity, and only laying themselves open to greater sorrow and more bitter disappointment. There is within man no abiding principle whatever."'

'You have stated the disease, where is the remedy?' asked Rose, looking at the light on Mr. Fellerman's face, and feeling irresistibly attracted by him.

'A life of self-denial and earnest meditation may lead to some solution of the strange enigmas of life.'

'Are you quoting from the Apocrypha?'

'I do not know it except by name. I quote from a far more ancient work.'

'Tell me what I ought to do,' said Rose, feeling at the moment as if her marriage with Jack would indeed be the destruction of her happiness.

'Come with me,' said Mr. Fellerman; 'leave this place and these ties, and learn of me. I will teach thee the marvels of the highest philosophy and religion the world has ever known. "Devote thyself wholly to moral culture, so as to arrive at the highest condition of moral rest."'

'I—I don't think I am religious,' faltered Rose.

'The true religion is what I will teach thee,' said Mr. Fellerman, speaking evidently in some excitement. 'Come with me to a community of young English women, where thou wilt learn the truth, and I myself will thoroughly instruct thee in the stupendous realities of our system, the marvellous conquest of mind over matter only attainable by those who believe with me. "The very gods envy the blessed state of those who, here on earth, escaped from the floods of passion, have gained the fruit of the noble path, and have become free for ever from all delusion and all sorrow in that rest which cannot be shaken."'

'Do you mean that I am to go away and not be married?' asked Rose tremblingly.

'That is what I mean,' returned Mr. Fellerman, speaking once more in his ordinary voice, and without the look of exaltation on his face. 'If you refuse, you will never see me again. I offer you a life which will be a noble life, inasmuch as it will be spent under my direction in advancing the happiness and salvation of others.'

They had been walking through Penlist. As they spoke the brougham appeared in the distance, down the winding road. He went on speaking, picturing the nobility of the life he described; but all these arguments would have fallen to the ground had it not been for the sentence, 'Refuse, and you will never see me again.'

'Am I to be a nun?' she asked.

'You are to take no vows save one: obedience to the lady who will be your Superior; and that is removable at will. Those who dislike our life may leave us at any moment.'

By this time the brougham was very near. 'Will you come?' said Mr. Fellerman, fixing his eyes on her and exerting all the power of his tremendous will.

He stopped the brougham, opened the door, gave her his hand to enter, and—the deed was done.

They drove on at a rapid pace, Fellerman speaking never one word.

'Oh, this is my wedding-day!' said Rose at length piteously; 'what will Jack think? what will my father and mother think? what am I doing?'

'Dear child,' said Fellerman very kindly, laying his hand on her head as he spoke, 'until thou hast learnt thy lesson, until thou understandest something of the profound depths of happiness and mystery into which I will lead thee, I will be to thee both father and mother and friend: I will not hurt a hair of thy head.'

'I *do* trust you,' said Rose, 'but I can't understand anything. Where am I going, and who with? and, oh! I have no clothes or anything.'

'Trust me wholly or not at all,' he rejoined. 'Say the word, and even now thou shalt return. Withdraw thy lot from me and go back.'

She was silent.

He looked at her and spoke in cold tones.

'Will you go or stay?'

'I will *go*,' she said firmly.

'Very good, he replied in his usual manner. 'You will soon meet the lady who will instruct you and be your head. Obey her in every respect for the space of one month: ask no questions and wonder at nothing. At the end of that time leave us and return home if you will; our doors are always open. But I have one test of your obedience to enforce: it *must* be enforced. Hold no communication with your home, write no letter, give no information. At any moment, as I said before, you may leave us; I will see that you shall do so if you wish, but you must not write.'

'But that is the hardest test of all,' said Rose. 'May I not write once?'

'Not once; it is the test I require.'

He looked at her and smiled.

'Have no fear, little one,' he said. 'I feel that you trust me. I will give you no reason to repent it.'

The magic of his presence was all-powerful; she knew that at that moment she would have agreed to almost anything that he might have asked. For a time she forgot

Jack; she forgot everything save the fact that he was with her.

'You will be known as Dorothea,' he said; 'in our community, where all are learners, we do not give our names. When you go forth as teachers, should that day ever come, you can take your names again.'

The brougham stopped at St. Germain's. They alighted and walked a few steps. A tall, commanding-looking lady met them, to whom Fellerman spoke apart. The sun had risen; his rays lit up Rose's face and her golden hair.

'She is very beautiful,' said the lady coldly. 'Has she had any training?'

'None whatever.'

'In her case it should, then, be somewhat severe.'

'Except that in that case she will probably leave us.'

'We can take means to prevent it.'

'*What!*' said Fellerman, with a flash of anger, 'do you suppose I will allow any coercion to be employed? Is *this* the result of what I have taught you?'

'It shall be as you wish,' she replied humbly.

The market people were beginning to assemble in the main street. The lady had turned into a side road where another brougham stood waiting. Fellerman handed Rose in, then the strange lady, and lastly entered himself.

'This is the Superior,' he said to Rose.

They drove some miles through lonely roads to a station, the name of which Rose did not know. Fellerman saw them into a train and spoke a word or two of parting.

'Are not *you* coming?' said Rose, in alarm, being by no means favourably impressed by the strange lady.

He smiled.

'Not now, my child; I will come to-morrow.'

The train started, and then, and not till then, Rose realized what she had done. She thought of her father's and mother's alarm, of Jack's sorrow, of the useless wedding preparations, and of all the trouble that would be involved. She would have gone back if she could now that Fellerman was no longer there to influence her, but it was too late. She had taken her course, and she felt she must pursue it. They were in a first-class carriage, there were no other passengers. From time to time she glanced at the Superior, who somehow seemed to regard her inimicably from the first. She did not

speak, neither did Rose. The latter had fasted since the night before, but on stopping at various stations, sometimes for ten minutes, the Superior made no mention of any refreshment and sat composedly on. Then Rose remembered that she had no money, and was, therefore, completely at this woman's mercy.

Whether the railway journey were short or long she did not know. She had some idea afterwards that they had changed trains, but her thoughts were in too much confusion for her to remember clearly. They travelled with the blinds drawn, and she was quite ignorant as to the county she was in when she alighted at length at a little roadside station, the name of which she did not see, the Superior taking her quickly through the gates. A covered country cart was in waiting, which they entered, and were driven over hill and through dale, the foliage in some places dense and of every shade of green, in others sparse and scanty, while rugged hills alternated with sheltered valleys and rounded heights. When the cart stopped after a long drive, the Superior and Rose alighted and wended their way through leafy hollows and beside little rills which gushed from the rocks around. At the foot of the hill, visited by Mr. Manly, the Superior stopped and pointed with her hand.

'Your home lies half-way up this hill,' she said.

'I hope it is not very far,' said Rose, 'for I am very tired, and the path looks so steep.'

The Superior smiled. Rose was reminded somehow of Fellerman in his most disagreeable moments.

It was indeed a steep climb; she was thoroughly exhausted when she reached the farmhouse gate.

'I fear you are not physically strong,' said the Superior.

'Not very,' replied Rose, feeling as if she had been accused of a crime.

They entered the large farmhouse kitchen; a number of girls were seated there who all rose to receive them. All were habited plainly in black, as when Mr. Manly saw them afterwards. A cloth was spread on the table, on which was the mid-day meal. It consisted of bread, milk, honey, eggs, and butter, all served in the plainest dishes.

It was now twelve o'clock; the sun was shining in at the windows; it had been scorching on their road up the hill, and Rose felt faint and sick.

'We will sit down without delay,' said the Superior when she had acknowledged the greetings of the girls; 'this is Dorothea,' pointing to Rose, 'our new inmate.'

Rose bent her head slightly and took the seat indicated to her next the Superior. All stood while grace was said, a peculiar form, the words of which Rose somehow fancied she had heard before; but whether that were so or not, they were certainly not conducive to much enjoyment. This was the formula used, she found, at every meal.

'Take thy meat, think it dust, then eat a bit and say withal, "Earth to earth I commit."'

She listened in horror: what was this awful place to which she had come? She drank a glass of milk and ate a slice of bread-and-butter; further food she refused. The girls spoke kindly to her ,and talked quietly amongst themselves; she saw they were all ladies, and felt somewhat reassured.

The meal over, the Superior bade her follow her upstairs, and conducted her to one of the small bare bed-chambers. It contained a wooden bedstead with one mattress, sheets and blankets, a chair and a wash-hand stand of the commonest description. But the jug was full of water, and Rose rejoiced.

'I should like to wash,' she said.

'Certainly,' said the Superior; 'you will have plenty of time. You will remain here until summoned, in order to have time for meditation.' And so saying, she left the room and shut the door.

Meditation! Rose thought she had plenty to meditate on. And this was to have been her wedding-day, when she would have been the observed of all observers, courted, admired and greatly beloved. What was she here? She did not even know, but it seemed to her as if she were a nun without any religion. Had she been a religious girl, she would have fallen on her knees and prayed for deliverance; but she had never been religious: her mind had always been so full of her deep, philosophical reading that she had listened to the simple teachings of Mr. Morris with a feeling akin to contempt, the power and grandeur of simplicity had not as yet struck her. Over her bed was a placard on which these words were printed:

'As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so cultivate goodwill without measure among

all beings—toward the whole world, above, below, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of opposing or differing interests. Remain steadfastly in this state of mind whether awake or standing, walking, sitting, or lying down.'

Rose had not brought her watch with her; the hours seemed to pass slowly. At six o'clock, as nearly as she could judge by the light, there was a tap at her door. She opened it. One of the girls was outside.

'You are to come down,' she said; 'but how tired you look!'

It was the first word of kindness she had heard; it brought tears into her eyes.

A meal was spread in the kitchen or dining-room. It consisted of milk, water, bread-and-butter. Rose, who was really hungry now, took a slice of bread-and-butter, but found she was singular in doing so: the Superior and the girls simply drank a glass of milk.

'You will like to retire early,' said the Superior at the conclusion of the meal.

'Yes,' said Rose; 'I should be glad to do so.'

'Go now; such things as are necessary will be placed in your room. You will replace your dress to-morrow with a black gown which I will provide for you.'

Rose went upstairs; one of the girls brought her a package containing clothes. Understanding that she was expected to go to bed, she went, and in spite of her troubles fell sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIFE UNDER THE SUPERIOR.

THE sound of a gong aroused her the next day. It was early morning; the lights were wonderful on the landscape around, the moorland seemed bathed in gold and crimson. She dressed herself in the black gown provided for her, and found it fitted well. She remained in her room until summoned to breakfast, a meal similar to that of the night before, but partaken of by everyone. She could not tell why, but all the girls seemed to look brighter this morning; in their faces there was more expectancy, less spirituality. The reason was presently explained.

'Mr. Fellerman comes to-day,' said one.

Rose flushed a vivid crimson, and found the Superior's eyes fixed on her face.

'Go to your room,' said that lady, 'and remain there. After to-day you will take part in our duties, but for the present you can meditate.'

Rose had finished her breakfast; there was no reason whatever why she should not go upstairs, but yet the uncomfortable feeling was present with her, that the Superior's command was actuated by some incomprehensible feeling of displeasure. She went upstairs and sat looking out of the window.

'You have not done your room,' said one of the girls presently, looking in.

'No,' said Rose; 'surely the servants will do it.'

'There are no servants here: we wait on ourselves.'

'I never did a room,' said Rose helplessly.

'I will teach you,' replied the girl—who was named Marietta—and, going to the other side of the bed, she assisted Rose to make it. Then she fetched a pail of water, and with a damp cloth wiped over the floor.

'It is very uncomfortable without a carpet,' said Rose.

'You may have worse hardships to endure,' replied Marietta cheerfully.

The Superior then entered, carrying with her a large book, which she opened.

'You will study this,' she said to Rose.

It was evidently a text-book of the same nature as the placards. Rose opened it at random, and read:

'He whose senses have become tranquil, like a horse well broken in by the driver; who is free from pride and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of existence, and the defilement of ignorance, may well be envied. Such a one, whose conduct is right, remains like the broad earth, unvexed, like a pellucid lake, unruffled.'

Again: 'As flame cannot exist without oil, so life, individual existence, depends on the cleaving to low and earthly things, the sin of the heart.'

'All earthly glory and heavenly joy can be procured by charity, piety, and self-control. Though he leave the fleeting riches of this world, this a man takes with him, a treasure that no wrong of others and no thief can steal. Let the wise man do good deeds, the treasure follows of itself.'

Rose closed the book.

'What does it all mean?' she said. 'For what have I abandoned everything? Am I mad? I suppose I must be.'

She heard a stir below, and, looking out of the window, saw Mr. Fellerman entering the gate. Her heart beat wildly, but she did not venture to go down.

'He will see me as he promised,' she said, 'and then I will ask him to take me home.'

But time went on, and she was not summoned. She saw the girls go out into the courtyard and form a semicircle, and then Mr. Fellerman came forth, the Superior with him. A few words were spoken, and one of the girls went into the house and upstairs.

'You are to come down,' she said to Rose.

The latter followed her into the courtyard. Mr. Fellerman smiled, but said nothing. The old farmhouse, the venerable out-buildings, the curious trees, and the magnificent view beneath, formed a strange picture to the eyes of Rose. But when Mr. Fellerman began to speak she forgot all her surroundings. Never had she listened to so magnificent a discourse. He spoke of the foreign lands in which he had lived, he described glowing Eastern scenery, and then he touched on higher flights, bearing away his hearers with his

splendid imaginings. He entered on systems of philosophy, he enlarged on the mystic circles of life, he brought out the practical meanings of the old fables, and finished by a most marvellous parable on the sun. His audience listened with rapt faces, their eyes beaming. Then turning towards them, he said gently:

'Let your steps lead you to the glad city of peace.'

This was evidently the sentence of dismissal: the girls all retired. Fellerman laid his hand on Rose's arm, as she would have followed them.

'And what do you think of us, my child?' he said quietly.

She hesitated.

'Are you daunted already? Will you return home?'

'If you would explain things I should be glad,' she said; 'but I don't understand anything.'

'Will you go or stay?' he said, looking at her.

With the fascination of his presence on her she *could* not say that she would go.

'I will stay,' she said.

'It is well. You will understand us better soon. I have not time to-day, but very shortly I will give you an hour or two to yourself, and tell you a great deal that you now wish to know. Meantime form no judgment, wait until you have fuller knowledge. And, my child,' he continued kindly, 'have no fear; you need not be afraid of anyone here. These girls—your companions—are well born, and will show you kindness.'

'Why do they all wear black? Is it the dress of your religion?—whatever that may be.'

He smiled.

'By no means: it is only for simplicity. These girls will return to the world again, taking with them the wisdom they have learned here, that they may teach others. They have no vows on them save that of obedience to the Superior. If *this* is broken there is but one penalty.'

'What is that?'

'They leave us: we see their faces no more.'

'Has anyone left?' asked Rose, feeling that perhaps the penalty was not very hard to bear.

'Not one,' said Fellerman, with a look of triumph, 'save those who had finished their course, and returned to the world perfected, as far as might be in the time, in knowledge.'

'Shall *I* return?'

'Perhaps, unless'—his face softened—'unless I have a nobler work for thee, my child.'

Rose unconsciously hoped he would *not* have a nobler mission for her. He read her thought, and smiled.

'In three months' time you will hope differently,' he said.

She nerved herself, and with palpable reluctance and hesitation asked him a question:

'Am I still not to write home?'

His kind smile disappeared, his face assumed a cold, hard expression.

'You will consult your own wishes,' he said distantly; 'but should you do so, I will no longer consult your welfare; return to your own people. I will detain you no longer. Farewell.'

The cold tones of his voice struck a chill to her heart; she turned her face towards him and gave him an imploring look. His face relaxed from its hardness; once more he smiled at her.

'You are forgiven, my child,' he said gently, and motioned with his hand that she was now to go in.

The Superior joined him, a cloud on her face.

'We shall have trouble with that girl,' she said.

'Why so? There has been none with any of the others.'

'Their cases were different. They came here knowing what to expect, knowing our religion, our principles. They had all been instructed by you. This girl knows nothing, and is actuated by one motive only.'

'And what is that?'

'Love of you. I see it in her face.'

'She must learn to subdue it, as she must learn other things. Do you suppose I should have taken so much trouble to bring her here had I not recognised in her a magnificent intellect and unusual powers of reasoning, both at present entirely undeveloped, but which I will work wonders with. Her beauty also is very great, it gives her power over others, and her peculiar sensitive temperament renders her exceptionally amenable to my wishes. A better pupil could not be found.'

'I do not myself see her great superiority,' she replied. 'I see her beauty, and that is all.'

Mr. Fellerman gave one of his old cynical laughs.

'Put it on that ground alone, if you will. You have been a woman of the world, and know perfectly well that a truth may be a truth, but to most men it is twice a truth from the lips of a beautiful woman. When I have trained her to the work you will acknowledge that I was right.'

'You will *never* train her,' she replied scornfully; 'you may by force of her love for you and your strong will get her to do all you wish—but as for herself, no amount of instruction will subdue her nature.'

'We will talk no longer on the subject,' said Mr. Fellerman, with a smile.

At the mid-day meal he was not present. Rose supposed he had left the house. To-day there was a cold joint on the table, but how it was cooked she did not know. She was not allowed to assist in the clearing away of the dinner, but was told to go to her room. The Superior brought her a book.

'You must meditate this morning on Love.'

She looked her full in the face as she spoke, and Rose became scarlet.

'It is not the love of which *you* are probably thinking,' the Superior said, with evident displeasure; 'we do not recognise such here. You must think of everyone you know, and long for the happiness of each. You must wish for others that they may be free from all sorrow, anger, and evil, and lastly you are to long for the welfare of your foes.'

Rose made no reply.

'And,' continued the Superior, pointing to certain passages in the book, 'these portions you will learn by heart:'

'"To abhor and cease from sin,
Abstinence from strong drink,
Not to be weary in well-doing:
These are the greatest blessing.

"Reverence and lowliness,
Contentment and gratitude,
The hearing of the law at due seasons:
This is the greatest blessing.

"Self-restraint and purity,
The knowledge of the noble truths,
The realization of bliss:
This is the greatest blessing.

"On every side are invincible
They who do acts like these;
On every side they walk in safety,
And theirs is the greatest blessing."'

The mention of the law put a new idea into Rose's head.

'Are you Jews here?' she asked.

'Certainly not,' said the Superior; 'but our religion is even more ancient.'

When left alone, Rose obeyed the Superior's injunctions so far as to learn the verses by heart, not being sure that she might not be called on to repeat them; indeed, she had a curious feeling all the time as if she were a child at a most unpleasant school. As to the meditation, she certainly meditated on love, but in a totally different manner to that enjoined. Her conduct appeared to her ever more outrageous and insane, and yet she knew that were the time to come over again she should act in precisely the same manner. When Fellerman directed her she had no power to resist his will; she did not even know that she wished to resist it, yet as she thought of her home and of Jack—good, honest, loving Jack—bitter tears rolled down her face.

But Mr. Fellerman was never long out of her mind; she found herself wondering where he was, what he was doing, whether he would see her again, and also feeling an insane jealousy of the other girls, supposing he taught them also. Lastly, who was he?

At tea-time she accepted a piece of bread-and-butter, and then, plucking up her courage, asked:

'Why do none of you eat anything?'

'We consider,' replied the Superior, 'that our mental powers are in a state of greater activity when our bodily appetites are weakened. You are at liberty to eat; there is no compulsion to abstain.'

Rose felt at once as if she had been accused of greediness, and resolved that she would rather die than eat anything at tea on the morrow. Whilst they sat at the table the Superior began to read aloud from a similar book to that she had given Rose.

'"When the conflict began between the Saviour of the world and the Prince of Evil a thousand appalling meteors fell; clouds and darkness prevailed. Even this earth, with

the oceans and mountains it contains, quaked like a conscious being; like a fond bride when forcibly torn from her bridegroom; like the festoons of a vine shaking under the blasts of a whirlwind. The ocean rose under the vibration of this earthquake; rivers flowed back towards their sources; peaks of lofty mountains, where countless trees had grown for ages, rolled crumbling to the earth; a fierce storm howled all around; the roar of the concussion became terrific; the very sun enveloped itself in awful darkness, and a host of spirits filled the air."'

'Ah!' said Rose in her ignorance, 'they belong to some peculiar sect of Christians.'

On the morrow, Saturday, she rose at the sound of the gong, and, going downstairs, assisted in bringing in breakfast. At the conclusion of the meal she was given a broom and bidden to sweep out one of the passages leading to the old grass-grown courtyard. She had never used a broom in her life, and performed her task very awkwardly.

'I see you are not accustomed to work,' said the Superior. 'Go now to your own room.'

She obeyed, and as soon as she had tidied it, as shown her by Marietta the day before, the Superior entered.

'Your meditation to-day will be on Pity,' she said. 'Think of all those to whom you should show compassion, and realize their unhappiness to the uttermost.'

Rose said nothing. It seemed to her that the being in most need of pity was herself; she would think of herself; how could she, indeed, avoid doing so?

'These precepts you will commit to memory,' continued the Superior. 'The observance of no ceremony, the belief in no creed, will avail him who fails in obtaining complete mastery over himself. Thoroughly learn and practise and perfect and spread abroad the law, in order that this religion may last long and be perpetuated for the good and happiness of the great multitudes.'

Rose learnt the verses and sat at her window, her whole soul full of longing that Fellerman might appear. But he did not come. She assisted in preparing the frugal dinner, going into all the lower rooms on the ground-floor and inspecting the premises generally. Her afternoon was spent in her own bedroom, presumably in holy meditation, in actual fact on her bed, in waking dreams of earthly happiness.

She was on the point of rising, when the Superior entered.

'I intended asking you to come out into the fresh air,' she said; 'but as you are tired you had better go to bed at once.'

'Oh no,' said Rose, wide-awake immediately; 'I would so much rather go out.'

'I think it best that you should not do so,' said the Superior coldly; 'but I would remind you that sloth is one of the vices we are expressly warned against in our order.'

'Won't you let me come down?' asked Rose.

'I have already given my opinion.'

Rose said no more; she felt more angry than she had ever done in her life. She heard the gong for tea, and a girl brought her up a slice of bread-and-butter. This she indignantly rejected. 'I should like some milk,' she said, but no milk was sent. She heard a stir in the courtyard, and, going to her window, again saw Fellerman arrive and the girls range themselves round him.

She felt gnawing pangs of jealousy. She alone was to be cut off from hearing one of his splendid discourses; perhaps he was to be told the reason she was not present. Perhaps, too, he had intended speaking to her alone and instructing her; she longed for the sound of his voice, she yearned for the touch of his hand. His back was towards the farm-house as he spoke, but she saw his splendid figure, and marked his impassioned gestures as he warmed with his subject. She saw the girls' faces soften and glow as on the day before, and, although she could not hear a word, she recognised the amazing power of his oratory.

His discourse over, he turned and looked up at her window, from which she immediately withdrew. She wondered what he thought of her, and thus wondering, after a long time, fell asleep.

The next day was Sunday. After breakfast she and the other girls went out on to the hill, picking all the flowers they could find, though these were not abundant. They procured, however, heather, shaking grass, mountain-ash berries, and a few forget-me-nots. The free, sweet fresh air rejoiced Rose; she began to talk to her companions, who, she observed, were very silent.

'Are we going to church to-day?' she asked of one, a tall girl named Sophia. The latter shook her head.

'We do not recognise what you call *church*, neither do we talk of it; it is entirely against our rules, and a slight penance is enjoined for doing so.'

'Which you will both fulfil,' said a voice behind them. They turned and saw the Superior.

'Sophia cannot have anything to do with the penance,' said Rose hotly, 'seeing that it was I only who spoke on the subject. I did not know it was any harm.'

'Sophia will, then, be absolved; you can perform it two nights instead of one.'

'But what is it?' asked Rose in evident anger; 'and why should I not speak of church? Mr. Fellerman himself went to our church in Penlist.'

'You are determined to repeat your offence,' said the Superior; 'I will, however, give you an explanation. We do not speak of church or churches, because we do not desire that discussions on other creeds should mar the simplicity of our religion and disturb our tranquillity. Every rule here has its distinct use. Your penance will be to make use of one of the smaller rooms at night, in place of your own room.'

'Do you mean one of those little holes without any window, with only a mat on the floor?' asked Rose, now violently angry.

'You must restrain your temper,' said the Superior; 'self-control is stringently enjoined. Yes, I do mean one of those rooms. But you need not sleep in it unless you like; you can refuse, and on Mr. Fellerman's next visit you can ask him to take you home.'

'I will fulfil it,' said Rose, still angrily, 'and *then* I will ask him to take me home.'

'Which he will most assuredly do,' replied the Superior firmly. 'A request of that kind need never be made twice.'

Her tone said so unmistakably, 'And I shall be rejoiced to see the last of you,' that Rose's spirit was roused, especially as Fellerman's words recurred to her; 'Refuse, and you will see me no more.'

'I don't know that I *shall* ask him,' she said.

'It is usual to pay the Superior more respect,' said that lady as she went away.

Rose said no more. She helped her companions to bring in the flowers and branches, and deck one end of the large room with them, and then, all the girls sitting down in silence, the Superior read to them marvellous passages of

great beauty and pathos from the large book. Dinner was prepared as usual, and after it was cleared away and the sweeping, which was insisted on after every meal, had been accomplished, she retired to her own room, having had no orders given her. Her life seemed to her a piece of sheer folly just now, incomprehensible, painful folly, leading to nothing. To what end was this fasting and penance, as they were not Roman Catholics, and why were there no prayers said, and no service held?

At dusk a lamp was lighted in the passages below, and when the girls retired to rest Rose was asked which chamber she would occupy.

'The little dark one,' she replied firmly, determined to taste the delights of martyrdom. Her night was horribly uncomfortable, far worse than she had imagined. As there was nothing to sleep on or cover her, she had not undressed, and all her clothes began to feel tight. She first lay down, then sat up, then lay down again. She felt cold, and stiff, and sore, and miserable. She made up her mind that she would not endure this absurd humiliation again, that Mr. Fellerman should take her home (where perhaps they would, after all, be glad to see her), and that she would strive to forget her new guide and all connected with him.

But on the morrow Fellerman arrived, and ere she was aware of his presence she was summoned to hear his discourse. The day was very hot; he stood beneath one of the trees in the orchard, whilst the girls sat on the grass. He chose for his text the words, 'Whence comes it that thy form is so perfect, thy countenance so lovely, thy appearance so peaceful? I am going to give Light to those enshrouded in darkness, and to open the gate of Immortality to men.'

'That *must* be from the Bible,' thought Rose, who had not read her Bible as attentively as she ought.

He began to call up powerful imagery in explanation of his text, and thence reverted to a splendid disquisition on ethics, most poetically delivered. The tears were in Rose's eyes ere he had finished.

At the conclusion of the discourse he spoke with one and another of the girls separately, especially one somewhat older than the others, with whom he walked up and down for some half-hour. She was exceedingly pretty, and Rose felt burning jealousy as she watched her.

CHAPTER XXV.

PENANCE.

THE other girls had dispersed when Mr. Fellerman came up to Rose and bade her walk out on the hill with him. He looked down at the beautiful view for some minutes, then said, 'Have not we, who dwell on the heights, a clearer view than they who live below?' Continuing in the same strain, he talked to her quietly, patiently, and most instructively for fully one hour, carefully explaining difficulties, his fine voice always kind in its tone. Rose listened delighted, entirely forgetting her wrongs and her determination to go away.

'And now, little one,' he said, 'art thou still resolved to leave us?'

'How did you know?' she asked, turning crimson.

He smiled.

'Did I not see thy face as thou camest towards me at first? did I not read thy countenance right?'

'Yes,' she said, 'but I don't know now. I—I should not like to go where I could not hear you speak so beautifully.'

'Understand yourself,' he replied in cold tones, 'for this indecision is childish. Make up your mind to remain for a month and bear the life laid before you, or make up your mind to go altogether. It is useless to come to me with complaints, and then tell me you should prefer remaining. I keep my eyes open, but I listen to no complaint.'

'I have not as yet complained,' she said humbly. 'I will not do so. But I cannot like the Superior.'

'Has she been hard on thee, little one? Has she inflicted penance that thou art not willing to bear? Curb thy pride and mind it not. She and I do not think quite alike. She clings to the severer and more debased creed from which our religion sprang, forgetting sometimes one of our most essential tenets, that "Penance avails nothing as compared with a pure life and deeds of charity."'

'Why do you allow her to inflict it?'

'She suits my purpose, and, as she is the Superior, she must be obeyed, implicitly obeyed. Order is the life of a community.'

'I will do as you wish,' said Rose. 'At the same time, penance in some people's hand is a nice instrument of revenge on those they dislike.'

'I cannot listen to this,' said Fellerman with a frown.

The young moon had risen, the light was clear, though dim; there was a wonderful charm in the air—the scent of the sweet moorland, the soft movement of the leaves and branches.

Rose raised her eyes to those of Mr. Fellerman, and he turned towards her. She was looking very lovely and very sad. Then, for the first time, came into his eyes the light which is only seen in a man's eyes when he feels he might or does love a woman: his whole face softened.

'Go now, my child, my little Dorothea,' he said, 'and be brave and strong.'

Without a word she went away, radiantly happy, for she had perceived a look on his face which she had never so much as hoped to see there. Of her own accord she entered the desolate little room, too happy even to attempt to sleep. The discomfort was quite unheeded by her. Go away? *Never!*

Hour after hour she lay awake, until, as morning broke, sleep overtook her. The gong sounded, but she did not hear it.

She slept on.

It was not until another hour had elapsed that she awoke, and, fearing lest it should be late, hurried into her room and began to comb out her long golden hair. The Superior came in.

'We have finished breakfast,' she said.

'I am very sorry,' returned Rose; 'but I will make haste. I do not wish for any breakfast.'

'I have no wish to deprive you of food,' said the Superior. 'You will find that your breakfast is set aside for you downstairs. But as either the dressing of your hair or your love of sleep is the cause of your neglecting your duties, thereby throwing these on other people, I think it best that your hair should be cut off in order that your time

may not be wasted. You will cut it off after you have breakfasted.'

Rose listened aghast; her hair had been considered one of her chief beauties.

'Do you mean it?' she faltered.

'Most decidedly. Here is a pair of scissors; you had better do it at once.'

The Superior went out, and Rose shed tears of rage. She feared to obey the order lest she should lose some of her beauty in Fellerman's eyes, but she knew appeal to him was useless. With desperate courage she took the scissors, and, feeling as if she were parting with her heart's blood, cut off her lovely wavy locks; the floor was strewn with them.

But if the object of the order had been to lessen her beauty, it had not succeeded; her hair curled in little rings all over her head, and she descended looking very lovely, with a shy look which enhanced her attractions. The Superior made no remark.

In course of time Fellerman arrived. His movements were always a source of mystery to Rose; he came and went without her knowledge, and where he was in the interim she had no idea. This day he gave no address; he spoke to several of the girls apart. Whether they also were in love with him Rose did not know, but she imagined that they were, and her jealousy increased.

She had been ordered that day to meditate on Joy, and to picture the highest form of happiness attainable on earth enjoyed by those around her.

This meditation she carried out faithfully, for she pictured the girls one and all listening to Fellerman's talk, lost in the joy of his presence, and she suffered torment the while. For the first time she pitied Mr. Barnard, but her life at Penlist seemed to have been lived ages ago, and faded into insignificance. In course of time Fellerman sent for her. He looked at her in wonder.

'Penance?' he said interrogatively, laying his hand on her head.

'Yes,' she replied, with a very pretty smile and most becoming blush.

He made no further remark, but talked to her for some half-hour very kindly, dismissing her with the words, 'Go, my child, and let thy footsteps lead thee in the path "whose gate is purity and whose goal is love."'

Then he sought the Superior, who walked out with him past the deserted farm outhouses on to the heights above. His manner was grave, his look very stern.

'For what purpose is that girl shorn of her locks?' he asked.

'For penance.'

'For a grave fault?'

'For sloth.'

'In other words, being late for breakfast after a wretched night spent in a miserable room!—yes, Aurea told me of the arrangement, at my request—and for looking extremely beautiful with her hair down her back.'

His tone was cynical.

'Her beauty is no part of our system.'

'Excuse me, it is a very important factor in *my* plans.'

'She comes for instruction, to learn abnegation of self and earthly desires; her beauty is a snare to her.'

'Was it for this purpose you cut off her hair?'

She made no reply.

'I do not seek to interfere with you,' he continued; 'but it seems to *me* that, to so firm a believer in penance as you, some penance might well be self-inflicted by you as a retribution for having ordered one so irremediable. Could you not have kept the girl without her breakfast?'

'This girl seems always in your thoughts,' she rejoined with suppressed agitation. 'There has been more trouble about her than any one of the others. You wish *me* to have a penance: name it; I will do as you wish.'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'Spare me your internal economy; as Superior you do as you please. It is you who believe so much in penance, not I.'

They were completely hidden from view of the farmhouse windows; the solitude was profound. She fell on her knees before him, and raised her hands appealingly.

'I will sleep in that room for a month together; I will eat but one meal a day during that time. Will that satisfy you? Only look once as kindly on me as I saw you look on her, and I will do whatever you wish.'

'Rise,' he said coldly; 'you are here to carry out my work and advance my aims. You are doing so. I have found no fault.'

'I will do as I have said.'

'With that I have nothing to do,' he replied impatiently. 'Rise instantly, and spare me these extravagances.'

She did so.

'In so far as you consider penances necessary to these girls I allow them, knowing that many who profess our religion have the firmest faith in them, but for myself I do not care for them, and I have nothing to do with any penance you may think fit to inflict on yourself.'

'And yet,' she said bitterly, 'you would not hesitate to be actively cruel if you thought it necessary in order to carry out your will.'

'You are right; I could and should be extremely cruel *if* I thought it necessary, but it would hurt me, notwithstanding.'

The Superior kept her word, and Fellerman knew of it. He smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

The days passed by quickly. Rose seemed occupied only with one idea, the longing for Fellerman's coming. Sometimes he was absent a week, sometimes he would come two days running. But he spoke to her only as he did to the other girls, and she did not see again that look in his eyes.

Her knowledge was advancing greatly; she was amazed at the mighty theories she was learning. But no matter how many tranquillizing texts she learned nor how many lessons of self-control were impressed on her, her heart was full of wild love which prevented them from taking effect. Had he declared any love for her she would probably have been satisfied, and her thoughts would have returned to her own home, but, as it was, she lived in a perpetual fever, at times grieving over his coldness, at times rejoicing over some kind word.

Communication with the outside world seemed almost entirely suspended; there were neither newspapers, nor letters, nor ordinary books. The milk and food were sent from a distant farmhouse, the man who brought them stopping his cart some quarter of a mile away, and the Superior, or sometimes two of the girls, going down to receive them. Very little conversation took place. Each girl seemed anxious to study and advance in knowledge, and was full of some purpose which Rose did not understand.

It was August, and very hot weather. Of an evening the girls were at liberty to wander about the orchard and immediate precincts of the farmhouse at will; no stranger ever came by. The beautiful view was an immense comfort to Rose. She thoroughly enjoyed these evening rambles; her thoughts were full of Fellerman and the extraordinary life she was leading. But by this time she had grown almost to like the life. It was a custom in the community before retiring for the night to confess any omission of duty or fault to the Superior, who inflicted some very slight penance, such as taking a double share in preparation of a meal, or so on, which was always most cheerfully fulfilled. Indeed, Rose could not but remark the contentment and unity which seemed to reign amongst them all, she herself being apparently the only discordant element as far as the Superior was concerned.

She was seated one evening in the large kitchen in company with Aurea, a very pretty girl of two-and-twenty, for whom she had formed a certain amount of friendship. She began to question her about her previous life, and as to how long she had been here.

'We do not talk of ourselves much,' said Aurea, not unkindly. 'Mr. Fellerman prefers that we should not, and we ourselves think that what is called "gossip" is best avoided, as it is a habit that increases generally, and would distract us.'

'It seems to me that I am the only one who came here in the dark,' said Rose. 'You all know more than I.'

'We all know for what purpose we came, certainly, and what we are expected to do when we leave.'

'I wish I did,' said Rose; 'and do you mean to tell me that when you are told to meditate on certain subjects that you really do meditate on them?'

'Certainly.'

'For myself,' said Rose with a laugh, 'I think about anything that comes into my head.'

'You do wrong,' said Aurea gravely; 'it is not a good return to Mr. Fellerman, who does so much for us. I do not know, neither do I seek to know, what he may have done for *you*, but there is not one of the rest of us to whom he has not shown very great kindness, added to which we are all personally aware of the numerous and vast acts of

charity he has performed towards people from whom he could not possibly expect any return.'

Had Rose declared the truth, she would have replied to the question, 'What has he done for *you?*': 'He has taken me away from a luxurious home, from my father and mother, from my intended husband, from every worldly pleasure.' But the answer in her own mind was: 'He has opened a new world to me.'

The Superior entered.

'I have heard every word of your conversation,' she said; 'if you do not wish to be overheard you should speak with closed doors. I find, Dorothea, that you have of deliberate purpose persistently disobeyed the direction given you to meditate on certain subjects, whereby you might have learnt much.'

'That is quite true,' said Rose.

'You will abstain altogether from the mid-day meal to-morrow.'

'Very well,' said Rose defiantly; 'be as cruel as you please!'

'And the next day also; you must learn to conduct yourself with more respect to me.'

'Very good,' returned Rose; 'I will of course do as I am told, seeing that I have no alternative, but as I do not feel any respect for you, it is not likely that I can show any!'

'You will go the *whole* day without food, save a glass of milk, the day after to-morrow. The meditation to-morrow will be on the precepts laid down as to obedience to those set over you, the next day on the control of bodily appetite.'

'How could you be so foolish?' said Aurea in much concern as the Superior went out; 'such a thing has not happened here yet. Should Mr. Fellerman come to-morrow I will tell him; he will not allow it!'

'No,' returned Rose, 'it is not my intention to complain; I must bear it, as he said. I do not want to go away from here, and therefore I must do as she tells me.'

'Then you should be more circumspect in your words; you must excuse my telling you that your manner was most irritating.'

The next day passed away. Rose absented herself at the mid-day meal, and, although she wore a cheerful face at tea-time, she was very glad when that repast was served. It is by no means an easy matter to go without food to those

who are not accustomed to do so. She remarked that Aurea, who poured out the milk, filled her tumbler to the very brim, for which she was extremely thankful. At breakfast the next morning her teacup was also very full; other food she had none; neither, by direction, did she appear at the mid-day meal.

Her physical suffering was now great, her meditation certainly real enough. Her pulse began to beat rapidly, her brain to work unceasingly; she could not control her thoughts. She found herself getting into a species of trance in which the mystic visions which Fellerman had sometimes put before them were mingled with thoughts of her own. She remembered nothing further until she fancied she was in Fellerman's arms—that he was carrying her out and laying her gently down on the grass. Then she had an idea that she was talking wildly to him, informing him how she had overcome matter with mind, that she had recognised how unreal material existence was, and telling him of the marvellous visions that had been shown her; and then, again, she remembered nothing further.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. FELLERMAN'S DIRECTIONS.

WHEN she awoke she was lying in her bed undressed. Mr. Fellerman was leaning over her with a very grave face, and at once began to feed her with a teaspoon from a tumbler he held in his hand containing a mixture of warm milk, egg, and brandy. The Superior was also in the room looking thoroughly unconcerned, but watching Fellerman closely.

Rose opened her eyes and smiled, when a very soft look came over his face; he smiled in return. He fed her until she had finished the contents of the tumbler, and she thought of his former words: 'I will be both father and mother and friend.'

'Good-night, my child,' he said kindly, and left the room, followed by the Superior. They walked out together on to the hillside. Dusk had fallen, a soft light was on the landscape.

'I suppose,' said the Superior at length, 'that it is your intention to call me to account and add to the penance I am already carrying through.'

'I have no intention of the kind,' he said; 'I do not control you. In this instance it so happens that you and I have both accomplished our ends: you by inflicting—I was about to say cruelty, but I will alter the word to penance—on an enemy; I by ascertaining unintentionally that my teaching has taken far deeper root than I imagined. The words she spoke after I had carried her into the open air showed me that I had not been mistaken in her—that when she has learned more she will be a perfect instrument in my hands.'

'Then you approve of what I did?'

'I will speak on that subject to-morrow. All I say now is, do not repeat your dangerous experiment; the girl cannot bear it.'

'I am enduring far more myself, and for a much longer continuance.'

'You,' he said scornfully—'you are four times as strong; you can bear sixfold as much bodily suffering. You should protect the weak.'

'I do not see much difference myself between using physical means or coercing people by the power of your will.'

'No?' he said, and smiled. 'I remain here to-night,' he said after a pause.

'We must prepare a room.'

'Certainly not. I shall sleep out of doors.'

'Where?'

He pointed to a patch of brown earth near the disused stables. 'There. The ground is quite dry.'

He turned and left her. At ten o'clock he entered the farmhouse. 'I will see that girl again, if you please,' he said.

The Superior took a lamp and led the way to Rose's room.

She was sleeping peacefully, looking very fragile, but very lovely; one white hand lay outside the coverlet. She opened her eyes as he stood looking at her. He poured out some two teaspoonfuls of brandy from a flask in his pocket, and mixed it with a little water, giving it to her to drink. She took it from him with a smile, and marked the wonderful light in his eyes.

'Good-night again, little one,' he said, 'and pleasant dreams.'

'You will give her three good meals of nourishing food to-morrow,' he said to the Superior on leaving the room; 'and you will not disturb her in the morning, unless she wake of her own accord.'

'I thought,' she replied coldly, 'that it was by your own express wish that the supply of food here was both limited and as plain as possible.'

'You are right: that, I think, conduces to mental activity; but I do not contemplate committing murder'—he turned his eyes on her at these words, and she became deadly white—'neither do I think any end is to be gained by it. If on no other ground, it clearly contravenes one of our most binding precepts.'

He walked out into the courtyard to the spot he had indicated, and found there a mattress and blankets. He took

them up and carried them back to the farmhouse, saying, 'I do not require these things.'

'Do have them,' said the Superior.

He laughed. 'The earth shall be my pillow, the heavens my roof.'

It was a warm balmy night; presently the harvest moon, which was waxing, appeared and bathed the landscape in light. He lay on his back and contemplated the sky hour after hour, until morning broke, when he rose, and, going towards the moorland, found a running stream in which he performed his ablutions, appearing at the breakfast-table in the farm scrupulously attired, as he always was here, in the easy costume of an English country gentleman.

Rose awoke in the morning to find one of the girls standing by her bed with a tray in her hand, containing a cup of warm milk, a boiled egg, and some bread-and-butter.

'If you are well enough to come down to dinner,' she said, 'Mr. Fellerman says you are to spend the afternoon with him. He is to be here all day.'

'I am well enough to get up now,' said Rose, her face in a glow.

'No, you are not to get up until dinner-time. And we are to do all your work—you are to have a holiday to-day,' she added with a smile.

'I did not know Mr. Fellerman was here yesterday.'

'He only arrived just as I went up to see why you did not come down to tea. I found you in a dead faint. I told him, and he ran up the stairs and carried you out into the open air.'

'I will now, if you please, resume the subject of our last night's conversation,' said Mr. Fellerman to the Superior after breakfast, whilst the girls were engaged in their various duties. 'How often am I to impress upon you that these girls have taken no vows, and that our system here is only valuable insomuch as it copies, at a distance, that of our monastic system abroad, and also prepares them to despise luxury and gain the mastery over themselves?'

'That is what I teach,' said the Superior firmly.

'In most things, and in every case save one, you have proved yourself an admirable teacher—I could not wish for a better; in technical knowledge you have advanced them wonderfully. But I wish you would understand that to *inflict* penance is

directly contrary to our system; to have the smallest value, it must be entirely spontaneous. These girls are not here for punishment, they are here to *learn*, and, in order to advance their teaching, seclusion and a certain hardness of life are necessary. Beyond this I have no wish to go; but, as I said, you are at their head—you will do as you please.'

'I consider my system a good one,' said the Superior sullenly; 'you yourself allowed it had hitherto worked admirably until this wretched girl came, who upsets everything. I must have some means of control, and if they do not like it they can go away.'

'Very good,' he replied calmly; 'you shall have your own way. If you consider it necessary to—let us say—advance their education by—let us say—the exercise of penance, by all means do so. But as far as Dorothea is concerned, seeing that you do not understand her, I have a fancy for trying your system with her on myself.'

'What do you mean?'

'If it give you pleasure—I beg your pardon, if you think it essential, I should say—to keep the girl without her meals, be so good as to keep account of the number of times; when I return here, I will fast cumulatively. That is to say, if you deprive her of four meals at different intervals, I will for two consecutive days abjure food. Now, this would entail much suffering on me and be entirely fruitless, inasmuch as there is no object to be gained by it; I am not sure that it would not be also ridiculous. But I should do it, notwithstanding.'

'Surely not.'

'Surely *yes*; I never make rash assertions. So, too, if you require her to sleep in that little room, tell me how often: I will sleep an equal number of times on the ground out of doors, as I did last night.'

'Really?'

'Most certainly. I did so last night simply in order to point my words this morning, and prove to you I was in earnest. It was very uncomfortable, I assure you, and did not improve my coat. But I have accustomed myself to despise bodily comfort for too many years, when occasion requires, to regard it now. If I remember right, the book which Christians so much revere, and which I heartily respect, says something about keeping down one's body and

bringing it under; but, so far as I know, it says nothing about other people doing it for you. I admit, however, I may be wrong; it is not a book I have ever studied carefully.'

'You have effectually tied my hands,' said the Superior angrily. 'You know that I can now do nothing. Why do you not say, "I command you to let the girl do as she pleases"? it would in effect be the same thing. But you say, "Do as you like," knowing that I can do nothing. It is as if you tied a man up with a rope and then bid him go free.'

'The subject is ended,' said Fellerman.

The Superior rose and left the room.

'To think of the awful terms she and her husband were on!' he said meditatively; 'and I find her so easy to manage.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

A JOURNEY TO LONDON.

Rose showed no sign of her recent illness when she went downstairs; her complexion was brilliant, her eyes shone. Fellerman placed her hand in his arm and walked up the hill for some little distance, then bade her sit down on one of the ancient boulders. They looked down at the dells and ravines below, at the rocky hills around, the silent hills with their long solemn shadows. For some time he was strangely taciturn, then he turned to her with a smile.

'Are you happy, my child?'

'Yes,' she replied shyly.

'And you have been unhappy?'

'A little, not very.'

'You are learning courage, I see; that is well.'

Rose felt that she would have endured double as much to have earned these words of commendation.

'You shall be happy this afternoon,' he continued. 'We will have no lessons; I will talk to you on any subject you please. What shall it be?'

She felt dangerously happy; it was the first time she had ever been thoroughly at ease in his society; he was not a seer or a teacher, he was neither cynical nor cold, but altogether charming.

He pointed out the objects of interest in the distance, telling her the names of some of the tors.

'I don't know what part of England we are in,' she said.

He told her, adding: 'Did you think you were here as a prisoner, and that we would not tell you where you were?'

'I did not ask,' she replied with a soft blush.

He talked on various subjects, showing her the different plants and telling her their names and properties. Then he took a flask of sherry out of his pocket and poured out a glass, bidding her drink it and eat a biscuit.

'You will have a good tea on your return, my child,' he

said, 'and then, I think, we need no longer concern ourselves about your health.'

'It was a great deal my own fault,' said Rose, looking down.

'If so, in future oblige me by paying all respect to the Superior.'

'I will do so.'

The fresh moorland air was blowing on her cheek; her colour was brilliant. She had removed her hat; the wind was playing with her golden curly hair. He looked at her again with dangerous light in his eyes; she felt that he would have liked to take her in his arms and kiss her.

'Tell me,' he said softly, 'art thou not happier here than at Penlist?'

There could be only one answer, given very gently:

'Yes.'

He drew a little nearer to her; on her side she made the slightest possible movement towards him, and looked into his dark glowing eyes, which were fixed on her face. Then he rose suddenly and walked away a few steps. On his return his face had assumed its usual resolute, somewhat stern, expression.

'We must no longer waste our time, my child, in idle play,' he said gravely. 'I shall go out with thee no more.'

Her face fell; she turned away. The gates of Paradise seemed to have been opened and shut quickly. He helped her down the hill without speaking, but at the farm-gates he said gravely:

'Good-bye, my little Dorothea. Be earnest, thoughtful, and pure, steadfast in resolve; keep watch over thine own heart. If thou shalt adhere unweariedly to this Law and Discipline thou shalt cross the ocean of life and make an end of sorrow!'

Rose saw him no more for some days to come; his manner then had entirely changed: he was cold, stern, and distant. He spoke to no one separately, but gave a very splendid discourse on the insufficiency of life for happiness, touching, as usual, on deep metaphysical subjects, such as required earnest attention from his hearers to understand. He ended with the words, 'Decay is inherent in all component things; work out your own salvation with diligence,' and walked away.

It was shortly after this, while Rose was walking in the

orchard, meditating sadly on the alteration in him, that she caught sight of Mr. Manly, and at once recognised what speech with him would involve; she would be taken away and never see Fellerman more. In terror she rushed into the house by a side door and entered the kitchen. She had not been aware that Fellerman was there, but found him seated on one of the oak chairs, looking over some accounts with the Superior.

'Mr. Manly is outside searching for me,' she said breathlessly. 'Hide me somewhere where he cannot find me.'

'Go to your room,' said Fellerman quietly; 'I will not let him find you.'

It was then that the Superior had answered the door and prevented Mr. Manly from entering. When he had gone away Rose was summoned.

'What are your wishes?' asked Mr. Fellerman.

'I do not wish him to find me. What am I to do?'

'Aurea goes to London to-morrow; will you accompany her for a short time?'

'I will do whatever you and the Superior wish,' said Rose, whose manner towards that lady was extremely deferential now.

She and Fellerman talked together for a few minutes.

'I could take them up to-night instead of to-morrow,' he said, 'otherwise this business may give us trouble. We could take the night mail.'

Aurea was called, and expressed her willingness to agree to this arrangement. Mr. Fellerman went out, taking the road to the nearest farmhouse, where he procured a cart, with which he met the Superior, Rose, and Aurea at the foot of the hill. The latter had made her farewells hurriedly; she was now to leave them and return to the world, not by her own wish, but because Mr. Fellerman was of opinion that the time had arrived for her to do so. She bade good-bye to her companions and the farmhouse with evident sorrow, though her face was calm.

The Superior left them at the foot of the hill and re-ascended alone. They drove in the moonlight at a rapid pace through the silent country lanes, reaching a small station at length. They were just in time for the up train. Fellerman placed them in a first-class carriage, and himself travelled second-class, meeting them at Paddington.

During the long night journey the girls spoke but little.

'Where are you going afterwards?' Rose asked at length.

'I am going to join my sister in India.'

'A life in the world will seem very strange to you.'

'Very,' said Aurea gravely; 'I have lost all taste for it. I am going now to a friend with whom I take the voyage.'

'What, then, is the good of your training? Are all your lessons to be thrown away?'

'By no means; I shall now find their use.'

'Tell me what it is.'

Aurea smiled.

'You must ask Mr. Fellerman; he will tell you if he wishes.'

'How long has he taught you, and where did you first meet him?'

'I met him in London society. It is now three years since I have lived with the Superior and been taught by him. First of all we lived in another part of England.'

'Did your friends consent to your leaving them?'

'Certainly. I was very poor, and had no parents. Mr. Fellerman showered kindnesses on me and on my aunt, and when the Superior asked me to live with her, both my aunt and I were quite willing that I should do so. I knew what I was to learn before I went, and the life I should lead; it was my free choice. At the same time, when Mr. Fellerman determines on anything, it is impossible to resist his will.'

He took them to the railway hotel on arrival at the terminus, and ordered breakfast for them, rejoining them when their meal was concluded. He told Aurea he was ready to accompany her, and Rose that she was probably in want of necessary clothing, that she might make what purchases she pleased in company with a person from the hotel.

'I have no money,' she said, with a painful blush.

'This need not distress you; your companion will pay.'

She appreciated the delicacy of not directly offering her money, though, seeing that she was already indebted to him for clothes, board and lodging, perhaps it would not have greatly mattered.

'Do you wish to stay a little while in London, or to return without delay?' he asked.

'Whichever you think best,' she replied, feeling that her only wish was to please him.

'It will, I think, be better for you to return to-day.'

She looked at him gladly. She should, then, perhaps take this long journey in his company. His next words dispelled this hope.

'You will start for your return journey from Waterloo this evening. Your companion will pay your fare and tell you at what station to alight. I shall take an earlier train down and meet you there. You have now an excellent opportunity for leaving us if you wish; do you wish it?' he asked very gravely.

'Do you want me to go?' she asked in alarm.

'No; I wish you to remain.'

'I am very glad,' she replied simply.

Aurea bade her farewell, and a kind, motherly-looking woman from the hotel took charge of Rose, driving about with her in order that she might view the shops. It was then that Jack had seen her, but she did not see him. She bought a few things, a very few, of the plainest description, and set off on her return journey in the evening full of anxiety to again see Fellerman, apart from whom she felt she should not know how to live, notwithstanding his coldness.

He met her as he had promised, telling her that he had already ascertained that Mr. and Mrs. Manly had either left or would leave the neighbourhood shortly. 'Therefore we think you are best at the farmhouse. No one has visited it before; no one is likely to visit it again.'

A cart was in waiting; he helped her in, but walked by the side many miles, all through the country roads, speaking occasionally to the driver. He dismissed him at the foot of the hill and walked up with her. It was early morning; the dew was shining on the leaves and grass and prickly furze bushes; it was a perfect summer day.

'You must be very tired,' he said kindly, but after that made no further remark.

When the farm was in sight, she summoned up courage and addressed him, speaking timidly:

'Have I offended you of late in any way, Mr. Fellerman?'

'No, my child,' he returned gravely, 'in no way.'

There could be, then, only one solution, she feared—he no longer liked her as well as he did.

She gave her mind diligently to her duties, fulfilling

scrupulously every direction given her, almost sorry that now no penance was ever laid on her. Once she saw Fellerman's eyes fixed on her, in them a depth of sadness. She fancied for the moment that he was bidding her farewell, and raised her eyes to him in an agony. He gave a slight smile and shook his head. Shortly after he went away.

She was walking in the orchard that evening after dusk, treading on the rank grass, and going in and out amongst the gnarled trunks of the old apple-trees, thinking as usual of Fellerman, and wondering if by any possibility he might again like her, when she caught sight of a man's figure coming quietly towards her, and making signs that she was to be silent. He was close to her. Fear prevented her from speaking. She looked, and it was JACK!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JACK'S SEARCH.

MR. MANLY'S story had roused in Jack all that sort of bull-dog courage which is in the heart of every true Englishman. He had not only made up his mind to find Rose, but he rather hoped that he should come across Fellerman and be enabled to have it out with him. It would have given him extraordinary pleasure to have had a personal encounter with fisticuffs, a fair fight and no favour; and he actually sighed as he considered that such a course of proceeding would be impossible in the present day.

Before leaving Newforth he sent a long and carefully worded telegram to Mrs. Challoner asking for instructions. The reply did not arrive until the next morning, and he felt obliged to wait for it, sleeping at the Vicarage by Mr. Manly's invitation. But this time was not wasted, for it required a most careful study of the map and minute directions on Mr. Manly's part before Jack could understand where he was to go, and even then Mr. Manly considered there was great probability that he would lose his way.

'It is miles from any station,' he said, 'and very inaccessible.'

In spite of Mr. and Mrs. Manly's kindness Jack fumed until Mrs. Challoner's letter arrived. He got up at five and wandered on to the seashore, then returned and walked up and down the Vicarage garden, looking out for the postman as eagerly as a girl who expects a love-letter.

Mrs. Challoner had been deeply moved on receipt of Mr. Manly's intelligence that he had found Rose.

'Thank God!' she said, 'that she is in a community, and not with that man. She will return to us again.'

It was while she and Mr. Challoner were considering what steps to take that Jack's telegram arrived. She answered it by letter, feeling that she could not put fitting words into a telegram.

'Go to her, my dear boy,' she said, 'find her if you possibly can; you are likely to succeed in that inaccessibly spot better than I or her father. I would go with you, but I should only be a hindrance to your search, as I have not been well of late, neither has Mr. Challoner. Beg of her to return to us, tell her that our doors and our hearts are always open to her at any time, and give her the enclosed letter from me. Say all you can, dear Jack; tell her that I am even now preparing her room, that she will not meet with a word of reproach from either of us, and not only that, but your father, dear, kind Admiral Ashworth, who is here now, has promised that he, too, will receive her kindly. But do not urge her marriage with you; bring her home if you can, and leave the future. Tell her how we have suffered, most of all from the uncertainty as to her fate, and how rejoiced we shall be to see her once more. I feel sure that she has been entrapped in some manner, and that she can explain all when once she returns home.'

Jack read the letter, and, after consulting with Mr. Manly, started by the first train for Devonshire. Mr. Manly saw him off, and impressed upon him at parting how necessary it was to be cool in his dealings with Mr. Fellerman should he come across him.

'He is altogether incomprehensible to me,' said Mr. Manly, 'for I feel sure he has much good in him; I trust you will be able to clear up the matter.'

Jack thought of nothing but the object of his journey as he sped along in the train. Should he be successful, or would Rose vanish as she had vanished before? But he would stay there, were it six months, until he heard something definite. Then an awful thought occurred to him, causing his ruddy face to turn pale. What if these moral texts and the plainness of the life were simply deceptions! What if these girls were entrapped for some evil purpose, and Fellerman himself were the vilest of the vile! He dismissed this idea, remembering what a good judge of character Mr. Manly was, and how he had spoken in favour of Mr. Fellerman.

'But oh that I had him here!' said Jack; 'we could fight until the train stopped; there wouldn't be much of his beauty left by *that* time.'

This wish not being attainable, perhaps to the preserva-

tion of Jack's own beauty also, he tried to read a newspaper, but was heartily glad when, after several times changing trains, he arrived at length at his destination.

It was now evening; there was not a sign of a hotel at the lonely little station, and Jack felt puzzled as to what to do. There was not a vehicle to be hired, either. A porter recommended him to sleep at the house of a widow woman some two miles off who sometimes let lodgings. He shouldered his small portmanteau, finding no one to carry it for him, and walked off.

He went over a hill and entered a dale, a pleasant little dale; thence turned into a narrow, crooked lane. It seemed a very long two miles ere he arrived at the cottage, and he was very tired. A clean-looking woman was standing in the porch beneath the low thatched roof. She had the fresh complexion common to Devonshire country folk, and was comely altogether.

Jack proffered his request for a bed, and was at once shown into a nice little sitting-room, scrupulously clean and fairly well furnished, with a bedroom adjoining. He asked for supper, and was told an omelette and slice of ham should be served at once. No mention was made of terms; no one who looked at Jack's face could doubt he would be generous with his money. His love had by no means destroyed his appetite; he made a hearty meal, in the course of which he asked a great many leading questions of the landlady as to the inhabitants for miles round, but not the slightest mention was made by her as to the farmhouse and the girls; evidently their existence was quite unknown to the general public. After supper he lit his cigar and walked down the lane, singling out the rugged hill to which he imagined Mr. Manly referred, and longing to go there at once. But he restrained his ardour, and, returning to the cottage, went to bed, and was soon sound asleep.

He was up by daybreak, thereby effectually disturbing his landlady, who also rose and prepared breakfast. When he had partaken of it he filled his flask with cold tea, for want of something better—in his eyes—cut himself a huge and very undulating sandwich which in some parts was an inch thick, in others of the transparency of a wafer, and, with these refreshments in his pocket, sallied forth, prepared to besiege the farmhouse.

The evening sun was throwing his slanting shadows when Jack returned, weary and altogether dispirited. He had wandered up hill and down dale, climbed rugged heights, walked through hamlets, traversed harvest-fields and winding shady roads, yet never a trace of the farmhouse had he discovered. All the farms on which he lighted were plain, honest, straightforward abodes, which by no possibility could be confounded with that mentioned by Mr. Manly.

He had his supper, again questioning the landlady in vain, and signified his intention of starting early the next morning.

'And,' he continued, 'if you would be so kind as to cut me some lunch to-morrow, I should be much obliged. My sandwich was not a great success; it seemed to me that what wasn't gristle was bread, and these hills do make anyone hungry.'

'To be sure, sir,' said the landlady heartily.

The next morning Jack sallied forth much better provided as to edibles than on the previous day. For the good woman had not only put up sandwiches, but a pasty, a cake, and some sweet biscuits of her own making, the whole of which Jack ate before twelve o'clock.

He chose a different route to-day, going over slopes of fern, and foxglove, and heather, amongst moss-covered boulders of granite, until the high hills were reached. Fortune favoured him, for, looking down on the opposite side to that on which he had ascended, he espied—the farmhouse. He took off his hat and murmured an expression of thankfulness. All day long he hung about in the vicinity, afraid to approach too near, lest he should share the fate of Mr. Manly; but as the shades of evening advanced he came near and carefully reconnoitred. He saw some of the girls, but not Rose. Then it occurred to him that, if indeed she were there, his only successful course would be to endeavour to take her away suddenly, as Mr. Fellerman had done, leaving her no time for thought. But how was this to be accomplished? He returned home at length, as the darkness was setting in, having decided on his plans. Before he went to bed he wrote to Mrs. Challoner, saying that he hoped to bring Rose to them before two days were over.

The effect of this hasty and ill-considered epistle—seeing

that he had no facts to start from—was to throw both Mr. and Mrs. Challoner into a fever of anxiety. The former professed to be indifferent, but started up twenty times a day declaring that he heard wheels; the latter went into Rose's room times without number, anxiously endeavouring to ascertain for a certainty that everything was arranged as the girl liked to have it. Dinner on each day was put off an hour lest she should return by a late train, and everyone eagerly expected her. Throughout the village it was noised abroad that Miss Challoner would soon be home, the rider by Polwheel being that probably she had been up to no good while she was away, and was forced to come home now through Mr. Fellerman declining to have anything further to do with her. Old Mr. Morris came up to offer his heartfelt sympathy and congratulations, on receipt of which Mr. Challoner wiped his eyes, and the entire population of Penlist was in a state of excitement. And all because Jack had seen the outside of a farmhouse in which he *thought* Rose was living!

CHAPTER XXIX.

JACK'S ENCOUNTER.

On the day following, Jack succeeded in hiring a vehicle, a sort of hooded chaise, in which he drove towards the hill on which the farmhouse stood, bidding the driver take with him before he started plenty of food for himself, and forage for the horse, as he might have to remain away from home for very many hours.

He found a small, but sheltered, clump of trees near the lane, in which he bade the driver draw up and stay there until he returned, no matter how long a time that might be. He was to keep out of observation as much as possible, and if he faithfully observed the directions given him, Jack promised he should be liberally rewarded.

The man settled himself comfortably inside the chaise, after a time going to sleep. Jack ascended the hill slowly, keeping in ambush as much as possible, and always out of sight of the farmhouse windows, remaining sometimes behind large boulders for half an hour together lest he should be observed, and wondering whether he could communicate in any way with Rose unknown to others.

But, his caution notwithstanding, he was distinctly seen by Mr. Fellerman, from the heights above, who smiled cynically and said to himself: 'I trust your journey will repay you, Mr. Jack Ashworth.'

He did not inform Rose of the young man's vicinity; he seldom spoke to her now, but towards evening, knowing that Jack was prowling about, he sent one of the girls to bid Rose walk alone in the orchard. Then he took a few turns, and with a smile met Jack face to face.

'How do you do, Mr. Ashworth?' he said, as if he had seen him but yesterday. 'You are probably looking about for Miss Challoner with a view to taking her home. You will possibly find her in the orchard. I have not spoken to her myself to-day, but I believe her to be there. As a

friend, let me recommend you to approach and speak to her very cautiously, as it is against the rules of the Superior for young men to come here.'

Sheer amazement entirely prevented Jack from replying, until Fellerman, with the old expression of disdain which rendered Jack furious, had added, 'I hope you will enjoy your evening,' and already gone some distance down the hill, walking with a quick step.

Jack prepared to spring after him, but remembered that by so doing he might be prevented from seeing Rose. With raging hatred in his heart towards Fellerman, he made his way round to the orchard, and there made signs to Rose to come out with him.

She turned white, then red, with astonishment and dismay, yet withal was conscious of a strange sense of pleasure at seeing Jack's face again; it seemed years since she had left him. There was no possibility of escaping him; he laid both his hands firmly on her arms and drew her with him until they had scaled the orchard wall and were beneath the shelter of the boulders. She did not feel the smallest fear lest she should be taken away against her will *this* time; she knew she could do as she pleased with Jack; but she had been really afraid of Mr. Manly. Yet a strange feeling of shame overcame her as he looked down at her and said sorrowfully, 'Rose.'

She made no reply.

'Why did you treat me so?' he asked, his voice shaking as he once more felt the influence of her rare beauty. 'What had I done to you, my dear, that you should have been so cruel, so worse than cruel, to me?'

Her eyes filled with tears.

'You did nothing to me, dear Jack; you were always a great deal too kind and good. I cannot explain to you why I acted as I did; I have hated myself for doing so, and yet I could not help it.'

As he stood before her, his fair, handsome face brought her life at Penlist vividly before her again; she marvelled that she could have been so oblivious of it, and of her father and mother. And what had she gained in return for all the trouble she had wrought and also endured? Apparently nothing.

'I have not come to reproach you, my dear,' he said; 'I

have not come for the purpose of talking about myself. But I want you to return with me, to come back now.'

'Oh, I cannot do that,' said Rose quickly.

'Think of your father and mother,' said Jack imploringly; 'think of the suffering they have undergone through your leaving them so suddenly and without saying where you were going. What your life may be here I do not know, but whatever its attractions may be, leave them and come back. It is your duty, my dear, your plain duty.'

'Perhaps it is,' she said, now crying; 'but I cannot come yet. There are no attractions here, and yet I cannot leave; you do not understand.'

'I think I *do* understand,' said Jack with sudden fury; 'it is because of that brute of a Fellerman. You went away from me because you loved *him*—but you might have told me so sooner.'

'You have no right to say that,' returned Rose with spirit.

'Perhaps not, but I *do* say it. Great heavens, him! a mean, treacherous, cowardly brute who slinks in the background instead of coming forward like a man; who, in safety himself, entices helpless girls away from their homes for purposes which I and honest men know nothing of, but which *must* be dishonourable in some way, seeing that concealment is necessary——'

His torrent of words was checked by Rose, who, throwing her head back, had assumed an aspect of the most intense anger as she said:

'It is *you* who are mean and cowardly, to malign a man behind his back, to dare to accuse him of dishonourable conduct—he who spends his life in doing good and kind actions, and not only supports us all, but shows us every sort of kindness in his power.'

'I will say it to his face if he will come,' said Jack, in still greater fury. 'I should rejoice to say it to his face and then knock his teeth down his throat. And as for supporting you,' he continued, his rage making him quite oblivious to what he was saying, 'a great many men would support a parcel of girls if they were allowed to——'

A stern voice bade him be silent: Mr. Fellerman stood before him.

'I am here, Mr. Ashworth,' he said, 'to listen to what you have to say, though I do not recognise your right to say it.'

He folded his arms and remained motionless, with a contemptuous smile on his face, that altogether prevented Jack from restraining himself. He aimed a blow at him which Rose flew to intercept, receiving it herself, though obliquely, having jerked his elbow, on her shoulder.

Fellerman put out his right arm, but Rose seized it with her whole strength, saying imploringly:

'He is mad; do not strike him.'

'You are right,' returned Fellerman coolly, 'he is a madman to-night; for your sake I will refrain from retaliation. Are you hurt, my child?'

'No,' said Rose; 'at least, not much.'

She still kept her place in front of him, clinging tightly to his arms. Jack kept silence, feeling bitter humiliation.

'Mr. Ashworth has probably something to say to you,' said Fellerman, releasing himself; 'if he has anything further to say to me I will remain.' Jack remained silent. 'Apparently he has nothing. In that case I will withdraw. That is to say, if you are not afraid to remain with him, my child. I shall go out of earshot, but I shall not be far off. Call to me if you are in any danger;' and with these words he withdrew.

They were all that was wanting to complete Jack's utter and complete defeat. His fury had spent itself, and now he could only feel that he had indeed acted like a madman, and shown to his worst advantage again, as he always did in Fellerman's presence.

'So,' he said bitterly, 'it has come to this, that I, almost your husband, am considered a source of danger to you, from whom you have to be protected by a man who, on what was to have been your wedding-day, was nothing to you.'

'Jack,' said Rose softly, 'I will make allowances for you: you have been greatly tried of late; it is all owing to me. But you should not have attempted to strike him.'

'As for striking at *him*, that does not weigh with me,' said Jack gloomily; 'it is my conduct to *you*. That I should altogether have forgotten myself in your presence is a thing that has cut me to the core. Tell me, are you really hurt?'

'No,' said Rose, on whose shoulder there was a large bruise, 'nothing to speak of. You need not distress yourself about that; but I hope it will teach you a little command over yourself in future.'

'I have been a brute,' he replied; 'but will you forgive me?'

'I will,' she said, 'seeing that I have so much for which I ought to ask your forgiveness.'

'I mismanage whatever I attempt,' he said. 'I thought it would be joy and gladness to see you again; I have thought of you all the time ever since you left, and now that I *have* seen you I have only to reproach myself. Rose, Rose, why did you go? Won't you explain, won't you tell me *anything?*'

She was silent.

'You had no love for me, everyone told me that: Mr. Barnard, Admiral Hatton, even *Polwheel*'—he spoke the last name with bitter contempt; 'even *Polwheel* knew it; they all knew it except me. I now ask you to return. Not for my sake; I shall keep away from Penlist so as not to trouble you; but for your own sake, for your father and mother's sake. I would, in spite of all past and gone, marry you to-morrow if you would let me, but I know you will never let me, and therefore I shall never ask you again. But tell me, you owe *so* much to me, and I will ask the question quietly, Why does this man call you "my child," who yet has neither wish nor intention of marrying you: he told me that with his own lips?'

The moon had risen, and was shining brightly. Jack saw the crimson that came over Rose's face as she replied:

'He calls me that because he has established a community here; it is in the same way as people call priests fathers.'

But for his recent outbreak Jack would have made a scornful speech; as it was, he held his tongue. The moon shone still more brightly, and in silence he handed her her mother's letters to read.

She read them through twice over, and then he saw that she was crying bitterly. All his life Jack had been a commonplace young man; that is to say, he was like other people. Most of us are essentially commonplace people. But who amongst us is there who in the course of his life, when his real feelings and deepest thoughts have been stirred, has not risen to tragedy? The worst of tragedy in real life is that to the onlooker it appears simple bathos.

The same man who, in a theatre, will feel no shame if a tear roll down his cheek, will sneer at similar emotion if displayed by those with whom he comes into contact in everyday life. It is at the very moments when we break through the crust of appearances, and suffer our real selves to be manifest, that we appear most ridiculous to other people. Fellerman, who was standing some distance away, gave a cynical smile and shrugged his shoulders as he saw Jack go down on his knees before Rose; but he waited to see nothing further: he turned his back and walked straight down the hill.

Jack raised his hands and caught those of Rose.

'Come home with me, my darling,' he said, with his whole heart in his voice; 'come home for a little while. Return here again if you will, but come home for a little.'

'I may not return if I once go,' said Rose through her tears.

'Why should you return? He can seek you in your own home. Come back to your father and mother.'

'I cannot,' she replied, sobbing.

'Surely no selfish feeling will stop you,' he went on, his voice ever growing more earnest; 'surely you will think of others. Your mother is even now arranging your room, your father is expecting you. Fellerman himself told me that probably you would return with me.'

'Did he say *that?*' asked Rose, with a quiver of pain.

'Yes, he said I must have come with a view to taking you home; he told me where I should find you.'

'He is tired of me,' thought Rose bitterly. Jack had remained on his knees. He turned up his face imploringly, and said: 'Come home for your father and mother's sake. Come home for the love of God.' His voice altogether broke down as he said these last words.

'I will come,' she said firmly. 'When shall I do so?'

He rose.

'*Now*, this *moment*.' And taking her hand, he led her down the slope, walking hastily in his dread lest she should change her mind. As they went he told her of the desolation her disappearance had wrought, of how her mother had grieved, of Mrs. Challoner's present indisposition—on which he enlarged—and of how greatly she, Rose, had been missed.

A sudden idea struck him. 'Are you going home because you think Fellerman expects you to do so?'

'*No*,' she replied; 'that has weight with me, but my real reason for returning is what you have just told me and my mother's letter. It is my duty to go.'

But at the foot of the hill she stopped and, looking up at the farmhouse, shed bitter tears.

CHAPTER XXX.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE day appointed by Jack for Rose's return wore on, but still she did not appear. The house was decorated with flowers, the dinner ordered was sumptuous in every way, the fatted calf was killed. The suspense grew wearying as hour after hour went on.

'Some accident, perhaps,' said Mrs. Challoner fearfully.

Dinner was at length served; Mr. and Mrs. Challoner sat down in melancholy silence, trying in vain to appear cheerful, and afterwards in the drawing-room strained their ears for the sound of wheels. The windows were wide open, but all they heard was the plash of the waves on the beach. They sat up until two o'clock, and then went to bed, still clinging to the hope that Rose would come on the morrow.

Admiral Ashworth called early the next morning, to ascertain if there were any news of his son and of Rose. With his old-fashioned, scrupulously honourable ideas, the slight that had been put upon his son, the public slight, had been terrible to him. But it was not only that; the whole pleasure of his home had been destroyed. All his life long Jack had been his father's delight; his mother had died in his infancy, and the Admiral had devoted himself to the boy, who had always been the most affectionate and best of sons. After he grew up, he retained his warm love for his father, and invariably came down to Penlist full of brightness and healthy, happy spirits. The change in him was very sad to the Admiral; he seemed entirely altered in every respect, and his mind full only of Rose and Fellerman. Often did his speech recur to his father, that he would rue the day on which Fellerman came amongst them: he had indeed rued it.

With regard to Rose the Admiral still felt very sore, but for the sake of her father and mother, and because Jack still loved her so dearly, the old man had made up his mind that his bearing towards her should be the same as of old.

He was shown into the pretty morning-room at Rosemount, where Mrs. Challoner was sitting at the open window, still listening anxiously, her work lying idly on her lap.

'Jack has not been to me,' said the Admiral. 'Have they arrived?'

'No,' said Mrs. Challoner, striving to keep up heart; 'but you know they have to travel by cross lines, and something may have detained them.'

'Where is Challoner?'

'He is out. He has spent the entire morning walking up and down the road towards Saltash.'

An hour passed, during which a somewhat forced conversation was kept up. Then the Admiral rose, saying very kindly:

'Dear Mrs. Challoner, I trust they will come, but—do not build too certainly upon their doing so.'

'I will send to you instantly if they do,' she replied.

At this moment there was a loud ring at the hall door, and Mrs. Challoner ran out. But it was only Mrs. Worsley, who, looking very handsome and bright, had just come from Plymouth, and was eager to hear the news.

'There is none,' said Admiral Ashworth, going out as he spoke. 'Come and see me, my dear, before you go.'

'I will certainly do so,' said Mrs. Worsley. 'I will come this afternoon.'

She seated herself on a low stool at Mrs. Challoner's feet in the morning-room, and, holding her hand affectionately, heard all that lady had to tell.

'She has not yet arrived,' were the concluding words of her story, 'but she will certainly do so. She could not stay away after my letter, for she always loved us.'

'Dear Mrs. Challoner,' said Mrs. Worsley, after a pause, 'I *hope* she will come. I hope so with all my heart. But you must remember that she has not once written, and that she certainly avoided Mr. Manly. Do not be *too* sure that she will come now.'

Mrs. Challoner sighed.

'Did you meet Mr. Challoner?' she asked, by way of changing the subject.

'Yes, and stopped to speak to him. But he was so horribly cross and rude that, if I hadn't known him so well, I should have been seriously affronted.'

'What did he say?'

'He looked up, and said very savagely, "Oh, it's you, is it? I thought you had something better to do in gallivanting about Plymouth than coming to a dull place like this, where young people don't care to stay."'

'You must not mind it, my dear. He thought it was Rose coming, and he was disappointed.'

'Of course I don't mind,' returned Mrs. Worsley cheerfully; 'I am much too fond of him to do so, and I knew why he was put out. I will go out and talk to him soon; but first of all I want to tell you of where I have been. You will scarcely believe it, but I have made my entrée into high life—real high life; and I want you to be interested in it.'

'It is very selfish of me, I know,' said Mrs. Challoner, with a faint smile, 'but I do not seem able to take an interest in anything until Rose comes.'

'But you *must* take an interest in this,' replied Mrs. Worsley, who was doing her utmost to cheer her friend, 'for I have been staying with no less people than the *Earl and Countess of Valerian*—think of that!'

'Indeed!' said Mrs. Challoner with real surprise, for the Earl of Valerian was a man of great wealth and influence, who owned large estates in Devonshire.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'and it came about in this way: The Earl thought he would like to take a cruise in Harry's ship, and while he was on board he took a great fancy to my husband. Now, you know Harry is very well connected, and though he is the last man to bring this forward—there is nothing snobbish about him, is there?—still, of course, in conversation certain facts come out, and whatever people may say, these great men have a certain pride of rank.'

'That, I believe, is true,' said Mrs. Challoner, who, however, had herself made no acquaintances amongst the nobility.

'Well, he asked Harry to stay with him at Valerian Park, and Harry refused. "Why?" asked the Earl, and Harry told him it was because he did not choose to leave me, meaning that he did not choose to go where I was not invited. "But your wife must come too," said the Earl heartily; "of course I meant that all along." So then Harry accepted gladly, and the day was fixed. But when he told

me I said it was out of the question. In the first place, I should not think of going without Lady Valerian's invitation, and in the next I was not accustomed to stay at such houses, and I had no maid and no proper dresses. Harry began to pooh-pooh me, the only argument that had the least weight in his mind being that one about Lady Valerian; but in the midst of it in she walked.'

'Where were you staying?'

'In poky little lodgings at Plymouth. But she didn't seem to mind it a bit, and was as pleasant as if I had known her for years, and asked for a cup of tea. Then she said she supposed I was soon coming to stay with them. I thought the best thing I could do was to tell her the honest truth, so I gave her my reasons why I could not go.'

'Did she accept them?'

'She smiled, and said, "Would you mind showing me your dresses, my dear? I should not take such a liberty, only that I know it is not pleasant to stay in a house if you *really* feel you are insufficiently dressed. I remember, when I was a girl, suffering much mortification in consequence." I thought this so nice of her, and I said of course I would show her my frocks, so I brought them all in. She began to laugh, saying, "Why, my dear Mrs. Worsley, these dresses are far handsomer than any *I* wear, except on state occasions." And, indeed, she was very plainly dressed in black, without any ornament. She took up my best frock, an old-gold brocade, and said, "This is a magnificent gown, far too handsome to put on while you are with us, for we shall see no company." I told her Harry gave it to me, and she seemed pleased, and said that from what the Earl had told her she was sure he was a good husband. Then she said it did not matter at all about my having no maid, and that she would not worry me by sending anyone to help me of a morning, as she knew that people who were accustomed to dress themselves greatly preferred doing so. In short, she was charming, and when she went away she kissed me.'

'What a nice woman!' said Mrs. Challoner.

'She is indeed. She is a Frenchwoman by birth, but has lived all her life in England since she was ten years old. Her family belonged to the old French nobility, and came over in consequence of the revolutions. She is a little woman, dark, with very bright eyes and a most fascinating

manner, though she must be quite fifty. The Earl is a splendid-looking man, about fifty-eight, very tall, with a magnificent figure and a clever, determined face. He reminded me of someone, but I can't think whom. Well, we went to stay there, and we enjoyed it immensely. Nothing could be kinder than they both were. There was only one other guest, a pretty niece, such a nice girl: her name is Violet l'Estrange. We were as jolly as possible, riding, driving, and playing tennis—to which several gentlemen came—and really, Mrs. Challoner, though I say it who shouldn't, I was admired.'

But this sally called forth no laugh. Mrs. Challoner smiled, and said:

'I have no doubt of it, my dear.'

'They have a splendid park and miles of grounds; it is quite a show place, and they allow the public in once a week. The views are lovely and so varied: sea views, land views; it was quite a treat to walk about.'

'And did the grandeur of the house oppress you?'

'Not a bit; I took very kindly to it. Certainly, I am very fond of comfort, and, so long as a woman is well dressed, I think she can go *anywhere* without people caring whether she is rich or poor.'

'A young and handsome woman can.'

'I dressed as well as ever I could, and Harry was delighted at the impression I made,' said Mrs. Worsley, who considered it 'humbug' to deny unmistakable facts; 'and he told me that the Earl liked me very much indeed, and said I was the nicest young lady he knew, which, of course, charmed Harry, and made him admire me twice as much himself.'

'They must lead a happy life in such a place,' said Mrs. Chaloner, 'with wealth, health, power, and no anxiety from children.'

'But it is a very great trouble to them to be childless; the title and estates will pass to a distant cousin. Besides, they have had a very sad history; she told me all about it one day. Shall I tell you?'

'Yes; I should like to hear.'

'When they had been married eight years—he was then Lord Mountain—they went abroad, taking with them their only child, a very beautiful boy of seven, called Algernon. At the end of the voyage they were shipwrecked.'

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'Where?'

'Oh, in India, or Burmah, or somewhere,' said Mrs. Worsley vaguely, to whom one foreign country in Asia was much the same as another, and who would not have been at all surprised had she been told that Bombay and Calcutta were within five miles of each other, and would have implicitly believed it.

'They were shipwrecked one dark night; the vessel broke in pieces. They themselves were washed on shore, but when the morning came, although most of the passengers were safe, the boy was missing and his body was never found.'

'Poor Lady Valerian!' said Mrs. Challoner with great feeling; 'what an awful trial!'

'It was indeed, she feels it to this day; she cried when she told me about it. She said he was such a splendid boy, so handsome and clever and brave. The Earl, too, felt it bitterly. They advertised and did everything they could, but no trace of him was ever discovered. The nurse, a native woman, hired for the voyage, could not be found. They lost also valuable papers and jewellery, for the ship broke up entirely, and, although much was washed on shore, they never recovered their things. It is evidently a terrible trial to the Earl to have no heir; he alludes to it sometimes quite bitterly.'

'Had they no other child afterwards?'

'No. Had he been a poor man without means of keeping a family, they would, of course, have had a dozen children.'

'I am very sorry for them,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'but perhaps they have escaped other trials. I am glad you enjoyed yourself, my dear.'

As she spoke she leaned forward.

'Surely I heard wheels,' she said.

Mrs. Worsley rose and ran at the top of her speed to the garden-gates, returning breathless.

'Come, Mrs. Challoner!' she said in excitement, 'come out. There *is* some vehicle turning down the lane towards the house, and it is being driven furiously, just like Jack drives.'

Mrs. Challoner turned white, but walked out with steady steps. The gates were wide open, and the driver of the chaise did not pause, but brought in his conveyance at the

same rapid paae until he stopped at the front-door. He threw the reins to the man beside him and jumped out.

It was Jack, Jack looking haggard, white, and fierce, and he was alone.

A few steps behind Jack came Mr. Challoner, who had run in from the lane as fast as possible. The whole party entered the dining-room.

'Well?' said Mrs. Chaloner, whose lips refused to frame any further question.

'Well,' repeated Jack. 'She isn't coming. That's all I have to say.'

'Tell us about it at once, Jack,' said Mrs. Worsley impatiently. 'Don't you see how you are worrying them? Is she well? Did you see her? Does she care about her father and mother?'

'She is well,' said Jack with a laugh; 'never saw her looking better in her life. Dartmoor air, I suppose. I did see her. And she professes to care a great deal about her father and mother. Now you know all you want, my dear.'

'Thank God for that!' said Mrs. Challoner.

'Now tell us your story your own way,' she continued, marking, in the midst of her own trouble, the signs of suffering on the young man's countenance.

'I haven't much to tell you,' said Jack, 'except that I behaved like a fool when I did see her, and that anyone else would have managed the business better than I did.'

'*Confound* you!' said Mr. Challoner, now speaking for the first time.

'Oh, very well, sir; I'm sure I don't care. Anything you please.'

'I beg your pardon, my boy; go on with your story,' said Mr. Challoner.

'I had better begin it. I went down to the place, and after two days' wandering round and round I found it. I met Fellerman going up there, who spoke to me and put me into a furious rage.'

'What did he say?' asked Mrs. Worsley.

'Nothing at all except to tell me where Rose was, and to wish me a pleasant evening. But his manner of doing it made me almost beside myself; he has the power of enraging me beyond measure, and he uses his power to the uttermost. Well, I found Rose, and I talked to her. First of all she

refused to go, and then I abused Fellerman as being the cause of her refusal, and when he appeared he smiled at me with so much contempt that I struck at him and altogether behaved like a madman. He went away, and then Rose read your letters, and promised to return with me. She did not go back to tell anyone, but walked down the hill with me just as she was, and entered the chaise I had with me.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

FELLERMAN'S DECLARATION.

On reaching the foot of the hill Jack had found the driver asleep. He roused him without difficulty, and they prepared to start.

'Have you seen anyone?' asked Jack.

'Only one person, sir. A dark, pleasant gentleman passed by, and said it was a fine day, and that I must be rather tired after waiting such a number of hours.'

'Pray, how did he know that?'

'I'm sure I don't know, sir.'

'Now,' said Jack, 'drive as fast as you possibly can. I will give you a five-pound note for your day's work. We have not much time to get the night train.'

'Have you no luggage to call for?'

'Never mind that,' said Jack hurriedly; 'it can be sent after me. Drive as hard as you can tear.'

They drove through the lanes at a quick rate, the driver perpetually urging on his horse. The landscape was wonderfully beautiful in the moonlight. In rounding the corner Rose caught sight again of the hill on which she had spent so many weeks, and looked until it was lost to view. What would Mr. Fellerman think of the sudden and ungrateful departure? But this was filling Jack with a fierce joy. 'The biter bit!' he said to himself. 'Now he will know how it feels to have the person one loves best taken away without warning, and without so much as a handshake.'

He fell into wild spirits, and, in spite of Rose's discouragement, kept up a running fire of talk.

'And how did you spend your time?' he asked. 'As there were so many girls, I suppose a great deal of gossip went on?'

'No,' said Rose, 'we had not much time or opportunity; we had other things to think of.'

'Ah!' said Jack, 'I suppose so. You had high aims and purposes. Thank Heaven most people have no aims or purposes, but just go on from day to day taking things as they find them, and having time to make themselves pleasant. I don't mean anything rude to *you*, my dear, but you must allow that the jolliest people to visit with are those that are not lofty, or geniuses, or self-absorbed.'

'No doubt,' replied Rose gravely; 'but the pleasantest path is not always the best.'

'You have grown a moralizer—since when?'

'Since I left home,' said Rose, with decision. 'Oh, Jack, you do not know what I have learnt, and what a totally different view of life I take!'

'You have gone in for being religious?'

'No, not exactly.'

'What then?'

'He—I mean we were taught by lectures, or sort of sermons, and we learned texts and moral law.'

'Were you Roman Catholic nuns?'

'Oh *no!*'

'Protestant?'

'No.'

'What then?'

'I don't know.'

Jack burst into a laugh.

'So you were there all this time and don't know now to what end you were learning, or what your creed was?'

'I would rather not talk about my life there at all, if you please.'

Jack remained silent for a time; the driver continued his quick pace for some half-hour, then suddenly pulled up where two roads met.

'What is it?' asked Jack anxiously.

'I *think* I know my road, sir, but I'm not quite sure. I have seldom been this way before. I will go and look about me for a little while.'

'Wait a moment,' said Jack, looking round. There was complete silence for a minute or two, then, in the far distance, was distinctly heard the measured sound of a horse's steady trot. 'Take which road you please and risk it,' said Jack, in wild excitement.

Rose turned white.

'Had we not better wait, and ask directions of whoever is coming?'

'*No!*' thundered Jack. 'Go on, driver, at your fastest pace; you shall have another sovereign.'

The power of money is marvellous. Had the vehicle been engaged by the hour, it would have been a physical and moral impossibility for the horse to have gone quicker, but the promise of twenty shillings increased the speed greatly.

They turned to the left; the choice was a judicious one, leading them after a time to a road well known to the driver.

'We are all right now, sir,' he said; 'we shall not be long before we get to the station.'

He pulled up for a moment to breathe the horse; the sound of hoofs behind them had entirely ceased.

They reached the station ten minutes before the train was due. No one was on the platform except a sleepy porter. Jack took the tickets and paid the driver, but the chaise remained outside the station.

'My horse must have a rest,' said the man.

This was true enough, for he had done good work. Rose sat down in the bare little waiting-room, shivering. She had on her hat, but neither gloves nor jacket, and, August though it was, and hot weather, she felt cold.

The train was late; Jack thought it would never arrive. He walked up and down the platform in a fever of expectation. At last the lights appeared.

'Come,' he said to Rose; 'come, my darling.' His face was joyful; in his eagerness he had quite forgotten she no longer belonged to him. 'Here is the train. Come, come; quick, my darling!'

He handed her in and shut the door. Why did not the train go on? To what was the detention owing? Would the seconds amount to minutes ere they went on? His heart began to beat fast and furiously, when up walked *Mr. Fellerman!*

If Jack had at this moment murdered him he would have felt it no sin, but he said and did nothing.

Mr. Fellerman opened the door, and said very gently, with a kind smile on his face:

'After so long a residence with us, my child, I am sorry that you should go away thus. I have come to bid you farewell; I shall never seek you out again.'

He held out his hand. She fixed her eyes on his face in grief; his dark eyes met hers. Then the whole power of his will seemed to overcome her; she felt bound to him, and that she could not live away if he wished her to return; that he did wish it she knew as well as if he had spoken to her in actual command.

'May I go back?' she gasped.

'Certainly,' he replied, and, taking her hand, helped her out.

The engine whistled, gave a shriek, on went the train, and Jack was left alone, furious.

Mr. Fellerman walked through the station, and spoke to the driver.

'We shall want the chaise, as I anticipated. This will be a good day's work for you, eh?'

The man smiled and touched his hat. Mr. Fellerman helped Rose in, and sat down beside her, but even after they drove away he did not say one word. His face was both cold and stern, and she looked at him in dismay. He took no notice of her appealing glances, but maintained his sternly composed demeanour.

Some two miles from the foot of the hill the horse gave evident signs of weariness, the driver began to urge him on.

'I don't know what we are to do,' said Mr. Fellerman; 'the horse will be over-driven if we take him any further, for you have to return.'

'I will walk,' said Rose eagerly; 'I would much rather do so.'

'Are you sure you will be able?' he asked doubtfully.

'Quite sure.'

He lifted her out and dismissed the chaise, waiting in silence until the sound of the wheels had died away. It was now past twelve; the stars were not very bright, but the light was tolerably clear. They stood in a narrow, grass-grown road, edged on one side by a clump of trees, on the other by gray boulders.

'What have you to say to me?' he said at length coldly.

She dropped her eyes and made no reply.

'Have you nothing to say?' he repeated.

'Only this,' she said in a low voice, 'that I am very sorry I went away as I did without telling you, and that I know it must appear very ungrateful, but I only went because I thought I ought.'

His face still retained its cold expression, he looked at her searchingly.

'And,' she continued, a deadly fear striking at her heart that she had sinned beyond forgiveness, 'Jack told me that you knew he had come to take me away, and I thought you wanted me to go, although it almost broke my heart to seem so unmindful of you and your kindness.'

'We had better walk on,' he said; 'we will discuss this subject on our road. It may perhaps be in your mind to accuse me of having taken a similar course previously, but had I not done so you would not have come at all, whereas in this case you had but to say the word, and every facility for your departure would have been placed in your way.'

'I am very, very sorry,' she said in a pained tone; 'could you imagine I *wished* to go away from you, you who have been so good to me?'

'No,' he replied more kindly, 'I *don't* think you wished it; but you went, nevertheless, and if you had once gone on in that train I would never have taken you back.'

'I thank you,' she said humbly.

'As for taking you away from Mr. Jack Ashworth, I have always considered that I did a good deed in doing so. An impetuous young man without a grain of self-control, who has not a single high aim or inspiration, or even understanding of those who have, with whom, after a time, you would have been wretched. When his ardent fancy for you had cooled, what would you have had in its place? You have not a taste in common, and he does not understand you.'

'Jack shows to worse advantage before you than before anyone,' she said timidly; 'he said he always felt you despised him even before you saw me, and it made him angry.'

'I allow that I do feel a sort of contempt for young men such as he, whose highest good is physical enjoyment. For his own sake I hope he will learn to restrain himself; you would any way have run a risk from his impetuosity: of that your shoulder must now bear witness.'

'He was so angry because you took me away,' said Rose, not venturing to look at her companion as she spoke.

'I allow also,' he said reflectively, 'that my conscience has accused me very often with regard to your father and

mother, and, in consequence of the strict life I lead, I have endeavoured to expiate my offence.'

'How?' she asked breathlessly.

He smiled.

'I suppose you think my best method of reparation would have been to restore you to your home; but in that case *your* life would have been rendered wretched. You would never have been happy there again, I know. Would you?'

She shook her head.

'Not unless I could have seen you and gone on learning.'

'And that you could not have done. I coveted you from the first moment I saw you, knowing how admirably you would serve my purposes; but when I took you away it was *only* for the sake of the work I had in view. You have fulfilled all my expectations save in one respect, and that is saying a great deal.'

'In which respect have I failed?'

'I will tell you afterwards.'

'I should like to know how you expiated your—your——'

'My sin in taking you away; that is of no consequence.'

'Please tell me,' she asked pleadingly, fixing her lovely eyes on his face in such a manner that he had hard work to restrain himself from taking her in his arms then and there. But he retained his calm aspect, and said:

'There are certain kinds of penance which I *do* believe in; I fulfilled one of them, that is all.'

'Won't you tell me what it was?' she asked, in fear lest he should have been practising some bodily torment.

He smiled.

'I will, since you are so anxious to know. I undertook a task which strained both my bodily and mental powers to the uttermost, and I am happy to say I fulfilled it.'

'What was it?'

'Must I satisfy your curiosity? Well, then, for some time I had been aware that it would add to the power and truth of my extempore discourses if I could translate and commit to memory certain ancient passages connected with, but not actually in, our sacred writings. But the task, owing to the dialect in which they were written, was so arduous that, as I had little time, I shrank from commencing it. It seemed to me that this would be a fitting penance, as being a useful one; accordingly I bound myself

by a vow neither to eat nor sleep until my portion for the day had been translated and learned, and to do this required many hours' hard work.'

'But if you were interrupted?'

'I was often, but I kept my vow. It would have rejoiced Mr. Jack Ashworth's heart could he have known that his visit to me deprived me both of food and sleep, for I could not collect my ideas after his departure. Do you think *he* will undertake a penance for his conduct to you to-night?' he asked with a smile.

Rose involuntarily contrasted the self-command of the man by her side with the total want of it displayed by Jack.

'And now,' said Mr. Fellerman, 'speaking of penances, what do you suppose will be your fate with the Superior?'

'I will submit to her,' said Rose in a low voice, 'to anything she inflicts.'

'That is right; you have greatly advanced in courage. But consider what your sins have been.' There was a half-smile, a very kindly one, on his face, though she did not see it, she kept her eyes resolutely on the ground. 'You have been in long conversation with a young man, clearly against all rule; you have been absent from her reading at night; you have been out in the dead of night; and you have tried to go away clandestinely without bidding a single farewell. As to the fact of your *going*, that I do not count a sin, for you know well enough you have always been at liberty to do that. Remembering how large a penance she inflicted on you for a slight fault, I fear to think of what you will now have to undergo.'

The reflection appalled Rose: she had been quite unaware of his former command or intercession for her, and dreaded to be in this woman's power now that she had so much to answer for.

'Wilt thou go back at all?' he asked, seeing her anxious face.

'*Yes*,' she said firmly, 'I will, no matter what she may do. But,' she continued appealingly, 'lay the penance on me yourself; if it be tenfold what hers may be, I will fulfil it more gladly.'

'If I laid on thee the penance thou hast deserved, thou wouldst have to fast, and sleep wretchedly, for so long that thy health would be injured, and my purpose injured thereby. But perhaps I could substitute another form.'

She did not dare to look up, and therefore could not see that the smile on his lips had extended to his eyes as he replied:

'I can tell her to beat thee; the penance would be quickly over. She would do it at my bidding, I know. I shall be away all day, so that I may not be tempted to rescue thee.'

'Very well,' she replied, her heart sinking at the idea of being in this terrible woman's hands.

'Wilt thou go on, then, expecting this pain? wilt thou bear it rather than part from me? Consider: her hand is strong, she will not spare thee, and thou still mayest turn back if thou wilt.'

'I will go on,' she said firmly.

He gathered her in his arms and laid his head on hers, saying, 'Thy penance is fulfilled—thou art forgiven. Didst thou think I really meant to trust thee in the hands of thine enemy? Thy slightest cry would pierce my soul, were I at the other end of the world. I have already suffered much from her cruelty to thee.' Then he showered passionate kisses on her lips, saying 'I love thee, Dorothea, I love thee! Dost thou hear? Let me say it again and again. I love thee! I love thee! I love thee! Thou hast become soul of my soul, and life of my life. I am like the diver in the Southern seas, who finds a pearl of great price. I am like the gold-digger who discovers a great treasure. I love thee, Dorothea, I love thee!'

A great wonder stole over her, then a transport of joy. But as she met his ardent eyes beneath the starlight, she withdrew from him slightly.

'Art thou afraid of me, my little one?' he asked in tender tones; 'thou hast no cause. Thou art as safe with me as with thy mother. I love thee, and I reverence thee. Didst thou think thou couldst go away from me? Thou couldst *not:* thou hast no life apart from me, and thou knowest it; thou hadst only bare existence. And now we must walk on.'

He placed his arm round her, supporting her almost entirely in the steep ascent, but had he not done so, she would have felt she was treading on air—she was in an ecstasy of joy.

He went on talking to her, not waiting for her replies, calling up Eastern imagery and passionate poetry to his aid;

he seemed as if he did not know how to leave off telling her that he loved her.

'I read thy heart, thy mind and thy soul as if they were open books, and I see naught there but my image and such ideas as *I* have put in them. Still, let me hear thee say, "I love thee."'

'I love you,' she replied.

Once more he rained kisses on her.

'How did you get to the station in time?' she asked.

'Thou wouldst check my ardour,' he said with a smile. 'It is the first time I have spoken of love to any woman, remember. I was at the station long before you.'

'I did not see you.'

'No,' he replied, returning to his ordinary manner, save that his face still glowed, 'I was in the station-master's office when you arrived.'

'The train might have gone on before you could have spoken to me.'

'The train would not have gone on until I desired, little one. Oh, money! thou art the true god of English people!'

'Why did you not take me away sooner?'

'I did not think a platform altercation or struggle with Mr. Jack Ashworth either dignified or desirable, and it would have distressed you. We are both powerful men, and very evenly matched, except that rage might misdirect his blows.'

'Poor Jack!' said Rose.

'Poor Jack!' he repeated with some contempt. 'Did he kiss your injured shoulder and bathe it with his tears when he went down on his knees to you?'

His tone changed to one of gravity; once more he took her in his arms.

'I love thee, Dorothea,' he said; 'I love thee!'

'Why did you not take me away *before* my wedding-day?' she whispered.

'It was not out of wanton cruelty, little one, that I waited until that day had dawned; it was because I had much business on hand, which I could not finish before. As it was, it was a difficult matter for me to accomplish it in time; and I did not wish to take thee away until I could watch over thee myself, although I did not love thee then.'

'I am glad you have told me that.'

'But I have something more to say to thee, Dorothea, and I will say it now that thy head is pillowed on my breast, that mine arms are round thee, and my kisses warm on thy lips. Tell me, dost thou expect to lead with me such a life as thou wouldest have led with Ashworth?'

'Oh *no*!'

'Thou art right. I am giving up for thee, Dorothea, far more than thou hast any conception of; but the great purpose of my life I dare not give up, even for thee. Did I intend thy life to be simply that of ordinary people, to what end all this training? This night's work has confirmed what I already knew.'

'What is that?'

'Thou hast intellect, and mind, and soul, and deep wealth of love, all of which are mine; but thou hast also a will of thine own. This must be mine also, or my purpose cannot be fulfilled, and all thy gifts would be unavailing to me. The ordinary life will not be ours, the life of uneventful happiness. There must be one will only between us, and *that will must be mine!*'

'I will do whatever you wish,' she answered, as his dark eyes looked into hers in the moonlight.

Complete stillness reigned, save for the occasional cry of the curlew; the sky was clear, the air soft. But outward objects were unnoted by either of these lovers; they heeded only one another. The moon sailed high overhead, and the man in the moon seemed to have a smile on his broad countenance.

'Thou sayest thou wilt do as I wish,' said Fellerman gravely, 'and I trust thou wilt. But I much fear that thou needest a lesson which I dread giving thee. It is not my intention or my wish to repeat lessons. I wish to honour and love and reverence my wife, as indeed our creed ordains; therefore, if the lesson *must* be learnt, I would rather teach it thee before thou takest irrevocable vows on thyself, in order that thou mayest withdraw from me if thou wouldest.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean, my child, that there must be no appeal from my decisions, no argument brought forward, no will of thine acted on. I will love thee as my life, but thou on thy part must act solely *through* me. Art thou willing?'

'Quite willing.'

'There is truth in thy voice, still I have misgivings; therefore, I say this to warn thee: never, as thou valuest thy peace of mind, seek to oppose me. If thou didst, I should feel it my duty once for all to teach thee the lesson of which I have spoken.'

'How?'

'I should cause thee to go through suffering, mental suffering, of such a nature as would be terrible to thee—such as thou wouldst remember as long as thou livedst, although it would wring every fibre of my heart to do so. But I should do it for the sake of my cause.'

'What would you do?'

'I cannot say until the times arises. With my whole heart I trust it may never arise; it need not, now that I have warned thee. Say, even now, knowing what may be before thee, wilt thou withdraw?'

'I will *not* withdraw,' she said, clinging closer to him. 'Your will shall always be mine, your way my way.'

He pressed his lips to hers in one long, long kiss.

'Now thou art indeed soul of my soul. I love thee, Dorothea, I love thee, I love thee!' He walked on with her until they reached the farm gates. 'Now,' he said, 'thou hast left thy home and thy kindred for me, thou shalt also leave thy name. Henceforward thou hast no name save Dorothea. Go in, my child; take off thy shoes, and tread softly as thou goest into thy room. I will speak to the Superior before thou art down in the morning; but thou wilt not see me to-morrow, for I have much to do. Good-night, my little one, and may all the powers of goodness watch over thy slumbers, and bring thee when life is over to the haven of immortality.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SUPERIOR'S REMINISCENCES.

It was the custom of the Superior to rise early, some time before the girls came down. She was a restless woman, and could not sleep long together. She also liked to sit up late, the night appearing to have some terror for her.

Mr. Fellerman, who had spent the night walking about in the open air, being far too excited to sleep, sought her as soon as she entered the large kitchen. He greeted her with his usual quiet composure.

'I want,' he said, 'to remove Dorothea from here. Now that her friends are coming to disturb our peace, she must go.'

A gleam of joy passed over the Superior's face.

'Where is she to go to?' she asked quickly.

'I have not yet decided.'

Her countenance clouded.

'Is she still to be under your authority?'

'Yes; but in a different way. The difficulty is not where to take her, but who is to take her? Do you know of any lady who would go with her to the seaside and take charge of her there?'

'I do,' said the Superior eagerly, vastly relieved at finding Mr. Fellerman did not purpose taking Dorothea himself; 'I know of one who would just suit you—if you do not want anyone to teach her, that is.'

'I do not expect to find a second teacher of your abilities,' said Fellerman, with a pleasant smile; 'neither is it now of any consequence.'

'Then Mrs. Wilkinson would just do. She is a very nice woman, living now at Exeter. She was the wife of one of my husband's brother-officers in India.'

'Would she come at a moment's notice?'

'I think she would; she has no ties. She is thoroughly trustworthy and reliable.'

'One more question. Is she poor? Would money, over and above payment for her actual services, be a boon to her?'

'She is very poor, having only her pension.'

Fellerman took down her name and address, saying:

'I will go and visit her to-day. You will see that Dorothea is ready to leave here to-morrow.'

'But what is she to do when she is away, and how long will it be before she returns?'

'She will never return.'

'Shall you come here the same as before?'

'For a time, yes.'

The Superior looked actually radiant; when her face lit up she was a remarkably handsome woman.

'Is Dorothea going home?'

'No.'

'What, then?'

'I am going to marry her.'

The Superior looked incredulously astonished.

'*What!*' she exclaimed fiercely.

'I am going to marry her.'

'You cannot marry her,' she said with excitement; 'you cannot have forgotten how you intend devoting yourself to a religious life in which married life is unlawful.'

'I have forgotten nothing,' he returned. 'I have carefully counted the cost—which is very considerable—for weeks past; but since yesterday morning I came to the conclusion that I would pay that cost.'

'You are mad!' she said wildly. 'Have you set aside all your own teaching, in which happiness, and human love for a woman, and all save tranquil goodness, is reprobated?'

'I have forgotten nothing,' he repeated slowly.

'Have you thought of where the "Karma" of your actions will lead you, according to your own fixed belief? Have you considered that giving way to earthly happiness thus may, if your creed be true, cause you cycles of years in hell?'

'I have considered all that,' he replied gravely, 'and I am willing to risk it. Remember, if my belief is true, it will be *my own* happiness only that will be involved. Were I to peril yours or that of any other person, I would not do it. Did I hold the Christian's creed, that hell is a place from which there is no escape, where of necessity there are

naught but evil spirits, I still would not do it; but as I hold that *I* only may suffer, be it for cycles of years, I will do it.'

She burst into a storm of tears.

'I would rather perish a thousand times than that you should suffer,' she said wildly.

'But,' he replied, 'I am not sure about it. It is no sin for those who hold our creed to marry; thousands do marry and lead good lives. The sin in my case will be having determined to devote myself wholly to a religious life, and now in some measure failing. But I shall work for the cause the same as before, perhaps harder.'

'I pray you not to do it,' she said in tones of deepest earnestness.

'There is also this to be considered: I have heard that love is one of the eternal verities. I know it to be so, but I have never by this understood the love of a man for a woman. The scales have fallen from my eyes,' he continued in some excitement. 'I understand now, what I never understood before, how a man can sell his soul for love of a woman. But in my case I am not going to do so. If, indeed, *this* love be one of the eternal verities, then I have not sinned; and if it be not, and I have done wrong, I am willing to pay the penalty. I would suffer for long periods to enter the gates of Paradise *as I entered them last night.*'

'If you believed in a Supreme Ruler you could not talk thus.'

'I will not discuss my belief further with you. Perhaps I may believe more, and differently, than you imagine. You know well our precept, "Salvation cannot be found in any system which ignores the path of holiness, which begins with purity and ends in love." What if human love may not find its place? Until of late I never even dreamed of the majesty and height to which it can attain.'

'You are a man of the world, and yet talk thus,' she said scornfully. 'Ask other men of the world what *they* think of love.'

'Does *their* love begin with purity? It is *not* love that they feel: it is lust, combined very often with no single higher feeling. I have given up my name for the sake of my religion, I have given up my title, my parents, my power, my ease, my place amongst gentlemen, my wealth—save that which I dispense to others—but I can *not* give up

my love, neither do I now think that I am called upon to do it.'

Once more she burst into a passion of tears.

'*Why* do you give up all these good things? Oh, be advised by me. I have known the world longer than you; take them, use them now. Go to your proper place in society and do your good works thence; you have surely gone through enough.'

He smiled and shook his head.

'But,' he said kindly, 'why are you so agitated? Why is my welfare of so much consequence to you?'

'I will tell you,' she replied, still speaking with excitement. 'I will tell you a story which, perhaps, you have forgotten.'

'It must not be too long. I am pressed for time.'

'It shall not be long. There was an officer in command of a detachment of the native contingent stationed in the hill country in India. Save himself and his wife, there was not a single European near, to their knowledge. He was a huge man, a big, brutal man, who drank heavily, and who, when he had been drinking, became a perfect demon. When he was in this state, his wife was completely in his power; the native servants fled from him in terror, knowing that he would strike them down. He behaved brutally to his wife; he struck her and tried to murder her more than once, but when he was sober he retained no recollection of what he had done.'

'Perhaps,' said Fellerman, speaking slowly, 'if his wife had tried to please him a little more, and had not so often goaded him to fury by openly showing the hatred and contempt she felt for him, he might not have drank quite so often, for it is possible he began by loving her. I believe he did.'

'Perhaps,' assented the Superior. 'One day when he was tipsy he was a little more brutal than usual, and would probably have killed her outright, had not a young man, say, rather, a youth of twenty, attracted by her cries, come in and received in his own person the blows he could not parry. He was seriously hurt, but he made no complaint.'

'He only acted as any *man* would have done,' said Fellerman a little impatiently.

'I don't know that. After this he saved her times and

often, and she loved him for his goodness. Then there came a day when—when her husband was found dead—shot.'

She stopped. Fellerman looked at her.

'Yes,' he repeated, 'there came a day when he was found—murdered.'

She turned pale, but continued her story.

'And when the native servants would have accused her, this young man was sorry for her, and gave them money to hold their tongues, so that, being far away from civilization, no accusation was ever brought against her. He did more than this: he gave her money and sent her to England. She resolved that she would show her gratitude, and she also loved him with her whole heart.'

Fellerman frowned.

'When he came to England he found her a broken, penitent woman, and, through sheer goodness, he taught her his system, in order that she might find happiness. She did not find it, but she used every endeavour to meet his wishes, and studied night and day.'

'Yes,' he interrupted, 'and you were good enough to learn all I required of you, and when I had formed my plans later, and wanted a teacher and Superior, you were kind enough to fill that place, and, on the whole, have filled it well. There is really no occasion for gratitude; there has been a mutual obligation, that is all.'

'What an extraordinary thing it is,' she said bitterly, 'that while people who are in love are sensitive to every shade of feeling in the object of their love, they are yet absolutely callous to all feeling in those who love them.'

'I am not callous,' said Fellerman, 'but I think mention of love between us a little out of place, although I am much obliged to you. If, however, you do love me, let us say, as an old friend, you had best show your regard by being kind to Dorothea while she is here.'

She walked out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LOVE-MAKING.

THE news conveyed to the Superior had been overwhelming. She was a woman of strong passions, and for years had nursed the most intense love for Fellerman, who had been very good to her. She entered into all his plans, striving to make herself in every way necessary to him, hoping that, in spite of the difference in their ages, he would one day marry her. She had been quite willing to receive all the other girls kindly, and teach them really well, knowing that Fellerman had no special interest in any one of them beyond a general wish for their welfare and advancement in his cause. She had believed that this coldly-restrained man would go through life without loving, and she would gladly have married him on such terms. But now, behold! a consuming passion was devouring him. From the very first the advent of Dorothea had awakened in her a profound feeling of jealousy and distrust. One of those subtle and not-to-be-explained instincts, which sometimes are so valuable, had warned her that this girl was dangerous. She quickly hated her, and tried to crush her, and Fellerman, seeing this, was far kinder to Dorothea than he otherwise would have been. He was in truth a man of the most intense feeling when his feeling was stirred, and now, as he said, he seemed to have entered Paradise.

As to Dorothea, she could barely restrain her joy. She went out into the orchard after breakfast singing loudly, the first time that she had made use of her magnificent voice since she had been in Dartmoor.

The Superior stopped her.

'Singing and music and dancing and plays are against our rules. We do not allow them.'

Dorothea, remembering the occasion on which she had transgressed the rules by mentioning church, and feeling that this day she could love all the world, now said timidly:

'Is there—have I incurred any penance? If so, I will fulfil it.'

The Superior considered a moment. In her heart she longed for revenge, for which apparently she had ample opportunity, seeing that all Fellerman had said as to the previous night's proceedings had been to ask the Superior to be kind. It was, therefore, open to her to make this day one long torture to Dorothea under pretence of penance, especially as he was away. She could easily devise means for inflicting suffering. But the fear of him restrained her; there would be time enough in the future for more effectual revenge.

'You have incurred one,' she replied at length coldly; 'but I would prefer that you did not fulfil it, seeing that you leave us to-morrow.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea, 'am I to leave you to-morrow? I did not know.'

She felt no uneasiness; she was quite satisfied to be in Fellerman's hands, and spent the day in thinking about him, unconsciously evincing in her manner the greatest tenderness and kindness towards the girls whom she should so soon leave, and who had not been blessed as she had been.

After breakfast the next morning she saw Mr. Fellerman arrive. He sent a message to her to come out to him in the orchard, and when she appeared he took her out on the hill with him, sitting down behind some boulders, well out of sight of the farmhouse windows. He told her of his plans with his arms round her; he seemed unable to let her go free for a single moment.

'We leave this afternoon, Dorothea,' he said. 'I will take thee to meet this lady. Art thou of age, little one?'

'I shall be twenty-one on the first of September.'

'The first of September shall be our wedding-day, if thou wilt have it so. Wilt thou?'

'If you like,' she answered shyly.

'I do like. Till then, and the day is not far off, thou wilt be at the seaside.'

'But I shall see you sometimes?' she asked anxiously, fearing Mrs. Wilkinson might be a second Superior.

He smiled.

'Thou wilt see me very often, although I have much to

settle. Put on thy blue dress this afternoon, and shine out in all thy beauty once more. I purpose giving up four weeks to absolute happiness after we are married. Think of that, Dorothea!—four weeks of happiness such as neither you nor I have ever known.'

'And after that?'

'After that we shall return to our work and the real purpose of our life. Our love will never fail, Dorothea, but pure *happiness* cannot last more than four weeks, unless we supplement it by our duty.'

Then he returned to his glowing talk of the night before, telling her a thousand times that he loved her. A slight sound aroused him. He sprang to his feet, and, going behind the rocks, found the Superior in a crouching attitude.

'Do you want me?' he asked affably. 'I am at your service. The next time perhaps you will oblige me by coming round to me.'

She retired, saying to herself, 'I don't know whether my hate or my love is strongest, but I will have my revenge.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JACK'S INTENTIONS.

ALTHOUGH Jack Ashworth's narration was received with the greatest dismay, there could henceforth be but one opinion at Rosemount, viz., that any further search for Rose was worse than useless.

'We must leave her now to herself,' said Mrs. Challoner.

The next day Jack called to wish them good-bye before going to town. He had a jaunty air and a rough manner, which sat ill on him; but no one took any notice of it, for one and all were heartily sorry for him.

'Now, Mrs. Challoner,' he said, 'we'll have an end of all the nonsense, if you please. Be so good as to throw those two rings into the fire that I asked you to keep. The wedding-cake is your own, of course; if you take my advice, you will eat it up as fast as possible. Perhaps you would be so kind as to send me up a slice to town. I am very fond of wedding-cake, and the postage is cheap. I will invite my friends to a share in it, and we will drink the health of "all absent friends."'

'Jack!' said Mrs. Worsley, looking really pained.

'Well, why not, my dear? You can't suppose Mrs. Challoner is going to throw away that splendid cake, especially in these hard times, and why shouldn't I have a piece as well as anyone else? And about the furniture—I will turn out my tenant as soon as possible, and the furniture can be taken away.'

'Jack,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'both Mr. Challoner and myself wish to make you a present of that.'

'I'm sure you are very kind,' said Jack, 'but I really don't see how I can accept several hundred pounds' worth of furniture; I shouldn't know what to do with it. But I thank you all the same.'

'Let matters be as they are, my boy,' said Mr. Challoner; 'the house is sure to go on letting well, being in such a

good position, and it will add to your income. We owe you some compensation for losing all your clients while you were searching about for—for us.'

'Thank you, sir. As to my loss of work, though, *that* won't trouble me. It seems to me I have led a very dull life hitherto, but I'm going to enjoy myself now. I'm not at all sure that it will be better for me to have a larger income.'

'Save it,' said Mrs. Worsley. 'You may be glad of money some day.'

'I shan't be down here much now. I'm sorry for pater; I'm afraid he'll be dull. You'll go and see him as often as you can, won't you, Mrs. Challoner? and we must get Admiral Hatton down soon.'

Mrs. Challoner assured him she would pay the Admiral every attention, and Jack then went away. Mrs. Worsley walked part of the way back with him.

'Now,' he said, 'I hope you and Worsley will come up and see me in town, Gertrude. I'm going to give up my chambers, and take jolly lodgings, and, as I said, enjoy myself.'

'Dear Jack,' said Mrs. Worsley affectionately, 'I don't much like the way you have been talking to-day.'

'You don't think I'm going to be good boy enough, eh? Well, in real life it isn't *always* the good boy who gets the cake. If you think I'm going to grieve over Rose, I'm not. I have done with her. I wouldn't have her now if she begged and prayed me.'

'Quite right,' said Mrs. Worsley.

'But a man must have something to amuse himself with, and, as I said, I'm going to enjoy myself. Good-bye, my dear.'

He departed, leaving Mrs. Worsley with a very grave face.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE PENALTY.

MRS. WILKINSON, the lady who accompanied Dorothea—as we shall call her henceforth—to the seaside, was a very pleasant, lively woman, the reverse in every way of the Superior. As no rules had been laid down by Mr. Fellerman, the life led was of the ordinary kind at seaside lodgings; the usual meals were taken, the usual idle time spent.

Fellerman had selected a village, containing only very few houses and a church, in one of the loveliest parts of Cornwall.

'For,' he said, 'no one from Penlist is likely to come to you, and the time to our wedding-day is very short.'

It was thoroughly understood between them all that every arrangement was to be made by him without so much as consulting anyone else, and Dorothea was glad to have it so. She leaned so completely on him that she did not even care to know what was going to be done. On their arrival at the lodgings she found already in her bedroom a lady's trunk containing every requisite; also a white dress, well made and good, though not grand; three other very handsome dresses, which had evidently been made for her, arrived two or three days afterwards. She thought of her magnificent trousseau, which was lying, Jack had told her, at home packed up, and, in spite of her happiness, gave a sigh for her mother.

As soon as Fellerman arrived she thanked him with a shy grace, saying, 'I have owed so much to you already that I may well owe a little more. I should not have liked to be married in an old dress.' Then she came closer to him and hid her face on his shoulder. 'May I ask a question?' she said.

'Ask what thou wilt, little one,' he replied, taking her in a close embrace.

'When we are married, may I just write home once to tell them?'

'Certainly. Thou shalt see them if thou wilt. When we are married, the whole world will have no power to come between me and thee.'

But Dorothea did not know that she should be inclined to see her parents; all that was clear to her would be incomprehensible to them, not understanding Fellerman as she did; furthermore, she greatly doubted their approving of any new methods of religion, knowing that Mr. Challoner firmly believed that whatever was obscure to him *must* be wrong.

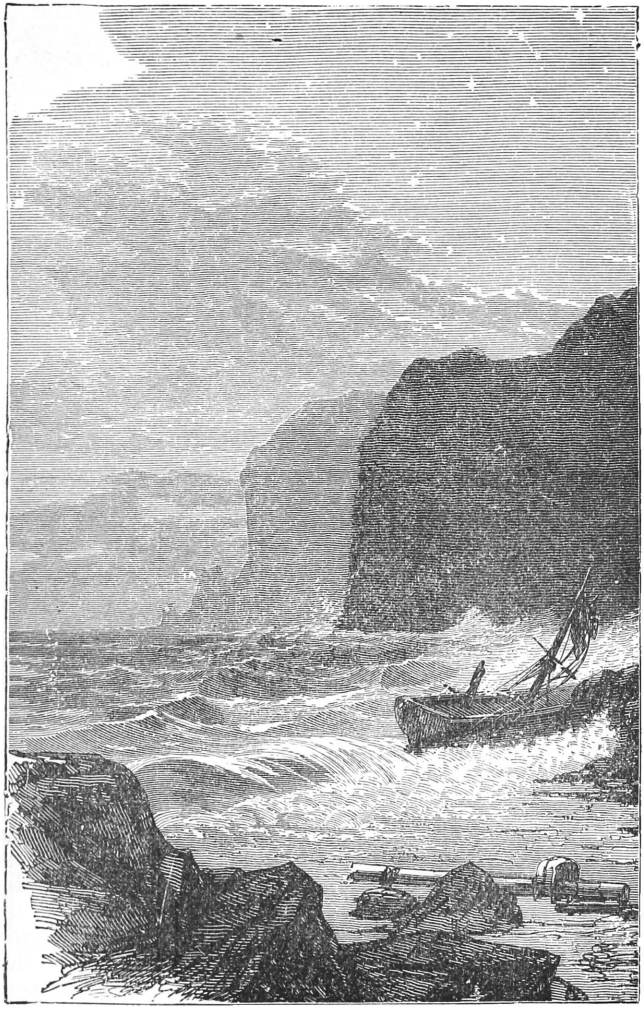
The village was not many miles from the Land's End, the coast was very rocky and wild, and stern of aspect. And yet there were a few little sheltered sandy coves, with caves opening on to them, where Dorothea loved to sit alone, and watch the grand waves as they dashed against the rocks on either side.

The church was very small and old; it had a square tower with a clock in it; the interior was even more ugly and antiquated than that of Penlist.

It was built on the extreme top of a headland; the graveyard was only protected from the edge of the high rocks by a stone moss-covered wall, against which in rough weather the spray dashed heavily. All the tombstones were old; there were large flat tombs and high, pointed monuments, all bearing quaint inscriptions, some being surmounted by carved skulls and crossbones. The churchyard was entirely neglected; even the grass was never cut. The church was little used; on Sunday, as often as not, there was no service, and at this present time the clergyman who usually officiated —coming from a distance—was ill.

Fellerman was but little with Dorothea; business compelled his absence in London more than once, and, as he purposed giving himself a short holiday afterwards, he visited the community at Dartmoor as often as possible, on each occasion giving a magnificent discourse. The girls were quite unaware of his approaching marriage; he had thought it best not to mention it, and the Superior said nothing.

He was ignorant of Mr. Barnard's declaration to and love for Dorothea, and, on hearing of the country clergyman's



" The coast was very rocky and wild, and stern of aspect."

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illness, at once bethought him of the chaplain, and determined to ask him to come down and supply his place.

Mr. Barnard was now living in London; Fellerman, who had kept up an infrequent interchange of letters with him, sought him out.

He was located in respectable lodgings in Highgate, and looked in better circumstances. He welcomed Mr. Fellerman warmly, but with a grave face; the days in which he had been a 'jolly good fellow' seemed gone for ever.

'I am glad to see you for two reasons,' he said. 'I will now pay you the twenty pounds I owe you, although I shall never wipe out my debt, and never forget it. As to the remaining fifty, I must ask you to let it stand over for a little, when I hope to repay you.'

'As I told you at the time, I did not expect repayment,' said Fellerman, 'I will, however, take this money, as I know it is not a pleasant feeling to be indebted to another man; most people generally end by disliking the person to whom they are under an obligation. But as to the fifty, it is usual, I believe, to offer a clergyman a fee for performing the marriage service: will you perform it for me and keep the money as your fee?'

'Nonsense!' said Mr. Barnard; 'I will of course marry you for nothing (friends always do), and I heartily congratulate you. Whoever heard of a fifty-pound wedding fee? Somehow, I fancied you would never marry. Who is the lady?' for the chaplain had heard nothing of the Challoners of late, although he had greatly wished to know whether Rose had been discovered, and he had entirely forgotten Jack's suspicions of Fellerman.

'I am going to marry Miss Challoner.'

Mr. Barnard made no reply, and Fellerman, looking at him, saw that something was wrong. He at once divined the cause.

'I withdraw my request,' he said kindly; 'it will involve you in a long journey, and I can just as well ask someone else.'

'By no means,' returned Mr. Barnard hastily, 'I prefer to do it myself; it is the least I can do for you.'

By this time the chaplain's love had considerably cooled (as most men's affections do in absence), but sufficient still remained to make the work of marrying Rose to another man

a very painful one. He was nevertheless determined to show his gratitude by this, the only means in his power.

'But I thought she was lost,' he said.

'She was in a community,' said Fellerman, explaining as much as he thought fit.

'I prefer to keep the matter quiet until we are married,' he continued, 'as she has cast in her lot with us and left her own people.'

'I shall say nothing,' said Mr. Barnard; 'but I thought you were of a different creed. How is it you are going to have a Church of England service?'

Mr. Fellerman smiled.

'It will not be possible to be married according to the rites of my creed. As far as I am concerned, though I respect the words, I do not consider I am bound to believe them all. But those which speak of paying the wife all love and duty I shall consider absolutely binding. Besides, it would not please her to be married otherwise; she would not think it right at present. In addition, my father was—I should say is—an Englishman; therefore, for this reason alone, I shall make the marriage as binding and legal as the laws of England will allow.'

'I knew it,' said Mr. Barnard triumphantly. 'I *told* Ashworth you would not do anything that was not honourable.'

'Has Mr. Jack Ashworth'—his unpleasant smile was always on his face at this name; he invariably emphasized the word *Jack* slightly as he pronounced it—'been saying to the contrary?'

'Oh!' said Mr. Barnard, slightly confused, 'I ought not to have said that, and, poor fellow! he was in great trouble at the time.'

'As for *his* opinion, it is quite immaterial to me,' returned Mr. Fellerman calmly.

And then some conversation ensued as to days and times of trains and so on, Mr. Barnard arranging to go to Cornwall on August 31st and sleep at an adjoining village. The key of the church would have to be obtained and various matters of business settled, which Mr. Barnard promised to see to. The license Mr. Fellerman was to obtain himself.

An altercation followed as to the fifty pounds, the matter

being finally compromised, and the debt reduced to twenty-five.

'There will be your expenses, and loss of time, and all that, to say nothing of the fee,' said Mr. Fellerman, 'and twenty-five pounds is not too much.'

It was on August 31st that Fellerman again returned to the little Cornish hamlet; he had taken up his abode temporarily in a fisherman's hut not far from the lodgings occupied by Dorothea and Mrs. Wilkinson, which lodgings, though clean and comfortable, were certainly not pretentious. But to the girl the change from the bare farmhouse was wonderful: she thought the cottage, with its home-like air, actually luxurious; as to the grandeur of Rosemount in comparison, that had almost faded from her mind.

Mrs. Wilkinson was sitting alone at the window as Mr. Fellerman came up; she told him he would find Dorothea in the small cove not far off.

'And,' she added, 'will you take her this shawl? There is a slight breeze now, and she must not take cold.'

He took the shawl on his arm and walked down to the beach. Mrs. Wilkinson watched him.

'What a splendid-looking man he is!' she said; 'they will make a handsome couple.'

Dorothea was sitting within the shelter of the cove, her hands clasped loosely on her lap. She was dressed in dark blue, and looked, as usual, very lovely. Her little golden curls were ruffled by the wind; the gentle sea-breeze made her colour high.

He approached quietly, and watched her in silence, devouring her with his eyes. He spoke at last softly.

'My little one,' he said, 'my Dorothea, I have come at last!'

She rose and flew into his arms, which were held out to receive her. When he at length would let her go, he bade her sit down again, and wrapped the white shawl he had carried carefully round her, then sat down by her side and held her in his arms as he talked. The waves, all blue and green, were dancing in the distance, breaking on the shore in soothing little plashes, and making the shells and seaweed and pebbles gleam in the sunlight.

'Well, my child,' he said at length, 'and which is best: this and freedom, or Dartmoor and lessons?'

'Everywhere is nice with you,' she said, dropping her eyes. 'While you were away I often thought regretfully of the farm, and, do you know, I was really sorry for some things to leave it and the girls.'

'Art thou happy now?'

'Almost *too* happy,' she said.

'Make the most of it, my child; I, too, am dangerously happy; in my previous life I have never been happy before. I am prepared to pay my penalty for it afterwards.'

'What penalty?'

'Nothing that thou needst understand about, little one. To-morrow thou wilt be *mine*, all mine.'

As he looked at her his face was so tender in its great love that she forgot to identify him with the stern, cold man whom she had feared so greatly; she forgot he was unlike other men, and some demon of mischief prompted her to try her power over him; for the moment she was quite oblivious of all that had gone before.

'Tell me, please, what you mean about a penalty,' she said pleadingly, her lovely eyes looking into his; 'I want to know.'

'The words escaped me inadvertently,' he replied, when he had covered her face with his kisses; 'I will tell you instead about Mr. Barnard—that he is to marry us to-morrow.'

'Mr. Barnard!' she said doubtfully.

'Yes, little one; I know he once loved thee, but it is yet his wish to come.'

'I should have been glad not to come to you penniless,' she said thoughtfully, 'my father is so well off.'

'I have plenty of gold for us both,' he replied earnestly; 'I prefer that thou shouldest come to me penniless, especially as we shall always live plainly; the money must be spent on others.'

'Now,' she returned pleadingly, 'tell me about the penalty.'

His face darkened; he removed his arms from her.

'Dorothea,' he said gravely, 'I gave you a solemn warning at the farmhouse that you must never question my will. Do not compel me to make you suffer. It is not my intention to say more about the penalty.'

But even now she did not heed; she had lived in such wild happiness during the last fortnight and had been so

greatly beloved that she could not realize the terms on which their engagement had been made.

'*Do* tell me,' she said again; 'I want to know.'

He looked at her very sternly.

'We shall be married to-morrow *night*, Dorothea, instead of in the morning.'

'Very well,' she replied; 'but you have not answered my question. I *must* know what penalty you meant.'

'Will you persist in trying to cross my will?' he said. 'We will be married in the churchyard instead of in the church.'

'Oh,' she said with a shudder, 'all among the graves! Then I cannot wear my white dress; I should feel like a ghost. But tell me, if you trust me at all, about the penalty.'

'What evil spirit has come over you?' he said. 'I will *not* tell you. You must wear your white dress to-morrow night.'

'You have no trust in me,' she said, 'or you would tell me. If you really love me you will still tell me.'

'What!' he said, 'must your cup be filled to overflowing? When the ceremony is over you will remain there until I bid you go away with me.'

He looked at her with sad eyes as he spoke, adding:

'But you need not marry me at all unless you wish.'

Suddenly the consciousness of what she had done came over her; she thought of the manner of man he was, of his former coldness and stern purpose, of his high aims, of his goodness, and finally of his overwhelming love for her; and this was how, at the very beginning, she had broken her compact, and tried to withstand him.

The tears stood in her eyes as she turned towards him, not venturing even to touch his hand.

'Will you forgive me?' she said in a low voice, 'and please forget what I have said.'

'I forgive you,' he said gently; 'but, if we are to know happiness hereafter, the penalty, your penalty, must be paid.'

'It shall be paid,' she said; 'it shall be paid to the utmost.'

'Yes,' he replied sadly, 'and you will suffer greatly, and I because you do. Is not my philosophy right? Did I not tell you long ago how vain is the quest for happiness? Is either of us happy now?' The wind had freshened, the

waves were now dashing against the rocks. 'We must go home,' he said, 'or you will be cold.'

She looked into his eyes wistfully. 'Won't you tell me again that you forgive me, and kiss me once before we go?'

He took her in his arms and kissed her, but with none of the rapture of heretofore. 'I forgive thee,' he said, 'and I would I could suffer for thee instead of with thee. But I cannot, or, were I not to teach thee thy lesson now, the whole purpose of my life would be destroyed.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SELF-ABNEGATION.

EARLY the next morning Mr. Fellerman sought Mr. Barnard, and acquainted him with the change in his plans.

The chaplain looked very doubtful. 'I don't know that it will be a legal marriage at night; I don't think it will.'

'Are you sure?'

'No,' said Mr. Barnard, looking very grave; 'I know nothing about clerical duties and laws on shore; as soon as I was ordained I joined my ship.' He was most anxious to know why the marriage was to take place at night, but he did not venture to inquire.

'As far as *I* am concerned,' said Mr. Fellerman, 'I should consider the marriage equally binding were I to place the ring on her finger and take her for my wife without any ceremony at all; I should fulfil my vows, the vows of my heart, to the uttermost, to the end of my days. But there are reasons why the marriage must be a legal one according to the English law.'

'Then I don't think this one will be.'

'Nevertheless, it shall take place.'

Mr. Barnard looked up, astonished at the apparent contradiction in the other's words.

'I should never forgive myself if I were the cause of anything going wrong with Miss Challoner,' he said gloomily.

'Do you mean you refuse to perform the ceremony?' asked Mr. Fellerman sternly.

There was a moment's pause.

'*No*,' said Mr. Barnard in a loud voice, and with a somewhat excited manner, 'I do *not* refuse. I took a vow that I would serve you, and by Heaven I will serve you, and trust you also. I *know* you will not injure the girl.'

'I will not indeed,' replied Mr. Fellerman gravely; 'I know I am asking a hard thing of you.'

You are. At this moment I couldn't if my life depended

on it tell whether I am doing a right thing or a wrong, but to serve you I will risk it. I have always been considered a scamp, I believe,' he added rather bitterly, 'but I wonder if this will be put down as one of my good actions or my bad. Had I not so much trust in you, nothing would make me do it.' And then a curious feeling came over him as if he would have been *compelled* to do it whether he liked it or not.

'I have a license,' said Mr. Fellerman.

'Oh!' said the chaplain, vastly relieved, 'then I have no doubt it will be all right; I am very glad to hear it. But the church will look very ghostly at night, for there is no means of lighting it!'

'It will not be necessary; we shall be married in the churchyard.'

'What!' said Mr. Barnard.

'We are not mad,' returned Mr. Fellerman with a smile, 'and it is our intention to be married there; at all events there will be no spectators, for not one of these fisher-folk would go near the place at night. You have the key of the church, I believe?'

'Yes.'

'And your surplice?'

'Yes.'

'You will be ready, then, to begin punctually at twelve o'clock, as the clock strikes.'

On being left alone Mr. Barnard's reflections were by no means pleasant. If he could have seen any way out of his difficulty he would have gone back to London at once.

'Oh that it had been for anyone but him!' he said; 'but I can't refuse *him*. I swore I would serve him. No doubt the license makes it all right, but, still, at night, and in a churchyard; it will be awful! What can the girl be thinking of? I suppose this is one of her crazes. Still, I cannot but trust him; I know he would not deceive her.'

Mrs. Wilkinson was equally astonished. Mr. Fellerman called on her before breakfast and saw her alone.

'It won't be legal,' she said.

'I have a license,' he returned, as he had done to Mr. Barnard.

'Oh, in that case there can be no objection,' she replied in her ignorance; 'but it seems odd.'

She returned to the subject when sitting with Dorothea.

'What has made you take this extraordinary freak into your head of being married at midnight, my dear?' she asked.

The girl coloured. 'We have arranged it so; it is Mr. Fellerman's wish.'

'It is a very curious one; if he were not such a wonderful and reliable man I should be doubtful about it, but with him I have no fear. I shall be sorry to leave you, my dear.'

'Are you going?' asked Dorothea.

'Yes; did not Mr. Fellerman tell you that I shall go to-morrow morning, and shall not see you after you are married; you will go away straight from the church.'

'I have had no time to hear anything,' said the girl; 'yesterday we were talking on other matters, and I have seen scarcely anything of him since we have been down here.'

'I wish I knew a little more about him,' said Mrs. Wilkinson as a feeler, 'for I admire him greatly.'

Then, for the first time, it occurred to Dorothea that she knew *nothing* about him: his lineage, his nationality—for he did not seem thoroughly English, constantly using Eastern modes of expression—his age, his means, his position, his religion, his Christian name. And yet she felt no fear of him, not even when she contemplated the terrible ordeal through which she had to go this very night; she knew that she would rather face *anything* than leave him. The ordeal itself she shuddered to think of, but not for a moment did she purpose turning back.

'Have you known Mrs. Lester long?' she asked, by way of turning the subject, for the Superior had never been mentioned by any other name, and Mrs. Wilkinson was quite unaware that she was the head of a community, or even that there was any community, Fellerman having enjoined silence on the subject.

'I knew her well many years ago. Her husband and mine were in the same regiment. He was a splendid-looking man first of all, until he took to drinking. When they were first married he adored her, but she never cared for him. She showed her dislike and contempt for him so much that I believe this was what first made him drink. I have heard that he afterwards treated her very badly.'

'I do not like her,' said Dorothea. 'But why did she marry him?'

Mrs. Wilkinson laughed.

'My dear, you must not expect all marriages to proceed from love—as I believe yours will—that would be making the world quite too heavenly a place. She married him, I know, because she had a disappointment elsewhere, and wanted a home—the reason, I believe, why a great many marriages take place. I heard afterwards that he committed suicide in India.'

Dorothea listened to all this gossip as if in a dream. Which was real? this life in which there was no mystery, no hardship, no depth—or that other in which her mind had dwelt perpetually on the intangible things of the universe, and in which bodily comfort had been altogether despised.

'I can hardly fancy this is your wedding-day, my dear,' continued kindly Mrs. Wilkinson; 'it seems so odd there being no preparations and next to nothing to do, especially as your future husband seems to be a rich man,' for Fellerman's arrangement with her had been exceptionally liberal.

'Yes,' said Dorothea, not knowing what else to say.

'What little packing there is I will see to; you need trouble yourself about nothing. You don't look as if you had been accustomed to do much.'

'My father is a rich man,' said Dorothea simply.

Mrs. Wilkinson noted the word 'is,' but she wisely held her peace. She was not a woman to meddle unnecessarily in other people's affairs, and although there was something very mysterious about this wedding, it had turned out such a fortunate business for her, and she liked both Mr. Fellerman and Dorothea so heartily, that she resolved not to make mischief elsewhere by saying a word of distrust.

In the afternoon Fellerman came in and bade Dorothea go out with him. He told her to dress warmly, as the wind was high, and he wished to take her on the beach to see the huge waves dashing against the rocks.

'You will have everything ready,' he said to Mrs. Wilkinson.

'Everything. And I have to thank you very much for your kindness to me.'

'And I you for your kindness to Dorothea,' he replied, with a smile.

She watched them as they walked away.

'She worships him,' she said to herself; 'but I don't think I ever saw a man so much in love in my life. He looks at her sometimes as if he would gladly die for her.'

His face was very grave and also very sad as he turned to Dorothea; there seemed nothing of the joyful bridegroom about him. The arrangement was becoming very dreadful to him on account of the suffering she would go through; but if the wealth of the Indies had been offered him in exchange for his resolution he would have refused it. He was making the hardest sacrifice to his religion that he had ever made yet, although from his earliest boyhood he had never once suffered his own wishes to stand in opposition to what he believed due to it. He had, in fact, never had any wishes except the one desire to advance his cause, and for this purpose he had unflinchingly sacrificed himself.

He stood with Dorothea at the entrance to the cave, watching the rolling waves, which broke on the shore and rocks in great hollow curves, and with a loud roar. Once the spray dashed right over them, and Dorothea laughed. Then, for she had never laughed in his presence before, fearing she had done wrong, she turned to him. He placed his hands on her shoulders, and said gently:

'Laugh while you can, my child. I am glad that you can laugh to-day.'

His words recalled to her what was to take place that night; she shivered slightly. He drew her nearer to him, and placed his arms about her.

'My child,' he said, 'dost thou dread what lies before thee?'

'A little, she said.

'And I too dread it for thee. I would give all I possess couldst thou avoid it.'

'Are you sure you have forgiven me?' she asked in a low voice.

'If I had not forgiven thee from the depths of my heart I would even now tell thee to depart from me, that I would provide for thy welfare elsewhere, and see thy face no more; for thou knowest that with us conventionalities have no weight. If I did not feel that thou wert indeed already part of myself, I would not give thee this pain; there is no one in the world beside thee to whom I would give it, but, as I said, thou art *myself*.'

'Will it be very—very terrible?' she asked.

'I fear it will be to thee; it would not to a woman of coarse organization and dull perceptions. But remember this always, that I suffer with thee. I have tried in vain to think of any other way in which to teach thee that, though thou mayest tell me what thou wilt, thou must never resist me or strive to do so. If thou wert to influence me in one thing thou wouldst do so in all things, and the great work of my life would be destroyed. Even these few days of happiness have shown me that, did I not fight against it, I might become even as other men are, a man with no purpose, save my own and thy enjoyment. If I know thee aright, and I *do* know thee, this one lesson will be all-sufficient: thou wilt never require another. Tell me, art thou willing?'

'I am *quite* willing,' she replied.

He pressed his lips to hers, and said no more for a time.

'Thou art quite resolved to abjure *all* that life such as thou wouldst have had with Ashworth, and live where and how I please, endure hardships, leave thy native country, forsake all but me and my religion?' he said at length.

'Quite resolved; quite happy to do so.'

'It is well,' he replied, and took her home.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FELLERMAN'S WEDDING.

THE day had been somewhat boisterous, the sun shining in fitful gleams. As the evening advanced a faint moon began to shine. The sea was much higher than in the afternoon; the roar of the waves on the shore was deafening. As the time went on Mrs. Wilkinson began to feel great qualms to which she would not confess, while Dorothea was aware that all her mental faculties and nerves were keenly alive. At ten o'clock Mr. Fellerman came. The supper had just been placed on the table.

'Do have something,' said Mrs. Wilkinson, 'and I have been telling Dorothea that she really must eat.'

The good lady had secretly obtained from the landlady a stiff glass of whisky-and-water for herself, to nerve her for going into the churchyard.

Mr. Fellerman declined anything for himself, but said to Dorothea, 'Eat, my child; you will require food. You have a long journey before you.'

She obeyed him, and by a great effort ate a sandwich. Then she said it was time to dress, and went away.

'See that she wears something very warm beneath her dress,' he said to Mrs. Wilkinson. 'I would not have her take cold.'

'Ah,' replied that lady, delighted, 'it shows what a nice, kind, thoughtful husband you will make. Now, what other man would have thought of such a thing just before he was going to be married? She shall have on a double flannel body—please remember, Mr. Fellerman, that she *must* wear flannel, so delicate as she looks—and I will go at once and make her put it on.'

'Does any man ever know himself?' said Fellerman reflectively, as soon as she had departed; 'am I acting like an angel or a devil, for one of the two it must be. If suffering to myself be the test, I am not sparing it.' And

then for the first time in his life rolled over him a wave of unbelief, such as sometimes overwhelms men of all nations and all creeds; but he put it from him triumphantly, saying, 'The cause is just; it will triumph!'

At half-past eleven Dorothea appeared, looking very lovely in her white dress, although her face was very pale. Mrs. Wilkinson considered the right moment had come for the consumption of the whisky-and-water, and was drinking it in her own room. She had begged Dorothea to taste it, and thought her very foolish for refusing. Fellerman took his bride in his arms and kissed her, still with the sad look on his face.

'My Dorothea, thou wilt not doubt my love this night?'

'No,' she replied firmly; 'nothing could make me doubt it.'

'Be strong, then, and brave; thine ordeal will soon be over.'

He led her from the house, after placing a cloak round her, as soon as Mrs. Wilkinson appeared. The landlady had no idea that a wedding was about to take place, and was much mystified as to the relations between the parties. She concluded at length that Mr. Fellerman and Dorothea were brother and sister, and seemed hurt the next day that they had not said good-bye to her before leaving. The church was only a short distance off. The moon was a little brighter; dark masses of clouds were rushing over her face, constantly obscuring the light. The wind was roaring, the surf thundered on the rocks, the sea looked one dark mass of struggling, furious water, on which white horses were riding. It was a very ghostly night: the church was in dark shadow; the headstones showed brown and white; here and there amongst the rank grass there were dark corners and awful streaks of moonlight, and horrible rattlings of the church doors. The wind came in furious gusts, which seemed as if they would shake the very foundation of the church, and then died away again. In these intervals the cry of an owl in the belfry could be heard.

Mr. Barnard unlocked the vestry door—he had the aid of a lantern—and put on his surplice. He had barely done so, when the wind with a furious blast burst open the door and blew out the lantern. He fumbled about in the dark to find the matches, saying:

'This is awful! I wouldn't do such a night's work again,

not if he paid me ten thousand pounds! I am simply doing it now for the sake of Fellerman. He must be mad, quite mad, and she too.'

He relit the lantern and found a Prayer-book with large print, which he took out with him. His surplice streamed in the wind, and made him look like an actual ghost.

'It is only Mr. Barnard,' said Fellerman, as Mrs. Wilkinson shrieked.

He held Dorothea firmly by the hand, and walked up the path with her towards a large, flat, low tombstone, standing in the midst of the longest grass.*

She had removed her cloak, and on her side looked so ghostly in her white dress that Mr. Barnard wiped his forehead, and a cold perspiration broke out upon him. Fellerman's face was very stern and set and white.

The chaplain came forward to greet the party, carrying the Prayer-book and the lantern; and then it occurred to him that he had better reserve his greetings.

'Have you got the ring?' he said to Fellerman. The latter produced it.

'Show me the license.'

Mr. Fellerman took it out of his pocket. That it was correct the chaplain could see, but, whether it was owing to the uncertain light or his own agitation, he could not read the names plainly; this he felt sure of, that the name of Fellerman was not there.

'I don't see your name,' he said.

'But it is there, notwithstanding,' replied Fellerman, very sternly.

'I suppose it's the light,' said the chaplain, minded even now to put down his book and go away. He probably would have done so if he could, but he thought that the entire force of Mr. Fellerman's mighty will was being exercised to keep him in his place. Mrs. Wilkinson was holding the lantern, shading it with her shawl, and shaking from head to foot. Dorothea had spoken no word; now she turned to Fellerman:

'Will you tell me your Christian name?' she asked.

'Yes, my child; it is Algernon.'

The tombstone was partly beneath the shelter of an old

* The marriage on the tombstone in a churchyard is an actual fact.

elm-tree; the wind took the branches and swung them to and fro, with a shrieking, moaning sound.

'I hope it won't be long,' said Mrs. Wilkinson, 'or I shall certainly faint.'

Mr. Barnard took up his book; as he opened it the moon shone on the faces of the bride and bridegroom, and the chaplain began to feel a fear both of one and the other; were they human beings or spirits, with their white, set faces? He began the exhortation, stumbling over it in the wretched light, and reading as hard as he possibly could. As he commenced, the clock struck twelve, each clang being distinctly heard above the roar of the wind.

The pages of the book fluttered; he could scarcely hold them down. Then came a most awful gust which silenced his voice completely for a minute or so; when it lulled, the boom of the sea beneath seemed louder than ever. But the voices of Fellerman and Dorothea sounded distinctly as they pledged their troth to one another. Mr. Barnard left out every morsel of the service that he possibly could; it seemed to him as if the dead around them had risen out of their graves, and were standing by him; he had never endured so much misery in his life.

The ceremony was at length concluded, when up came the wind again with a terrible blast which extinguished the lantern, and the faint light of the moon barely enabled them to see one another's faces.

Fellerman spoke a few words to Mrs. Wilkinson, who at once departed, giving Dorothea a warm kiss; she was in truth devoutly thankful to get away, and ran for her life through the churchyard.

'Shall I bring out the register for you to sign?' asked Mr. Barnard; 'you must sign in pencil.'

'Never mind the register,' said Fellerman. And then it dawned on Mr. Barnard's mind, with cold horror, that there had been only *one* witness to the ceremony.

Fellerman spoke a word to Dorothea, and beckoned to Mr. Barnard to come with him to the other end of the churchyard facing the sea. The chaplain turned round once as he walked, and saw that Dorothea was kneeling on the tombstone, her white arms clasping a cross that stood hard by; he imagined that she wished to be left alone for a little while in order to pray.

Then with every nerve strung to its fullest tension, her mental powers became unduly quickened; she scarcely knew whether she were in or out of the body. The wind was howling and raging still; the branches of the elm-tree banged against one another; the awful waving shadows seemed to advance and close round her. Fellerman was talking to Mr. Barnard; she could not see him, but she verily believed that his mind was communicating with hers, and that this conversation took place between them.

She: 'I see the dark headstones, the neglected graves around me; I hear the shrieks of the wind and the noise of the waves. Will you stay with me?'

He: 'I will stay with thee.'

'The dead are rising from their graves; I see them, I fear them. See, they are in their white shrouds; their faces are white and they look on me.'

'They will not harm thee, my child.'

'But I see more. I see what is beneath the ground; I see the bones of the dead men; I see worse. I fear—I fear.'

'My will overshadows thee; they shall not touch thee.'

'The spirits of the air come towards me; I see their white wings; they come near.'

'They are good angels.'

'But there are evil spirits: they rise from the depths; their forms are awful; protect me if you love me; they beckon to me.'

'Thine own good spirit protects thee.'

'They are all near me; I leave this earth, I go into those mystic worlds of which you have told me; they are terrible to me. I suffer—I suffer.'

'I suffer with thee, but there I cannot follow thee; their terrors thou must endure alone.'

The minutes went slowly by; Fellerman continued to talk to Mr. Barnard, while Dorothea, still kneeling, imagined that she was exploring the length and breadth of other worlds. Cycles of time seemed to go by. And then a worse trouble befell her, for Fellerman's voice no longer reached her: she believed that he had forsaken her. She gave an agonized cry, and said:

'In these awful distances have I lost you altogether; is my life ended, and have I gone finally away from you?'

This reply came to her ears:

'Thou canst never go away from such love as mine. Henceforth, is thy will mine?'

'It is; my own is gone for ever.'

'Thy penance is ended; thou art now mine. Rise and come to me.'

The clock struck one.

Mr. Barnard turned round; he had begun to think there was something very odd about this long conversation on trivial matters from a man just married. The moon at that moment shone brightly on Dorothea: he saw her agonized expression. A suspicion of the truth began to dawn on him; he turned fiercely to Fellerman, saying:

'Are you a man or a devil?'

'Just now I scarcely know,' was the reply.

The chaplain saw that his hands were clenched, his face was livid and great drops of pain stood on his brow.

'You are ill,' he said more quietly.

'No,' said Fellerman, 'I am not. Let us go and seek my wife. But as you seem to doubt me, go to her yourself and ask her what you will.'

She had just risen; her face now wore a look of content.

'Dorothea,' he said gently, 'Mr. Barnard wishes to speak to you.'

He went away a few paces and turned his back.

'Mrs. Fellerman,' said the chaplain, struggling with his surplice, which the wind *would* blow out, 'I ought to congratulate you, and I do. But, pardon me, why all this mystery?—why do you look so deadly pale in your white dress; why are you married at night? Again pardon me, but are you acting of your own free will?—do you love your husband or only fear him?'

'Mr. Barnard,' she replied with dignity, 'I believe that a good motive actuates your question, and therefore I reply to it. I love my husband with my whole heart.'

He bowed and left her, and struggling out of his surplice, which he bundled up under his arm, left the churchyard as previously arranged.

Fellerman took his bride in his arms and gave her one kiss, so long that it seemed to her as if it would never end.

'Now,' he said, 'henceforth thou art mine, heart, and will, and mind, and soul, and body.'

Then, bidding her shut her eyes, he carried her through

the churchyard to the gate, where a carriage with the luggage on the top was in waiting. Before entering it, he poured out a glass of wine from a flask in the pocket, and made her drink it. As they drove away, he said:

'Thou hast borne thy trial bravely; thou art now incorporate in my being, soul of my soul, life of my life.' His face was radiant. 'Four weeks of joy, my child, four weeks. Beyond this we will not look forward.'

'How did you know I should go through such awful scenes?' she asked. 'I suppose you did know, as you seemed so sorry for me before we were married.'

'I lay claim to no supernatural powers,' he said; 'but knowing your highly sensitive temperament, the time of night, the horrible surroundings, your knowledge of the mystic worlds which I have taught you, and your fine imagination, I foresaw what the result would be.'

'But you *did* talk to me; I *did* see those spirits and those endless worlds of space?'

'Who shall say?' he replied; 'my spirit was certainly in communion with thee; as to the spirits and other worlds, the man whom the Christians most revere, Paul, saw them, I have been told, and before and after him scores of men whose minds and lives are unobscured by evil influences and sordid, sensual pleasures have seen them also. I myself have seen them, therefore why not thou?'

'You will not have occasion to tell me to go through it again. I thought ages had rolled by.'

'Never, my child. And now we are going to London, and thence to Scotland, to try if happiness be ever found here below.'

'We *must* be happy,' said Dorothea, with her arms round his neck.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning ere they reached the hotel where they were to spend two days, but where they called as soon as they arrived in London shall be told later in this story.

NOTE.—The reader must decide for himself whether this scene was owing to theosophical power, which Fellerman had thoroughly mastered, the exercise of his will alone, or the horror of the surroundings influencing Dorothea's vivid imagination.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. BARNARD'S CHAPLAINCY.

By Fellerman's previous request, Mr. Barnard called on Mr. and Mrs. Challoner at Penlist, but before doing so he wrote a letter of most sincere apology to Fellerman for having misjudged him with regard to his wife, adding that he would still gladly render him any service that lay in his power.

It was by no means pleasant to him to go to Rosemount with the news of the marriage; but Fellerman had judged, and judged rightly, that under present circumstances Dorothea would prefer to hold no communication with her home, so long as her parents could be made acquainted with her position in any other way. There could but be one interview between them, which would certainly be productive of pain to both parties, inasmuch as it would not be possible for either Mr. or Mrs. Challoner to understand the motives which had led to their daughter's leaving her home and marrying as she had done.

They received Mr. Barnard very kindly, and were in no degree surprised at his news.

'We cannot but feel it that she should have married without our knowledge,' said Mrs. Challoner, 'but I have long thought it would end thus. I do not blame you, Mr. Barnard, for taking part in the scheme; on the contrary, as it has taken place I am glad to know the ceremony has been performed by a clergyman of the Church of England, as, with Mr. Fellerman's mysterious views, he might have chosen to have no service at all. It was both honest and kind of you to come and tell us of it at once.'

Mr. Barnard's conscience accused him sadly. Could they only have known what manner of wedding it was, what would they have thought? The midnight service, the awful night, the absence of witnesses and of Fellerman's name in the license, and the omission of signatures in the register. On all of these points he was bound to be silent.

He, however, disclaimed any merit about coming to see them.

'It was by Mr. Fellerman's wish that I came.'

'I am glad of that,' said Mrs. Challoner. 'Did Rose send any message?'

'I only saw her for one moment, first and last, to speak to.'

'And what did she say?'

'She told me that she loved her husband with her whole heart.'

'Then she had better keep to him: *I* don't want to see her again,' said Mr. Challoner. 'Not a penny of my money will she ever see.'

'All we can say in Mr. Fellerman's favour is that he is not mercenary,' said Mrs. Challoner. 'He has behaved very badly, but had he expected money with his wife, he would have taken care to let her come home first. I wish we knew more about him. I hope he will treat her well.'

'Serve her right if he doesn't,' said Mr. Challoner, who was bitterly angry. 'And not a farthing shall she have from me.'

But neither then nor afterwards did he alter his will, in which she was left a large sum, with reversion of all the property after Mrs. Challoner's death.

'I think there is a great deal to be said in Mr. Fellerman's favour, though he has behaved badly to you,' said Mr. Barnard. 'He is one of the kindest of men, is evidently very fond of his wife, and, speaking personally, he has behaved nobly towards me, helping me in a time of my direst distress.'

'I can't think why Mr. Ashworth and my husband dislike him so much,' said Mrs. Worsley, speaking now for the first time. 'One can understand it in Mr. Ashworth, but he has done nothing either to me or my husband, and yet we both feel antagonistic to him; while, on the other hand, Mr. Manly liked him extremely, and, afterwards, so did my sister, Mrs. Manly.'

'I do not think he likes the ordinary run of what are called "young people."'

Mrs. Worsley laughed.

'Well, I know both I and my husband and Jack are ordinary enough; we are all clever, but we haven't "fine minds," and don't pretend to them.'

'And a precious good thing too!' said Mr. Challoner. 'I hope I shall never hear Rose's name mentioned again.'

Mrs. Challoner looked pained, but made no reply to this speech.

'I am glad, Mr. Barnard,' she said, 'to hear that you have seen your mother of late. May I ask if you have seen your father?'

'Oh no,' said Mr. Barnard, with a laugh; 'my father is much too religious to be contaminated by me. He sent me a tract entitled "There'll be Hanging for this," the application of which I entirely failed to see. But my mother has been very good to me, and my circumstances are looking up.'

He remained to lunch, and, on being pressed to stay the night, said he would do so.

During luncheon, Stevens, Admiral Ashworth's man, arrived with a message from his master. Feeling that, after all the scandal that had taken place, Rose's marriage could not be made too public, Mrs. Challoner sent a return message to tell Admiral Ashworth of it, adding that she would call round herself in the afternoon. Stevens thought proper to stop at the Rose and Crown on his way back, and impart the news.

On Mr. Barnard's strolling round the place, in the afternoon, he was accosted by Polwheel, who, dirty as usual and without his coat, was standing in his favourite negligent attitude smoking.

'Well, Mr. Barnard,' he said affably, 'I hope I see you well, sir. Nice news for you and Mr. Jack about Miss Challoner, sir. I heard you a-makin' love to her down on the rocks. Well, poor thing! I'm glad he's married her *at last*.'

Mr. Barnard gave him a look of withering contempt and walked on; he did not consider it any part of his business to fight Mrs. Fellerman's battles.

The next day Mrs. Worsley announced her intention of going to Plymouth, thence on a secret expedition. She asked Mr. Barnard to accompany her, as it would be on his way back.

'And,' she said, laughing, 'mind you look very nice; I like people who go out with me to look their very best.'

Mr. Barnard said he would do what he could in that line, and he really looked very well when he appeared.

Mrs. Worsley inspected him with approval.

'Why am I inveigled thus?' he asked on starting. 'I think I ought to be told our destination.'

'You are going to call with me on Lady Valerian;' for Mrs. Worsley's relations at Valerian Park were still most friendly.

Both the Earl and Countess were at home and visible, and Mrs. Worsley was pleased to see that Mr. Barnard made a very favourable impression.

On his departure the Earl expressed himself cordially respecting him.

'But why are you going about with young men?' he asked, with a laugh, of Mrs. Worsley, who had been requested to stay longer. 'I shall tell your husband.'

'That you are welcome to do. I brought him because I wanted you to see him. Didn't you say the other day that you wanted a domestic chaplain?'

'Yes,' said the Earl, 'I was rather thinking of it. You see, we are a long way from a church, and the servants don't go regularly, and I can't go in for prayers and that sort of thing. Besides, there is the chapel here doing nothing. But I hesitated because I didn't think I should like to have a man here who would be telling me I was a miserable sinner if I drank a glass or two of wine or rode to hounds.'

'Try Mr. Barnard,' said Mrs. Worsley; 'he won't tell you that.'

'Is *he* a parson?' asked the Earl in surprise.

Then Mrs. Worsley entered into a long account of Mr. Barnard's history, enlarging on the shameful way his father had treated him.

'Poor fellow!' said the kind Countess. 'His father must be a wretch, and does not deserve to have a son.'

'I'll think about it,' said the Earl, by no means indisposed to consider the suggestion favourably.

'You had better ask my husband about him first,' said Mrs. Worsley.

The Earl did so, the result being that he offered the appointment of chaplain to Mr. Barnard, who, after much consideration, accepted it.

It was, indeed, the very post he wanted. Of late he had taken life very seriously, and could not get rid of the thought that his vows were still obligatory on him. At the

same time, he did not consider himself fitted for ordinary parish work, having a very humble opinion of his own worth.

But this chaplaincy just suited him. He read prayers, and preached a sermon from a printed book, generally Kingsley's. He made himself useful to the Earl in a variety of ways which an ordinary clergyman would not have done; he was kind to the people on the estate, and, above all, he was now careful always to comport himself as a clergyman should. Altogether he was greatly liked.

He had scarcely been installed, when his father wrote to him, saying that, as it was quite certain he must have seen the error of his ways, or the Earl and Countess of Valerian would not have taken him up, he would now forgive him, and hoped he would soon pay them a visit. Mr. Barnard threw the letter into the fire and laughed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SUPERIOR'S VISIT.

DOROTHEA and Mr. Fellerman were in Scotland. They stayed at hotels in the Highlands, but mixed with society as little as possible, although they did not make themselves in any way remarkable by their exclusiveness. They joined the *table d hôte* of a day, but spent the rest of the time by themselves. A good many admiring comments were made on the handsome couple by the tourists, but no one was aware that there was anything about them very much out of the common.

Neither Fellerman nor Dorothea took wine nor any stimulant; otherwise they ate and drank like other people, he explaining to her that his creed allowed the adoption of the food of the country its members lived in, so long as they ate without indulgence of appetite. He was glad to do like other people for a time; his whole soul recoiled when he thought of his wedding, and yet he firmly believed he had done right. Dorothea never referred to it, although a week had gone by. They spent whole days alone amidst the heather-crowned hills and beautiful lakes, and choosing secluded spots, he would talk to her for hours together, displaying the marvellous knowledge he possessed and the depth of his mind. He seemed acquainted with every subject. He told her many of the beautiful legends connected with his faith, but everything that might inspire horror or awe he carefully suppressed; he never seemed tired of pleasing and charming her. She was scarcely ever out of his arms as he talked; in the midst of his dreamy poetical ideas he never forgot her presence, and when, as sometimes happened, he found occasion to correct or suggest alterations in her mode of expression, it was always done in the most tender words and with a smile. She *could* not identify him with the Mr. Fellerman of Penlist; he was a transformed man.

So seven days went by, days of the most unclouded happiness to both; she sometimes felt almost afraid to think of how great his love for her was.

On the eighth day he went out for the first time alone; he had to see about some letters at the nearest post-office. He had scarcely gone, when a lady arrived at the hotel—a lady who inquired for Mrs. Fellerman, but would not give her name. Dorothea at once thought of her mother, and directed she should be shown up, but a tall lady entered the room: *it was the Superior.*

Dorothea shuddered, but, remembering that in a crowded hotel she need have no fear, she invited her visitor to take a seat, taking care herself to keep within reach of the bell.

'So you are married?' said the Superior in a hard voice. Her face looked older and more careworn, and she was no longer dressed in black.

'Yes, I am married, Mrs. Lester,' said Dorothea, endeavouring to pluck up her courage, but feeling as if at any moment she might be ordered to fast or incur some penance.

'And do you know what you have done for your husband, you who profess to love him?'

'I do love him,' Dorothea replied; 'but I would rather not discuss the subject with you.'

'Possibly not, but I would. I will tell you what you have done. He has given up everything in the world for the sake of his religion—fame, name, wealth, enjoyment—and now *you* have come and made his religion a mockery.'

'I?' said Dorothea. 'How is it possible for me to have done that?'

'He intended devoting himself to a religious life before he saw you. This secession of purpose, according to his creed, may cost him untold years of misery and torment—hundreds, perhaps; he told me so himself.'

And then, leaving out all the more beautiful lessons of charity and piety and love to others, which Fellerman himself invariably taught, she enlarged on all the sterner and more corrupt beliefs included in his creed, calling up the most horrible pictures, which she sustained with quotations from the original text, of the penalties to which he had subjected himself, until Dorothea felt that she could bear no more.

What seemed to corroborate her words was Dorothea's remembrance of the scene in the cave when, rather than tell her of what the penalty to himself consisted, he had allowed her to go through such a fearful ordeal. Had he told her, her life would have been shadowed perpetually, and he knew it.

The Superior noted her misery with supreme satisfaction.

'I thought it was as well you should know to what you have brought him,' she said. '*I* would have saved him from pain, *you* have brought it on him.'

With these words she withdrew.

On Fellerman's return he found his wife on her knees in an agony of tears and sobs. He raised her, and said in much concern:

'Why, my little one, my Dorothea, what is it? What has distressed thee so?'

But all his kisses and caressing words did not soothe her; she still sobbed on.

'Dorothea, my child,' he said after a time, 'you *must* tell me.'

In broken words she told him of the Superior's visit, and what she had said.

'I will return soon,' he said, and, seizing his hat, ran downstairs.

On making inquiries he found that Mrs. Lester had lunched there, and had only just left the hotel. He quickly overtook her. She looked slightly uneasy; she had believed him miles away, or her visit would not have been paid. In actual fact he had returned much sooner than he expected.

'Mrs. Lester,' he said sternly, 'I will thank you not to come here again and frighten my wife; you have seriously alarmed her.'

'I am very glad to hear it,' she replied; 'I never liked her, and she never liked me.'

'That is no reason that you should come to see her. I request you will not do so again.'

'As to that, I shall do as I please,' she rejoined defiantly. 'It is my intention to give up being Superior of your community, and I have come to tell you so.'

'Very well,' he replied, concealing the great inconvenience this would cause him just at this present time; 'you are at

liberty to go. Be so kind as to let me know when you wish to leave, as I have many arrangements to make.'

'I have already left,' she said; 'the girls can take good care of themselves.'

'That was not right of you,' he said sternly.

'No, perhaps not. You can, however, get Mrs. Wilkinson to supply my place.'

'Mrs. Wilkinson would be of no use to me. Other people cannot supply your place; they have not had the training and necessary knowledge: the community must be broken up.'

He sighed as he spoke, thinking of the vast pains he had taken to bring the girls together.

'Your dear wife,' she sneered, 'can become Superior.'

'She is not suited for it: I have other work for her. I will now return to our original subject. How *dared* you say what you did to her?'

'I shall say it again if I please, and add more to it. You forget how much of your sacred books I have read.'

His face darkened.

'I can take most effectual means to prevent you, and if you communicate with her again, either by letter or word of mouth, I *will* prevent you.'

'It is out of your power.'

'I think not,' he rejoined quietly.

'How will you prevent me?'

'Simply that I will have you taken up for murder,' he answered, looking her full in the face.

She was prepared for this: she did not flinch.

'You cannot do that: your bare assertion is no use after so many years.'

'Allow me to remind you of certain facts which, perhaps, you have forgotten. I was coming in at the time, and myself saw you fire at your husband; a native servant, on whom I can lay my hand at any day, stood by my side and saw this also; but, most important evidence of all, as soon as it was over, you, in your penitence—you *were* penitent, I believe, or I should not have screened you—wrote to me making full confession, excusing yourself on the ground of his cruelty, and asserting your remorse. That letter I have now in my possession.'

She turned pale; her courage for the moment fled. She

saw that she was completely in his power, and that he would not hesitate to use it if he thought fit. Then she rallied, and said:

'A murderess was a nice person to place over young girls, wasn't she?'

'Is there, then, no such thing as penitence?' asked Fellerman sternly. 'Is there no opening to a sinner to expiate evil deeds? I thought and believed that you repented of your crime when you clung round my knees with your head almost on the ground, crying and beseeching me to spare and screen you. I did both, and I did more; I did my utmost to put the means of happiness in your path, to guide your feet into the haven of peace, and I believed I had succeeded.'

'Peace!' she echoed scornfully; 'have I ever known a peaceful day since? You are stronger than I, and therefore I must give in, otherwise she, your precious wife, should hear a little more from me both of what you believe and what you are.'

'So surely as you do that,' said Fellerman, 'you lodge in gaol for the remainder of your days, if, indeed, they do not hang you.'

Her face became dark with fury.

'Now I will tell you the truth for the first time. I have no more faith in your corrupt and idolatrous religion than if I had never heard a word about it.'

This statement Fellerman listened to incredulously. He *could* not believe it.

'*What* did you say?' he said quickly.

'I said I had not the slightest faith in your religion. True, it contains very beautiful ideas and words, and as *you* believe it there is some sense in it, but as the mass believe it it is ridiculous. But whether it is so or not, I have not the slightest faith in it myself.'

This was a most crushing blow to Fellerman. He so ardently believed in it himself that he literally could not credit anyone, who had studied it as Mrs. Lester had done, not believing in it also. It seemed to him both amazing and an earnest of failure.

'Did you dare to deceive me for so many years, and deceive those girls also, by teaching them a faith in which you had no belief?'

She laughed.

'A woman dares anything for the sake of a man she loves. I learnt and studied and taught simply for love of you.'

'You have well displayed your love!' said Fellerman scornfully.

'Is it likely that I, an Englishwoman, brought up to be a member of the Church of England, should believe all that mysticism, however beautiful?'

'I am sorry for the Church of England if you have returned to her,' said Fellerman gravely.

'Ah!' said Mrs. Lester, her face working; 'I may still revenge myself on your wife, though not in the way I intended. I will wait years, but I will surely do it.'

'And if I am alive I will also do as I have told you.'

He turned round and left her. He felt her words most bitterly. That his community should be broken up was to him a great trouble, but far worse was the cause, the scepticism of the Superior. He had often disapproved of her actions, always of her harshness, but he had always imagined that she believed in the righteousness of the cause.

He endeavoured to set aside his own trouble, and returned to his wife with a cheerful face. She had left off crying, and smoothed her hair and made herself nice, but her face was sadness itself. He sat down, with his arms as usual round her, and soothed her by every means in his power before he went into the subject of what Mrs. Lester had said to her.

'Now, my child,' he said at length, 'tell it me all as nearly as you can.'

She did so, shuddering the while. 'Oh,' she said brokenly, 'if I have indeed brought pain upon you, I wish you had never seen me. I shall never be happy again for thinking of what she said.'

'Hush, hush, my little one,' he returned. 'What if I were to tell you that I did not believe it.'

'*Oh!*' she exclaimed, her face radiant, 'if you do not believe it it cannot be true. You have removed a terrible weight from my mind.'

'I *did* believe I might have to suffer so when I determined to marry you, and, my child, I thought it worth while; but since I have been married, since I have had one week of—of *Paradise*, Dorothea, I cannot believe that such high and

holy love as ours can be an instrument of evil. But——' He paused.

'But what?'

'But now trouble has come to us, my child, showing that joy here below *cannot* last. We must leave this place to-morrow, and return to our old life of work and high purpose. But supposing, Dorothea—I only say supposing—we find this love of ours is an absorbing passion that cannot be subdued, that interferes with that active love for others, and serene contemplation, which is the essence of our creed, then we must take means to subdue it.'

'What means?'

'First of all, to avert such result, we had better make up our minds to live as simply as possible; but if—if it prove a sin and snare and effectual stumbling-block, then——'

'Then?'

'I will not tell thee, my child; let us hope we can avert so great a calamity by the self-denial of our lives.'

But though he would not tell her, and she did not ask again, the words in his own mind were, 'We must separate.' Thinking thus, he looked at her, an expression of white agony on his face, and said: 'Dorothea, which is best—to love as we do, feeling that at any moment the joy of our love may be denied us, or to love as most people who marry: in love—so it is called—for a month or two, and for the remainder of their lives indifferent to one another?'

'As *we* do,' she replied firmly.

He kissed her again and again, then bade her leave him for a time.

'I fear much,' he said to himself, 'that I shall prove in myself the truth of our text, "If a man reap sorrow, disappointment, pain, he himself, and no other, must at some time have sown folly, error, or sin." *Can* such love be folly, error, or sin?'

He walked up and down the room meditating. 'Evidently joy is denied us,' he said; 'but can I in my own person avert the result I dread?' He did not appear at the *table d'hôte*, although he bade Dorothea do so, neither did he taste food for the remainder of the day. He spent the hours in profound meditation, and when his wife reappeared he clasped her in his arms so long, looking the while at her with the most tender compassion and pain, that at length she went to sleep with her head on his shoulder.

CHAPTER XL.

THE COMMUNITY BROKEN UP.

THE next day Mr. Fellerman and Dorothea left Scotland, travelling as quickly as possible until they reached Exeter. He placed her in quiet lodgings there, and himself set out for Dartmoor without delay. He would not take her with him, fearing that if the girls knew that he had been away to be married, and in pursuit of his own pleasure, while they were leading a life of self-denial, it would weaken their faith in the cause. Knowing he should be away at least a week, he gave his wife certain books, bidding her carefully study them in his absence, marking out the portion for each day, and thoroughly explaining it. She found it no light work that he had set her; sometimes the evening had closed in ere she had finished her task, so that she had no idle time to spend in longing for his return.

He found everything in perfect order, and the daily round going on just as it had done in the Superior's time; the girl called Sophia had been placed in charge. With a very grave face he explained to them that the community must be broken up, owing to inability to supply the Superior's place; 'but,' he said, 'under any circumstances you who are here now would before very long have returned to the world.'

He gave them a long and very beautiful, though sad, address, in which he recapitulated all they had learnt, and what work he expected them to do on leaving; then to each one in turn he spoke alone, ascertaining when and how she might return to her friends, and making arrangements to take each one home himself if possible, at all events to see all safely on their way. But this could not be done in a day. Meantime the simple life in the farmhouse went on. There were the two plain meals a day, eaten in the large stone-paved kitchen, the same grace was said which had filled Dorothea with horror, the same quiet study and meditation continued.

Fellerman sat up more than half the night after the girls

had retired, writing busily in the kitchen. He was drawing up a summary of belief and rules for future guidance for each one, and in his letters he gave an address which would always find him, so that they might apply to him in any difficulty. As there were many letters to write, and each one required much thought in order to suit the different circumstances of its recipient, he generally went on writing until three in the morning, when, taking a rug and a pillow, he would sleep in one of the adjoining outhouses with the door open, whence he could see the farmhouse. But often he was restless; he would rise and walk about in the grass-grown courtyard, or in the neglected orchard, or out on to the hill, meditating deeply, sometimes quoting portions of the sacred writings.

'I have beheld the Lord of Men, of which delightful and benevolent Deity, who is the object of our invocation, there is an all-pervading middle brother, and a third brother. Who has seen the primeval Being at the time of his being born? What is that endowed with substance which the unsubstantial sustains? From earth are the breath and blood, but where is the soul? Who may repair to the soul to ask this?'

He paced up and down in the starlight, then exclaimed aloud again, 'There was no entity or non-entity; no world, or sky, or aught above it; nothing anywhere in the happiness of anyone, involving or involved, nor water deep or dangerous. Death was not, nor was there immortality, nor distinction of day or night. But THAT breathed without affiliation. Other than him, nothing existed which since has been. Who knows exactly, and who in this world shall know whence and why this creation took place? The gods are subsequent to the production of this world, then who can know whence it proceeded, or whence this varied world arose, or whether it upheld itself or not? He who in the highest heaven is the Ruler of this universe does indeed know; but not another one can possess this knowledge.'

'Yes,' said Fellerman looking up at the sky, 'and yet English women, and partly educated English men, go to us —to us, the profoundest thinkers of the age, and look on us as people who bow down to, and worship, little images of wood and stone. But, unless my life is to be a failure, they shall know better one day.'

One by one the girls departed, each with tears in her eyes. To each one Fellerman spoke some solemn words at parting (in many cases giving money as well as advice), and, placing his hand on her head, said gravely, 'May kindness, mercy, reverence, obedience, suppression of evil, generosity, tolerance and charity be your guides, and lead you at length to the haven of Immortality!'

He returned to his wife after an absence of ten days, acquainting her that he must once again visit the farmhouse before giving it up altogether. She asked if she might accompany him, as she would like to see the place once more. He said 'Yes.' It was a dull, dreary September day when they reached it; the towering rock-capped hill looked stern and gloomy, the deserted buildings unspeakably forlorn

Dorothea walked through the flagged stone passages into every room on the ground-floor, then ascended the staircase and looked into all the little bedrooms with their sloping sides and old furniture. She looked at the texts on the walls, and a strange feeling of desolation came over her. From the window of one of the rooms she could see the wild and rugged scenery, the dells and ravines below, the moorland beyond. She stood for a long time looking at it.

On going below she found Fellerman seated at the table, leaning his head on his hands. He looked up as she entered, and quoted sadly, '"No beings soever born, or systems either, can overcome the dissolution inherent in them; no such conditions can exist." It is time that we should go, my Dorothea.'

He took down the texts from the walls, and carried them with him, shut the doors, and left the place—for ever.

He helped his wife down the hill, but he spoke no word; he was evidently feeling keenly.

The next week they went abroad.

CHAPTER XLI.

JACK'S WILD OATS.

SOME months passed away; the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Manly and Admiral and Mrs. Hatton were rejoiced by the birth of a son to Mrs. Manly. Mr. Manly was a genuine child-lover, and now he had a child of his own he was delighted.

Mrs. Worsley continued her free life, unshackled by domestic ties and cares.

'It really happens very conveniently that we have no children,' she said, 'because we couldn't afford it—Harry and I cost such a lot; and I should lose all my good looks and become a household drudge.'

Lady Valerian, to whom she was speaking, suggested that such a state of things did not ensue to everyone who had children.

'Not with you,' replied Mrs. Worsley, 'but people like ourselves can't have a host of governesses and nurses, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the wife becomes nothing but a nurse, or else the children are neglected.'

'Ah,' said Lady Valerian, 'I would gladly have gone through any trouble could I have kept my son.'

Mr. Barnard continued at his post, still greatly liked by everyone. His responsibilities had now fully impressed him; he endeavoured in every way to feel like a clergyman as well as live like one, and that bitter self-depreciation had entirely departed from him. Feeling thus he had, at his mother's urgent entreaty, put his pride on one side and paid his father a visit in the North, where he was received with every honour as the friend of the Earl and Countess of Valerian. But he had not been a day in the house before his father paid him respect on his own account; Mr. Barnard senior could scarcely recognise in the agreeable man with staid manners his reckless son. He made a fresh will while he was there, leaving him his whole property after the wife's portion had been paid.

Before leaving England Dorothea had written to her mother. But though the letter was very loving it was very short, going into no past circumstances, giving no particulars of either her present or future life, save that she was very happy with her husband, and was going abroad with him; neither did she give any address to which they could write or even mention the object of her destination. She felt most strongly that all connection between them now should be severed, although a great love might remain; were it possible to live in the same town, she would have refused, knowing that her own total change of ideas and feeling would only occasion surprise, dismay, and endless argument and discussion in others.

'We shall never see her again,' said Mrs. Challoner, shedding a few tears.

'I don't know that,' said Mr. Challoner, looking very red in the face from his effort to appear callous; 'when that scoundrel is tired of her he will probably desert her and send her home, and go off to his foreign countries that he talked so much about when he was here.'

'We shall always be ready to receive her,' said Mrs. Challoner; 'but I pray it may never come to that.'

Mr. Challoner blew his nose, and saying fiercely that he must go and see what those rascals of grooms were about, left the room.

Old Mr. Morris had died peacefully, full of a good old age and regretted by everyone, and a young Vicar had arrived, full of zeal and earnestness, a truly good young man, but one who expected Rome to be built in a day. The bell for service clanged twice every day, and as often as not he read the service, for he always would read it, to himself and the verger, the clerk now being an institution of the past. The fisher-folk shrugged their shoulders and said 'he were a mighty good young gentleman, but too high for them'; by which they did not mean too ritualistic. The church was cleaned and renovated, and the three-decker and high pews removed, and altogether the new broom did wonders. These changes were very painful to Admiral Ashworth; Penlist did not seem like the same place to him as when he and his son, and the Challoners and Mr. Morris, were all on such good terms of fellowship; now everything was altered: Rose was gone, Jack never

came, Mr. and Mrs. Challoner had their trouble, and he, the Admiral, had his, and a heavy one. For very bad reports had reached him concerning his son—that he was supposed to be leading a very fast life in town. He wrote to his father occasionally, though always affectionately, but he gave no information concerning himself and replied to no questions.

The Admiral was sitting dejectedly in his study one day, an open letter in his hand, when Mrs. Worsley came in, her face radiant in the consciousness that she was wearing a new dress.

She saw how careworn the old man looked, and, taking a low stool, sat down by his side, placing her hand in his.

'Now,' she said affectionately, 'tell me the trouble, dear Admiral Ashworth;' for Mrs. Worsley had heard more than rumour about Jack, and was seriously concerned.

'I'm dull, that's all,' said the Admiral, 'and I am glad you have come to cheer me up.'

'But that's not all,' she persisted, 'it's something about Jack, I know; I can see that letter is from him; tell me what he says.'

'He says nothing,' said the Admiral disconsolately, 'and, as you seem determined to know, my dear, I will tell you. I wrote begging him to let me know if he were in debt, and if so I would help him, and all he says in his reply is that he is well and he hopes I am, and that I am to keep up my spirits.'

'He has no right to be in debt with his income,' said Mrs. Worsley sharply, 'and don't you be so foolish, dear Admiral Ashworth, as to offer to help him. It will do him all the harm in the world. He must be making a clear two hundred a year out of that house, and he has six of his own; and if a young man can't live on eight hundred a year, besides what he gets from his work, his expenses can't be legitimate, and he ought not to be helped.'

'I'm afraid he's doing no work at all,' said the Admiral.

'Then he ought to be ashamed of himself, and must be made to work. I should take away his allowance.'

'No, my dear, that wouldn't be right or fair.'

'Well, then, someone ought to ask him what he means by it.'

She turned the matter over in her own mind and resolved

that she would be that person. With her to resolve was generally to do. She told her husband, who was on board ship at Plymouth, that she wished to go up to London for the day.

'What for?' he asked; 'because I can't come.'

'No, I want to go by myself. I'm going to see Jack Ashworth.'

'Upon my word!' said Captain Worsley, laughing good-temperedly. 'You don't want me, and you are going to spend the day with a young man. What next?'

Then Mrs. Worsley detailed the motive for her visit.

'I *must* see him, Harry, because I think I might do some good.'

'Well,' he rejoined, 'if you *must*, what's the good of asking me? But how are you to see him? You can't go to his chambers?'

So Mrs. Worsley wrote a note asking Jack to meet her at Paddington and afterwards to take her to the Park. He complied, thinking the freak of going up to London for so short a time, considering the length of the journey, a very extraordinary one. She was to sleep at her aunt's and return the next day.

He was very well dressed when he met her, in faultless London attire, glossy hat, fashionable clothes, irreproachable boots, and he appeared a very fine young man, but his handsome face had an older look on it, and the former happy expression had gone. He put her into a hansom and jumped in himself.

'I'm sure I'm very much honoured by this visit,' he said. 'Come and have some lunch, and we shall be in time for the Park in the afternoon.'

'It's so late for lunch.'

'That doesn't matter if you haven't had any. I can't go without *my* lunch, or my dinner either; I don't believe in it.'

'Or your glass of wine,' said Mrs. Worsley a little sharply, noting a certain look she did not like on his face.

'Or my glass of wine. Why should I? Life is too short for us not to make the most of its pleasures. I say, Gertrude, I'm leading such a jolly life now.'

'Oh, indeed!' returned Mrs. Worsley, not minded to enter into this subject amidst the roar of the streets, every word having to be either shouted or else whispered into his

ear. 'Well, how do I look, Jack? Fit for the Park? I put on my best dress in honour of you.'

'And you look stunning. I'm proud of you! I hope Worsley knew you were coming, because I don't want my head knocked off, you know.'

'Yes, he knew all about it.'

Mrs. Worsley was dressed in a very handsome black costume, faultlessly made; her bonnet was black lace, with little pale pink feathers; her gloves, and all those minor details which go so far to form a well-dressed woman, were perfect, and Jack felt more than content to take her to the Park. But at Hyde Park Corner she chose to leave the gay throng and sit down at some little distance, whence they could see the carriages passing to and fro.

'What's the use of looking nice if no one sees you?' asked Jack.

'Never mind; I want to talk to you. Here comes the chair-man; pay him his twopence, Jack.'

The young man carelessly threw a sixpence, saying, 'Don't bother about change.'

'Ah, Jack,' said Mrs. Worsley, 'take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.'

'I don't find that either one or the other does that,' said Jack; 'and what's the odds?'

'As long as you are happy?' added Mrs. Worsley.

'Exactly.'

'But I don't believe you *are* happy, Jack. You don't look a bit like you used.'

He laughed.

'I'm growing old, that's it.'

It was a lovely day in June; the sun was hot. Mrs. Worsley removed her seat to one beneath the shade of a tree.

'It *is* hot,' said Jack, and then he exclaimed suddenly, 'By Jove!'

'What's the matter?'

'This day last year was to have been my wedding-day. I declare I had forgotten all about it.' And so he had.

'I don't want you to go on regretting Rose, because I don't think she was worthy of you, but, still, I'm sorry you have forgotten.'

He laughed.

'My dear Gertrude, do you think in the present day that

men keep true to one ideal? In books people go moaning and groaning all their lives, but where do you find the man in real life who does so?'

'Some men do.'

'Yes, I grant you that if that *rara avis* could be found, a man who had never loved before, *he* might, but there isn't such a man on the face of the earth, if you don't count boys.'

'I am certain some men do.'

'Then you don't know anything about men, my dear. If you can't get the lips that are far, you must make out with the lips that are near, and very jolly too; if you can't get Susan you can probably marry Jane, and be just as happy. Don't people do it every day of their lives?'

'Yes, and that is why people have such low ideas of married life, because they don't love one another. If you had married Rose you wouldn't talk like this, Jack.'

'And seeing I couldn't marry her—and I'm sure I did my best to do so—I shall probably marry someone else after I have sown my wild oats, and it will be all the same a hundred years hence.'

'It will *not* be the same,' said Mrs. Worsley firmly, 'and I *do* know what I am talking about. I know what sort of lives my husband and Mr. Manly and other people lead.'

'H'm!' said Jack.

This made Mrs. Worsley angry.

'I'm ashamed of you, Jack,' she said sharply. 'Are all these reports we hear of you true?'

'What reports?'

'That you bet, and play baccarat, and—all sorts of things.'

'And pray why shouldn't I play baccarat? Did you really think that I should go to bed every night at ten o'clock? No, I don't. I go to parties, and theatres, and—various places, and I play cards, and I bet, and I'm leading a very jolly life, and I don't want anyone's pity.'

Mrs. Worsley by this time had begun to see that for any good she was doing she might just as well have stayed at home. She turned the subject, and shortly afterwards said she would leave the Park. Jack saw her to her aunt's, and the next day she left London.

But she did not return direct to Plymouth; she stopped at Newforth on her way back. After paying a visit to her father and mother, she went to the Vicarage. She wanted

Mr. Manly's advice. She duly admired the baby, and informed her sister that she was looking very well, and then, after a little chat, she signified her intention of seeking Mr. Manly in his study. Finding him alone, she told him unreservedly her opinion of Jack Ashworth and his affairs.

'I wish *you* would go and see him,' she said; 'because, if he isn't influenced by you, he won't be by anyone.'

Mr. Manly was so well aware of the high opinion entertained of him by his sister-in-law that he did not think it necessary to comment on it.

'If he were in my own parish I should certainly do so, but now I must consider the matter.'

'There won't be parishes in heaven,' said Mrs. Worsley.

Mr. Manly slightly raised his hand in token of disapproval, and his sister-in-law apologized for her remark. After lunch he told her that he had decided to go.

'You had better write first, or he may be out,' said Mrs. Worsley.

'I will; I will give him three clear days' notice in order that he may be disengaged. I will go up in the afternoon and sleep in town, but I can't work miracles.'

'Yes, you can,' she replied.

Jack responded by an invitation to dine and sleep at his rooms, which Mr. Manly accepted.

They were very well furnished, thoroughly comfortable apartments, but there was nothing in the two rooms which Jack occupied to indicate any reckless or unnecessary expenditure: no pictures, or china, or any fashionable crazes. There was a very good dinner, and a huge jug of water on the table was pointed out to Mr. Manly as specially for his benefit.

'I hope I'm not to drink it all,' said the clergyman.

'I'll drink a glass of wine for every glass you drink of water, tumbler for tumbler.'

The smile died away from Mr. Manly's face.

'In that case I shall drink very little water, Ashworth,' he replied.

Now, Jack had a shrewd suspicion that Mr. Manly's visit was owing to Mrs. Worsley's intervention, and he was quite determined to show him that, in spite of all he had done for him, he would not brook any interference.

At dinner a great deal of agreeable conversation took

place, and Mr. Manly laughed heartily at some of Jack's anecdotes.

'Come,' thought the latter, 'perhaps he hasn't come to preach, after all.'

'Didn't I hear that you were writing for periodicals some time ago?' said Mr. Manly.

Jack laughed.

'I was writing *for* them, only unfortunately they didn't see it in the same light, so that my stories didn't appear *in* them.'

'Have you written anything lately?'

'No, not of late; haven't time. But I'm quite sure I'm a born author.'

'May I ask why?'

'Because I feel the identity of my characters so strongly. I assure you I felt so jealous of one of my own heroes, when he made love to the girl I liked, that I could have punched his head.'

'I hope you will not make me that hero,' said Mr. Manly, laughing.

'No, it wasn't you. But I can't get rid of my characters; they seem to live with me when I once begin.'

'If I were you I should persevere; write of an evening after your work is done.'

'I don't do much work—that doesn't trouble me; but I go out of an evening nearly always. I once thought I would write a story about Fellerman and Rose and our wedding—most romantic, you know—but, though I don't care a rap for *her*, I felt so savage when I thought of *him*, that I knew I should murder him in the first chapter, before anything had happened to anyone else. Or I should have more probably hung him, and made the prison chaplain and the governor and the turnkeys dance and shout for joy.'

'It is my belief,' thought Mr. Manly, 'that he cares very much for her still.'

It was not at all pleasant to Mr. Manly to interfere in another man's affairs, but, if the subject *had* to be approached which had brought him to town, he thought it had better be approached without delay.

'Ashworth,' he said after a time, looking him full in the face with his determined steady gaze, 'what sort of a life are you leading?'

Jack ate some strawberries, and then replied deliberately:

'A very bad one, if you want to know. Try the strawberries, Mr. Manly; they're not half bad, and that's lemonade in that decanter near you. I had it on purpose.'

Mr. Manly ignored the latter remarks; his earnest, intellectual, spare face wore a resolute expression, for he was doing work most distasteful to him, although he considered it his duty.

'To what will this life lead, do you suppose?'

'To a short life and a merry one, I suppose.'

'And after?'

'I suppose I shall die and have done with it. I know I'm leading a hard life.'

'But *will* you have done with it? When you have exhausted all the pleasures of the world and your health is broken down, which I gather from your own words is what you expect will be the case, are you so certain that death will come when you desire it?'

'No; but at this pace, judging by other men, I should say it would.'

'And what then, when you take your life with you into another world?'

'No preaching, Mr. Manly. I won't have it.'

'I speak to you as between man and man, Ashworth. Other men have suffered on account of a woman as you have done; it is a cowardly thing to let your trouble alter your whole life.'

'It's not a pleasant thing to be called a coward by another man,' said Jack, 'but I have some respect for your cloth; therefore I must put up with it.'

'Notwithstanding, I repeat that some such feeling as I mentioned is at the bottom of all this. I don't ask you to forget. I have had similar trouble myself, and I know a man *can't* forget first of all, but I ask you to show the world that no woman has so much power over you as to ruin your life. Take up your work again and work hard.'

Jack burst into a laugh.

'None of your sermons for me, Mr. Manly. You *can't* suppose my life is owing to Rose's conduct. Why, if I had married her, we should probably, although I loved her dearly, have been quarrelling by this time about whether we should have soup or fish, for dinner, or both, or something

equally entertaining. We should have a calm sort of affection for one another, and that, I suppose, would be all. Like everyone else.'

'Not everyone else, Ashworth.'

'Oh, it's beautiful to read the books by women, generally unmarried women,' said Jack with another laugh: 'about the young man who falls in love and suffers agonies—well, perhaps *that's* true enough—but the joke is that he *goes on* being in love, and he has a pure and lofty ideal of women in consequence, and keeps out of all naughty pleasures, and lives a wonderful life, and dies with her name on his lips. Show me your man who has done it, and I'll have his body embalmed and placed under a glass case, that all the world may admire.'

'There is such a thing as a good life,' said Mr. Manly gravely.

'For parsons and women, yes. But ask men of the world what *they* say!'

'And do you mean to compare that miserably small section of society known as "the world" with the vast numbers of people who live out of it; ay, and many, many who live in it, and yet lead stainless lives?' said Mr. Manly, with much sternness. 'Look round in country places, in suburban places, in seaside places, and also in London itself, and take the sum of the men who do *not* lead the life you describe, who are respected and respect themselves. As for men of the world who have no aims beyond their own sensual pleasures, no steadfastness, no principle, whose eyes are blinded, can you point out to me a more miserable prospect than theirs?'

'As to your "respectable" people,' said Jack, 'I don't think we'll say anything about *them*. I maintain that the life which I and other young men are leading is in reality clean and decent compared to that of your "respectable" middle-aged men, fathers of families very often, who make love to innocent young girls, ladies, and only just stop short of actually doing them harm, but who don't mind taking their hearts away—I believe *girls* have hearts and romance and all that—and preventing them from marrying, or from loving where they do marry. Now, you wouldn't find a *young* man who would do that.'

Mr. Manly was silent.

'After all, though,' continued Jack, 'I dare say the middle-aged men who have been through it all are right in thinking women mere playthings, edged tools though they be sometimes. I say, as I said all along, that it's best to forget all about them, and drink, and gamble, and enjoy yourself how you can. You can't take away a person's character if it's gone already.' The silence was becoming uncomfortable; Jack walked to the window and partly turned his back. 'Come, Mr. Manly, you're dull; I'll give you a song.' And he began to sing:

> 'A story I'll tell you that's not in Tom Moore:
> Young Love likes to knock at a pretty girl's door;
> So he called upon Lucy, 'twas just ten o'clock,
> Like a spruce single man with a smart double knock.'

Mr. Manly said nothing.

'I see I can't amuse you now; you were lively enough at dinner. Suppose we make a night of it: what do you say? I'll lend you a coat and a collar if you don't like to go to a theatre in your own; you won't be the first parson or the last by a long way who has done it, and I won't split.'

There was still no reply. Jack turned round and saw that Mr. Manly's eyes were fixed on him with an expression of compassion, and a look in them that instantly reminded him of a higher life and pattern. He turned his back abruptly, and felt a choking sensation in his throat. Some five minutes went by, then he came forward and stood before Mr. Manly, who was still sitting at the table.

'Mr. Manly,' he said gravely, 'I am heartily ashamed of myself. I offer you a sincere apology. I have behaved disgracefully.'

Mr. Manly rose, and placed his hand on the young man's shoulder.

'Ashworth,' he said, still with that wonderful look of compassion on his face, 'think of your father.'

CHAPTER XLII.

REFORMATION.

JACK ASHWORTH and Mr. Manly sat up talking far into the night. The latter gave no further good advice, but listened to the young man's account of himself, which, now that he had begun to speak, was very explicit. The only remark made by Mr. Manly which could be taken as a reproof was, 'You are capable of better things, Ashworth,' and this was spoken very gently.

Jack fully detailed his circumstances, and seemed to find it a relief to do so.

'I'm over head and ears in debt,' he said. 'I've won sometimes largely, and sometimes I've lost a hundred pounds a night at unlimited loo.'

Mr. Manly thought of the hundreds of struggling, almost starving, widows and families, but he said nothing, except to suggest that he should tell his father, who might help him.

'No,' said Jack, 'I can't and won't do that. The dear old man would give me his last farthing, and cripple himself for the rest of his life. I shan't say a word to him. It would cut me more than anything else to know that he didn't live in his usual comfortable style until he dies.'

'I wonder if I may make another suggestion?'

'Of course you may.'

'Ask him to come up and live with you.'

'As a watch-dog, eh?'

'No, certainly not. The old man is very lonely, from all I hear, Ashworth; he misses you sadly, and worries about you. He might enjoy a change to London, and it would be good for you to have him. I hear he has not been looking at all well of late.'

Jack's conscience smote him.

'I'm afraid I have sadly neglected him.'

'His income added to yours might clear you of your difficulties in time.'

'I shan't have him for *that* reason.'

'By no means.'

'I can turn out my tenant, and, if pater likes London, we might live there.'

'In that case,' said Mr. Manly, who was of a practical turn of mind, 'his income would entirely keep the house until you paid your debts.'

'I really think he would like to come—anyhow, I'll ask him. But you can't expect me to turn over a new leaf all of a sudden, because I can't do it.'

'Perhaps not.'

'And about church, and so on,' said Jack doubtfully; 'I dare say it looks very nice from an æsthetic point of view to see two tall clergymen in their robes standing in the chancel, and to hear the organ playing, and all that; but what is the practical bearing of it, for, somehow, I seem not to know?'

'Do you go so that you *may* know?' asked Mr. Manly, with a smile.

'Well, no, I don't often. There seems as much going on on Sundays as on other days.'

'But your father always goes regularly, and I am sure you will not let him go alone.'

'Oh, Mr. Manly, I'm afraid you have a good deal of the wisdom of the serpent,' said Jack, shaking his head.

'In that case, perhaps, you will not mind listening to my good advice in future, should I summon up sufficient courage to offer it.'

'As to that, it doesn't seem to me much "summoning" is required,' said Jack, laughing.

The Admiral accepted the invitation gladly, and soon signified his intention of remaining altogether with his son at the latter's request. He was delighted to be with him, and all Jack's better nature seemed to have returned. He abjured play altogether, and did his utmost to clear himself from debt. Furthermore, he devoted a great deal of time to his father, seeing clearly that the Admiral's health was failing, and in addition began to work really hard at his profession. He also took Mr. Manly's advice, and began a novel, which interested him so greatly that for a time he cared little for amusements. He read out portions to his father of an evening, who was delighted, and considered his son the first author of the day. And after a struggle this

novel was at last published, and Jack commenced another. The Admiral paid rent for the furnished house—he insisted on doing so—and Jack lived with him for nothing, so that before a year was over he was comparatively free from debt. A caretaker was placed in Ashworth Lodge at Penlist, and the household removed to London. Altogether there was a tremendous change in Jack for the better, and he was in a fair way to do well.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MR. BARNARD'S MISSION.

ALTHOUGH the sorrow which the Countess of Valerian had experienced in the loss of her son was of old date, it seemed now to recur to her again with acuteness. She could not get rid of the idea that, supposing the child had not been drowned, it might have been possible to recover him, had more efficient means been taken and a larger reward offered. Now that she was growing older, and the pleasures of society had to a certain extent lost their charm, she dwelt incessantly on the wild notion that something might yet be done, and perhaps their son might be restored to them. It was in vain that the Earl pointed out to her that at the time of the shipwreck everyone, including she herself, had at length come to the conclusion that the boy must have been drowned. She maintained that something might still be done.

'It's a craze,' said the Earl, speaking of it to Mr. Barnard, 'and I really don't know what to do.'

'Give way to it,' suggested the chaplain; 'send someone to make inquiries: it will set her mind at rest. You could do it for three or four hundred pounds.'

'I shouldn't mind spending a thousand to satisfy her,' said the Earl. 'She has been a good wife, and not extravagant, and I will gladly spend this money to please her. But who is to go, and what am I to do?'

'*I* will go if you like,' said Mr. Barnard, to whom the circumstances were well known by this time. 'I'm not the sort of clergyman people can't do without. You can easily get another man in my place while I am away.'

'I don't want another man,' said the Earl, 'and I for one shall miss you terribly. We will talk this matter over.'

Lady Valerian expressed herself delighted. She had the greatest faith in Mr. Barnard's practical ability, and declared that a better man could not possibly be found. Both the

Earl and the chaplain looked on the whole affair as throwing so much money into the sea; but the Countess cheered up so visibly from the time the project was first mentioned that the Earl said it was worth the outlay.

Mr. Barnard looked forward to a very pleasant tour, in which all his expenses would be paid, and altogether was well pleased with the idea.

The shipwreck had taken place twenty-five years before, off the coast of Burmah; therefore, as gleaning any satisfactory information concerning it was almost out of the question, he thought the only thing he could do would be to proceed to the spot, and trust to his own abilities to acquire any tidings which might set the Countess's mind at rest again.

He did not start at once, for there was a certain amount of information with respect to the ship, crew, and so on, which he could obtain in England. Although he had no faith in his mission, he prepared to fulfil it conscientiously. Before leaving he invited Jack Ashworth to spend a few days with him. He had never forgotten Admiral Ashworth's kindness, and the Admiral, on his side, still felt himself indebted to Mr. Barnard, so that now that the chaplain had again become prosperous he had renewed the acquaintance.

Jack accepted, having previously seen his father depart on a visit to Admiral and Mrs. Hatton.

Mr. Barnard's rooms were quite private, and, although he dined at the Earl's table, he was always able to have his meals served in his own apartments whenever he chose, so that he felt quite at liberty to invite a guest. But on the first day of Jack's arrival the Earl entered into conversation with him, and was so much pleased with the young barrister's manly, withal modest, demeanour—for Jack had entirely lost his reckless air—that he insisted on his becoming his own guest. The pretty niece, Violet l'Estrange, was staying in the house. She looked with no unfavourable eyes on Jack, but he, though paying her every attention, did not respond in any way. With regard to all young ladies, he had something of the feeling of the burnt child. Lady Valerian, on her part, was extremely kind. As soon as she heard that Jack had lost his mother early, she infused into her manner quite an affectionate warmth, and so popular did he become

that the conventional two days' visit was prolonged into two weeks.

The Challoners had left Rosemount for a time, and removed to Plymouth. They had found Penlist so dull and sad latterly that they preferred to leave it, and Mr. Challoner saw much to interest him in Plymouth. From their daughter they had heard no word; it was the same as if she had been dead. Mrs. Challoner grieved much; she thought she would have been much happier if she could only have known what sort of life Rose was leading, even though she did not write; it was as well perhaps that she did *not* know.

As to the Superior, Mrs. Lester, she was living quietly in Exeter, having resumed the life of an ordinary person. She spent her time in translating foreign authors, and apparently had forgotten the revenge she once threatened; but one day, in conversation with Mrs. Wilkinson, the latter inadvertently mentioned the circumstances of Dorothea's wedding. She had not intended to reveal them, but, incautiously letting a hint drop, Mrs. Lester wormed the whole matter from her. The latter at once went to the Cornish hamlet, carefully inspected the church and churchyard, and examined the register, in which she found no trace of the entry of a marriage on the date named, and, having satisfied herself of the truth of Mrs. Wilkinson's narration, departed, well pleased.

It was not long after this that trouble visited both the Vicarage at Newforth and the home of Jack Ashworth. Some three months after the latter's visit to Valerian Park the Admiral died—died a peaceful and happy death in the arms of his son, who had nursed him devotedly. Jack felt it bitterly, and sobbed like a child when he went to look on the Admiral's beautiful countenance for the last time.

He continued to live in the same house, leading a grave and sober life, and, devoting himself much to study, gave up the world entirely for a time. His means were now very good, and he put away money. He was very lonely (for the bond of affection had been unusually strong between him and his father; never during all their lives had an angry word passed between them), but he sought no other society.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Manly lost their child. To both it

was a very heavy trouble, but it was lightened by the living faith displayed by the clergyman, and the tender care and affection he bestowed on his wife, who was really ill from grief. 'Trouble doesn't seem to touch so hardly at the Vicarage as at other places,' said Mrs. Hatton, who was herself overwhelmed with grief.

Mr. Barnard had gone some time before. Then one day came news from him which electrified everyone—he had discovered a register of the birth of *a son of Lord Mountain.*

CHAPTER XLIV.

A DISCOVERY.

MR. BARNARD had first of all gone to Burmah and visited the scene of the wreck—a lonely, desolate spot, miles away from any of the towns. He did all he could, but, failing to obtain the smallest information, he thought he had done all that was necessary, and that he would visit Calcutta. While in Burmah several religious festivals took place, which interested him greatly. They seemed to be nothing more than so many social gatherings, and occasions for gorgeous displays of dress, dancing, music, and feasting. Barges full of gaily-dressed people glided along the rivers to the various shrines; at the pagodas and temples were men bearing offerings, which they presented to the idols. These consisted principally of flowers, fruits, and beautifully ornamented paper umbrellas. Numberless wax tapers burned before the principal images, bells were being beaten, crackers exploded, and prayers rapidly muttered, The whole observances struck Mr. Barnard with a sense of pity; he began to wish they could be taught better. At Calcutta he met with various friends, principally military officers, who initiated him into all the customs of the place, and one of them, Major Spicer, was with him constantly. In course of conversation one day he mentioned for what purpose he had gone to Burmah, and Major Spicer, feeling interested, repeated the story at the mess.

'Mountain,' said the Colonel—'I am sure I heard something said about that name not so very long ago.'

The next day Mr. Barnard called on him to beg he would give him any assistance that lay in his power.

'I have been thinking the matter over,' said the Colonel, 'and I remember now what I did hear. It was that the birth of Lord Mountain's son had been registered, and it struck me as odd, because I had been quite unaware that the Earl of Valerian had a son. I know him slightly.'

'But why and how were you told?'

'Some young fellow asked me if Lord Mountain were known in our society, and I said that I had never so much as heard his name out here. He then told me that he himself happened to see the register. I really quite forget now who it was.'

Mr. Barnard left no stone unturned, but no further information could he glean. The name was certainly registered, but it was more than a year before, and no one seemed to know anything about the details. He advertised and offered large rewards in vain; Lord Mountain had never been known, and he seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. He telegraphed to the Earl of Valerian for instructions, who, in a state of intense excitement, telegraphed back that neither pains nor money was to be spared, and in a letter begged him to remain until something more was ascertained, which Mr. Barnard, nothing loath, promised to do. But although he did his very utmost, bringing his fullest abilities and greatest energies to bear on the subject, and employing every possible agency, he discovered nothing further; and knowing that if he returned to England just yet neither the Earl nor Countess would be pleased, he went on a lengthy tour up the Himalayas, in company with his friend Major Spicer. It was while they were travelling that he made a further discovery, which filled him with the greatest excitement, although he imagined it to be far removed from the object of his search.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE.

AFTER travelling for some time, Mr. Barnard and Major Spicer reached a lovely little tableland, high up in the mountains, not far from the Burmese empire. The road thither was very steep, running along the faces of the ridges; there were stern rocks and deep gulleys, and the wildest scenery. But on the plateau the grass grew well, and flocks of sheep and goats were pastured there. The views were magnificent, and the tourists determined to camp about for some few days and thoroughly explore, more especially as it seemed a spot quite unfrequented. They climbed over sharp rocky ridges which ran down from the peaks and fell with lofty precipices into a stream below; sometimes they were obliged to hang on by the tufts of grass; edelweiss grew in the crevices. Working along the spur, they came at length to a magnificent gorge, the black rocks, fully two hundred feet in height, almost meeting, the torrent below rushing at fearful speed with an awful roar. They rested here and had lunch, the coolies they had brought up with them remaining with the tent. Being both excessively hungry, they did full justice to the chupatties and potted ham they had carried in their pockets, and finished their meal with some whisky-and-water.

'Now,' said Major Spicer, who was a very adventurous young man and a most entertaining companion, 'I should like to get along towards that peak,' pointing to one of a curious shape.

'I don't think it's possible,' said Mr. Barnard.

'Let's have a try,' returned Major Spicer, and they set out. It was a tremendous climb; they had often to hold on by their hands and knees, and halfway up were thankful to come upon a large plateau, completely sheltered on one side by the overhanging and surrounding masses of rock. Amongst the rocks they saw the opening to a large cavern,

but not a cavern in its natural state, for it had been excavated and made into an elaborate and vast structure; the columns within were richly carved.

Before they approached it there seemed to be a murmur of voices within, and Major Spicer whispered to his companion to approach most cautiously. They did so, taking a side route. By this means they, on reaching the entrance, could look in unobserved. Evidently a most interesting ceremony was taking place.

'It's some of these Buddhist fellows,' whispered Major Spicer, 'and this is one of their temple caves, or else it's a monastery. Be as quiet as you can, and let us see what is going on.'

Ten monks in yellow robes sat on mats facing each other, a president at their head. A young man in lay dress carrying three yellow robes now appeared from the other end, accompanied by a monk. He salaamed to the president, and then said:

'Have pity on me, lord; take these robes, and let me be initiated that I may escape from sorrow and experience Nirvana.' This he repeated three times.

The president took the bundle of robes and tied them round the candidate's neck, repeating a formula of meditation on the perishable nature of the human body. The candidate retired, shortly reappearing in a change of dress, his garment as novice. He knelt before the president, repeating three times:

'I go for refuge to the Buddha.

'I go for refuge to the Law.

'I go for refuge to the Order.'

After a slight pause he said:

'I take the vow not to destroy life.

'I take the vow not to steal.

'I take the vow to abstain from impurity.

'I take the vow not to lie.

'I take the vow to abstain from intoxicating drinks, which hinder progress and virtue.

'I take the vow not to eat at forbidden times

'I take the vow to abstain from dancing, singing, music, and stage plays.

'I take the vow not to use garlands, scents, unguents, or ornaments.

'I take the vow not to use a high or broad bed.

'I take the vow not to receive gold or silver.'

The candidate then rose, paid respect to the president, and retired a novice.

'Rum goings on!' whispered Major Spicer to Mr. Barnard. Neither of them had ventured to move a finger, and could only see what was going on by craning their necks round a piece of rock which obscured them from sight.

'Yes,' said Mr. Barnard, 'I'm glad we've seen it.'

His companion made some further remark which was quite unheeded by the chaplain, who was straining his eyes intently. For standing in the background, dressed in a yellow robe, his face white and stern, he saw *Fellerman*.

CHAPTER XLVI.

LORD MOUNTAIN'S SON.

To say that Mr. Barnard was both shocked and intensely surprised would be faintly to express his feelings; he was unspeakably horrified. Forgetting, or not knowing, that Buddhism numbers its followers by millions and millions, and embraces almost every variety and shade of opinion, according as it is Buddhism pure or Buddhism grafted on to another faith, he had but one idea in his mind concerning its disciples, which may briefly be summarized in the words of the hymn:

> 'The heathen in his blindness
> Bows down to wood and stone;'

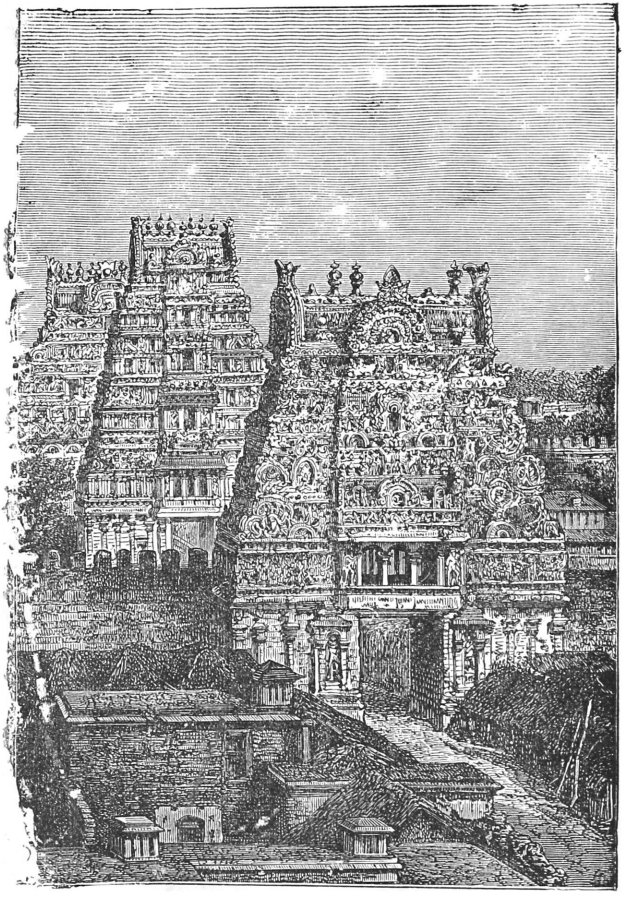
and to find a man of Fellerman's stamp amongst them was to him simply appalling. He was preparing to spring forward and go into the cavern and accost him, when his arm was seized with a grip like a vice by Major Spicer, who, as sternly as it is possible to do in a whisper, bade him stay where he was, at the same time looking at him like a thunder-cloud.

'Let us get out of this,' he said, and, still holding Mr. Barnard's arm tightly, led the way down, not relaxing his grip until they were completely out of earshot, when he burst into a hearty laugh.

'Why wouldn't you let me go in?' asked Mr. Barnard; 'I most particularly wished to do so,' and he gave his reason, suppressing Mr. Fellerman's name. 'I would risk a good deal to get speech with that man,' he said, 'for I have the most sincere regard for him.'

'It wouldn't have done,' said Major Spicer. 'I dare say they were peaceable enough; Buddhists have that reputation; but you never can tell what fanatics may do, and we were unarmed.'

'*That* man would not have hurt us.'



PAGODA.

'Probably not, but the question is, Could he control the others?'

'I should think he could control anyone,' said Mr. Barnard.

He suggested returning to the spot, but Major Spicer positively refused to do so and argued him into going on. But the next day he set forth alone, reappearing at the close of the day dispirited and worn out with fatigue: he had been quite unable to find the place, and Major Spicer resolutely refused to help him.

But though he could not prosecute a further search, he could not dismiss the matter from his mind. Why was Fellerman in this secluded spot, wearing the monkish habit which involved celibacy? Where was his unfortunate wife? Oh, what a wretched ending to this ill-omened marriage! But knowing he could do nothing, Mr. Barnard resolved he would not breathe the circumstance of seeing Fellerman to a human being; it would add immeasurably to Mr. and Mrs. Challoner's trouble to know it, and could not possibly do any good. So Mr. Barnard continued his tour, roaming about amongst the snow-clad mountains, and after Major Spicer had left him, returning to Burmah, where he wandered about as his fancy took him, visiting the borders of the mighty rivers, the vast forests of teak, and ebony, and sandal-wood, and other trees.

He passed amongst the lowlands where the betel palm and bamboo luxuriated, where cinnamon plants and varnish trees and aromatic shrubs abounded; he saw birds of the richest plumage, and monkeys and elephants and wild beasts; he studied the native customs attentively, walking about unmolested amongst the villages of bamboo huts thatched with palm-leaves, and watching the inhabitants at work, or smoking and chewing the betel-nut: altogether he enjoyed himself immensely. He had now been away a year, and was wondering how much longer he was to go on throwing away money for the Earl, when a telegram requesting his immediate return arrived, as a wonderful circumstance had occurred at Valerian Park, no less than the appearance there of the little son of Lord Mountain.

It had happened in this manner. From the time of Mr. Barnard's departure, the Countess had lived in a constant state of expectation: she firmly believed that tidings would be discovered, and when he sent news concerning the birth

of the child, she was greatly excited. She at once had a suite of rooms handsomely refurnished, in the fervent hope that her long-lost son, with his wife and child, would return soon and occupy them; she could not conceal her joy.

The Earl in vain pointed out to her that, if indeed their son were found, he would be a total stranger to them after the lapse of so many years, and probably he had married beneath him, perhaps some native woman, else why all this secrecy? The Countess declined to listen: she kept her faith firm that she should see her son again, and that he would be worthy of his father.

One morning the housekeeper came to her in a state of great excitement, bearing in her arms a beautiful boy about two years old, richly dressed.

'We found him just now, my lady,' she said, 'sitting on the stone terrace, playing with his toys. Pinned to his frock was a letter addressed to my lord, which James has just taken to him.'

'I wonder who he is,' said Lady Valerian; 'what a lovely child! Was no one with him?'

'No, my lady, he was alone.'

The child put out his little hand and began to play with Lady Valerian's watch-chain, looking into her face with his innocent large dark eyes.

'Oh,' said the Countess wildly, '*who* is he so much like?'

At this moment in rushed the Earl, frantic with excitement, exclaiming:

'The child is Mountain's son.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

FELLERMAN IN BURMAH.

THERE was no doubt about the boy's parentage; the likeness alone would have declared it, but there were other proofs given. The letter was an impersonal one, briefly stating that the boy was born in lawful wedlock, and the certificate of his birth was enclosed; in the communication it was stated that his name was Archibald. Now, Archibald was the Earl's Christian name.

Beneath the child's frock was found, moreover, a sealed packet, containing papers and a small amount of jewellery which had been in the Earl and Countess's possession at the time of the wreck. Accompanying these was another paper stating that Lord Mountain was alive, and should there be any proof wanted as to the child's identity, it would be amply supplied after Lord Mountain's death.

This furnished abundant field for speculation. What possible reason could their son have for not coming forward, but why in that case did he send his son to them?

The child made his way to their hearts at once. He so exactly resembled the lost boy as he had been at that age, that it seemed to both of them more as if their son had returned than it would if a grown man had suddenly presented himself. They were both charmed and delighted, and deciding that further search for Lord Mountain was useless, all the advertisements remaining unanswered, they recalled Mr. Barnard. The child could talk in English, but could give no account of how he came, except that it was with 'lady'; and although the grounds were thoroughly searched, not a sign of a stranger could be found.

It is scarcely necessary to say that, to an observant man such as Mr. Barnard, a lengthened residence amongst the Burmese had considerably altered some of his views concerning them. While, on the one hand, he saw much to pity in the idol-worship and observances common to the

mass of the people, on the other he found much to admire in the spirit of tolerance, charity, and active goodness universally preached in the sermons given on moonlight nights beneath the trees, which the black-haired, brown-faced Burmese attended, clad in their white linen jackets.

He discovered that in Buddhism, properly speaking, prayer, idol-worship, and temple observances had no place, that these only obtained amongst the more corrupt forms, and that, as a rule, the monks abjured all of them. He heard in these discourses almsgiving, purity, patience, courage, contemplation and knowledge extolled, but chiefest of all a boundless charity, self-abnegating and extending to every sentient being. 'Ah,' he thought, 'a great many Christians might well take a lesson;' and sometimes he remembered with shame his sermons on board ship, in which, for some five minutes, he had read another man's discourse at the top of his speed.

He heard lying and evil-speaking denounced, and the duty of acting as peacemakers inculcated strongly. Patience under injury, resignation in misfortune, humility, were forcibly advocated, while humiliation and confession were enjoined when sin had been committed.

When every arrangement for his departure had been completed, Mr. Barnard, before leaving, visited one of the villages some little distance up the country. He wandered about amongst the palm-thatched huts, watching the native children at their lessons beneath the trees, and seeing their mode of writing on leaves; he thought their instructor was very severe with them, and he shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed: 'Poor little wretches!'

As he strolled about he caught sight in the distance of a tall man, habited, as is the custom with some of the mendicant monks, in rags sewn together, with a yellow cloak thrown over his shoulders. In his hands he carried a begging-bowl, in shape like a soup-tureen without a cover, made of brown earthenware; this he presented from door to door at the various huts, saying nothing as he did so until he received from each some contribution of food, when, muttering a few words which Mr. Barnard could not catch, he passed on. His back was towards the chaplain, but the latter saw that he wore the complete tonsure and that he was a very finely formed, athletic man.

Mr. Barnard was aware that the observances of some of these monks were of a very severe kind. They were to eat only the simplest food, to possess nothing except what they got by collecting alms from door to door in their wooden or earthenware bowl; they were to eat only one meal a day, and that before mid-day; they were to dress only in rags sewn together with their own hands; they were to live in forests for a part of the year with no shelter but a tree, and there they must sit on their carpet, even during sleep, to lie down being forbidden. They were only allowed to enter towns or villages to beg for food, but they were obliged to return to their forests before night.

All these ideas passed through Mr. Barnard's mind as he watched this mendicant, who evidently belonged to one of the more severe orders. He was well under the shadow of the trees himself, and took care not to make himself observed by this strange man who interested him so much. But the greatest shock he ever received in his life was given him when the man turned and in him Mr. Barnard recognised FELLERMAN.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BENARES.

THE chaplain was a man of quick wits and ready resource He did not accost Mr. Fellerman at once, but resolved to wait until the latter had again plunged into the forest, when he would beg for some explanation. But suddenly the yellow-robed figure disappeared, and Mr. Barnard searched for him in vain. All day long he waited, keeping out of observation himself, and hoping earnestly that he should again see the stern face of the mendicant. As he remembered the aristocratic bearing and easy grace of Mr. Fellerman, who dressed, though quietly, always well, in clothes of the most fashionable make and cut, Mr. Barnard felt that he could have shed tears. He was a very feeling man, and he was inexpressibly shocked and grieved: all day long also he pondered over what it might mean.

But as the shades of evening were falling, he saw a gentleman in European dress passing quickly through the village; he wore a helmet and pugaree, which fell over the back of his neck. Mr. Barnard recognised him at once, and followed him; it was Fellerman.

At once the chaplain resolved that he would sacrifice all his own plans (a week or two's further absence could make no possible difference to the Earl and Countess of Valerian), and track this man to wherever he was going, in the hope of elucidating the mystery, and perhaps discovering the fate of the wife. He felt instinctively that were he now to ask an explanation it would be peremptorily refused, and that he should lose all chance of finding out what he wished. But he was scarcely prepared for the length of the journey he had to take. With a caution and zeal which would have done honour to a detective, Mr. Barnard followed in Fellerman's wake altogether unobserved, and at length found himself in the Home of the Gods, Benares.

Still keeping Fellerman carefully in sight, Mr. Barnard

passed through the streets. He saw the Brahmin bulls going about all decked out with shells and beads and ornaments, the Fakirs leading calves through the bazaars, the snake-charmers and conjurors and musicians in the corners. He saw the temples devoted to the welfare of monkeys; he heard the bells sounding and the gongs clamouring. He saw the peacocks strutting on the walls, the sumptuous palaces on the banks of the Ganges, the priests going about and warning the common people out of their path, and still Fellerman went on until he reached the extreme outskirts of the town, when he stopped opposite a small bungalow, and looked at it carefully, the deepest anxiety depicted on his countenance. He walked up and down for some minutes. Suddenly, when close to the bungalow, he staggered and fell to the ground. Mr. Barnard gave an involuntary cry of dismay and ran to his assistance; he seemed quite unconscious.

The bungalow was not in the English but in the native quarter of the city, but Mr. Barnard's exclamation of alarm brought an English lady running out on to the veranda, and he saw that the lady was Mrs. Fellerman.

But how strangely altered! She was beautiful still, but with the beauty of a martyr or a saint; her face was colourless and thin, and her expression the saddest he had ever beheld in any woman. Her golden hair still curled in short rings all over her head, otherwise he would scarcely have remembered her. She was plainly dressed in black; the only ring or ornament that she wore was her wedding-ring.

She gave a low cry as she came out, the profoundest astonishment depicted on her countenance. Some native servants appeared, and with Mr. Barnard's assistance Fellerman was carried into the bungalow. Then his wife hung over him, regardless of the chaplain's presence, kissing him, crying over him, calling him every endearing name in her power. But he neither spoke nor moved; he lay as one dead. It seemed no surprise to her to see Mr. Barnard; she had no thought for anyone but her husband, whom, from her words, she had evidently never expected to see again.

'The first thing is to get a doctor,' said Mr. Barnard, and a military doctor, on his earnest solicitation, attended as a great favour.

'Sunstroke,' said that authority; 'whole system in an exhausted state.'

He was a kindly-mannered man, and though he seemed to think it somewhat odd that this beautiful woman and her remarkable-looking husband should be living in so poor a quarter of the town, he made no remark. He gave directions as to treatment, and said he would call again.

Then Mr. Barnard, without accounting for his presence, told Mrs. Fellerman that he was on his road to England. She begged and entreated him not to go.

'I will stay a little while,' he replied.

And then a new idea occurred to her. She implored him to let her and her husband go to England with him, speaking in an agony.

'But it may be weeks before he is able to decide on whether he will go or not,' said Mr. Barnard, who was well aware of the critical state Fellerman was in, as he lay profoundly unconscious.

'That is why I would go now before he can decide,' said Dorothea vehemently. 'Mr. Barnard, I have never crossed his will, or even expressed any opinion, since I have been married; I have submitted to him *absolutely;* but I cannot bear this living death of being apart from him any longer—I cannot let him die away from me. He would never go if he knew what he was doing, and he would not let me see his face. For the love of God'—in her excitement she went back to her old form of religion—'for the love of God take us away with you.'

'I would gladly do so,' said Mr. Barnard; 'but it will be running a terrible risk.'

But she prayed and entreated and sobbed until he consented, provided the doctor would allow it.

Then he walked out towards the river, glad to escape from the unwholesome streets, and looked at the ghats, buildings erected to give bathers access to the water. They consisted of flights of steps surmounted at the top by a roofed structure for protection from the hot sun. Great portions of a Hindu's day are passed upon these ghats, some of which have one or more little temples attached to them; they serve as lounging places, or business is transacted on them.

But it was quite impossible for Mr. Barnard to appreciate

the wonders of the city while so serious a matter was on his mind. Was he justified in kidnapping a man even at his wife's request, a wife who, by her own account, lived apart from her husband; and what would Fellerman say to him if he ever recovered?

'Well,' he said at length, 'I'll risk it. I'm not a man to stand on strict etiquette, and if I can rescue that poor fellow from that awful life, I shall be doing a good action, and I owe him a good turn.'

So on his road back he called on the doctor at the cantonment, and explained the urgent necessity that Mr. Fellerman should be taken to England without delay. As a guarantee of his own good faith in the matter, he introduced himself, mentioned friends at Calcutta to whom the doctor might refer, and finally the Earl of Valerian's name, for Mr. Barnard was well aware that he was undertaking a very serious business.

The doctor declined to give any opinion until he had again seen the patient, and then, most reluctantly, and stating the great risk of the proceeding, gave his consent for his removal. It was his own private opinion that the sick man would never reach England. On his departure details were discussed.

'We must go to Calcutta for the mail *at once*,' said Dorothea, who felt an overpowering anxiety to be safely on board before her husband could forbid it. 'And, Mr. Barnard, what about the money? I have only a little, but my husband is rich, I know, and will repay you if you can lend me some, or if not, I will ask my father; I know he would not refuse.'

Mr. Barnard declared that he had unlimited funds at his disposal, and that she should repay him in England. He thought at the time how vainly a poor man or woman might strive to carry out his or her wishes.

So no expense was spared, and an invalid carriage was fitted up, and the patient transported to Calcutta, the train journey not seeming to affect him one way or the other. Once, and once only, he spoke, looking at his wife, and saying with his old affection, 'Dorothea, my little one,' and then immediately relapsed into unconsciousness. Mr. Barnard, coming in just after, found her crying quietly. Passages were taken in the mail, two separate cabins for Mr. Feller-

man and Dorothea, and a third for Mr. Barnard, although during the first part of the voyage he always slept in Mr. Fellerman's cabin and attended to him. Some difficulty was raised about taking an invalid on board in such a state, but money and influential friends will do wonders, and Mr. Barnard managed the embarkation in company with a friend of his, a military doctor. He bought outfits both for himself (for his luggage had been left behind, and would have to be forwarded), Fellerman and Dorothea, with every luxury for the invalid, and again blessed the power of money. But it was not until the steamer had left the river altogether, and was in blue water, that either Mr. Barnard or Dorothea breathed freely; then she turned to him and said fervently, for the first time in her life, '*Thank God.*'

CHAPTER XLIX.

FELLERMAN RETURNS.

THE voyage was partly over before Fellerman regained full consciousness. Mr. Barnard nursed him unceasingly, and was amazed at the wonderful knowledge he betrayed in his wanderings, the beauty of the passages from his sacred writings that he would repeat, and, above all, both at the fervour and depth of his religion and the marvellous love and agony at the same time that he displayed on mentioning his wife's name. He would call on her name unceasingly at times for an hour together, till Mr. Barnard's heart ached to hear him. 'Dorothea, my little one,' he would say, 'I have sacrificed all besides, but this I *cannot* do—I *cannot* leave thee. Dorothea, Dorothea, I love thee. I would sooner die fifty deaths than leave thee. I *cannot* do it.'

At such times she would kneel down beside him, and lay her lips on his cheek, talking to him in low tones, till at last he was soothed, and would say 'My child' with something of his old look and tone.

More painful scenes Mr. Barnard had never witnessed. He had little opportunity for conversing with her himself, for one or other of them was always with the sick man; neither had he asked a single question, from motives of delicacy. That there was something very queer about it all, he knew, but that was all. The girl he had once loved seemed a totally different person to this woman, with her white, still face; he had feared that the old feeling might return in this close companionship, and was relieved to find that it did not.

In his delirium Fellerman sometimes spoke of a child, and it was evident that in this case also suffering was connected with his thoughts. Once and once only did he refer to the midnight wedding, saying in tones of anguish, 'Dorothea, I would have shed my heart's blood sooner than have caused thee this pain; but I thought it was my

duty—I thought it was my duty!' And then he rambled into talk about the churchyard, and Mr. Barnard heard his own name mentioned. 'He thought I did not love thee. Had I *not* loved thee I could not have let thee suffer.'

As soon as he recovered full consciousness, Dorothea withdrew, only appearing when he was asleep. He was very patient, eating and drinking whatever food or medicine was given him without asking any questions. But before long he inquired how he came on board.

'Oh,' said Mr. Barnard unblushingly, 'I was roaming about India, and one day I came on you, also roaming about. But you had had a sunstroke, and had lost your head, and I thought, knowing nothing about your circumstances, that the only thing I could do was to take you home with me.' Then Mr. Barnard saw that the invalid wished to ask a question, but would not, so he continued: 'I didn't know you first of all; you were dressed in a helmet and pugaree and summer suit, and I had always seen you in dark clothes before.'

A shade of relief passed over Fellerman's face. He involuntarily, as it seemed, pointed to his head, on which the hair was beginning to grow.

'Yes, had your hair shaved off, I see,' said Mr. Barnard, 'and a capital good thing, too, in a hot climate. I've a great mind to have mine done. As it is, I have shaved off my beard and moustache, and had my head cropped as close as possible.' And, indeed, Mr. Barnard looked much more clerical, and the loss of his beard made him appear years younger. 'Any way, you would have been obliged to have had your head shaved, on account of your illness, so it's just as well it was done first.'

'I wonder,' said Mr. Fellerman slowly, 'if my head is quite right now?'

'Why?'

'At night I fancy my wife kneels down beside me and kisses me. She is in India, I know, so my head cannot be clear. And yet,' he added dreamily, 'I don't want it to be clear if I am to lose *that* vision.'

He was soon able to be brought on deck for a short time, when the passengers paid him every attention, but by the doctor's orders, in pursuance of a hint from his wife, did not speak to him. She was afraid he might discover her presence on board.

But another matter was now perplexing Mr. Barnard: what was to be done on their arrival? He could not remain with them; the Earl would expect him. Mr. Fellerman could not be left alone, neither had they any money, and, under the circumstances, he felt sure that Dorothea would not wish to apply for the shelter of her father's roof.

He resolved to write to Mr. Manly, stating, in confidence, all the circumstances, and asking advice. The letter was written on board and posted on the way, arriving overland from Brindisi before the steamer.

Mr. Manly settled the question by going on board at Gravesend, and, before seeing Mr. Fellerman, had a full hour's conversation with his wife. He, too, was amazed at the change in her appearance, for he had not seen her since she disappeared from Penlist. To Mr. Manly she was far more explicit than she had ever been to Mr. Barnard. Then he sought the invalid, who, now very much stronger, was sitting reading in his cabin.

'Well, Fellerman,' he said, with his cheery voice and smile, 'it is a most unexpected pleasure to see you. I want you to come and stay with us at Newforth for a time; my wife is a capital nurse. No, I won't take any refusal. Barnard will see to your luggage, and I to yourself, and until you are strong again it isn't any good asserting your iron will. I'm going to assert mine.'

Mr. Fellerman smiled. It was evident he was rather glad to have responsibility taken away from him. He thanked Mr. Manly, and accepted the invitation.

They waited below until most of the passengers had landed, and the bustle a little subsided, and then Mr. Manly gave him his arm and left the ship with him. But no sooner were they in the train for Newforth than Mr. Manly said quietly:

'I ought now to prepare you for a surprise. There will be another visitor at the Vicarage—someone very dear to you.'

'No one is dear to me,' said Mr. Fellerman in an apathetic tone, 'except she who was my wife, and she is in India.'

'And is your wife now,' said Mr. Manly energetically, 'whether you like it or not. You have had no divorce, or occasion for one, and she *is* your wife. But she is not in India. Prepare yourself for a surprise.'

'What is it?'

'She awaits you at the Vicarage?'

But the news did not seem to astonish Mr. Fellerman at all.

'Nothing surprises me now,' he said in the same dull tones.

Mr. Manly pointed out the various objects of interest they were passing, but Fellerman scarcely replied to his remarks. He seemed absorbed in contemplation.

The welcome he received from Mrs. Manly was of the warmest. A most comfortable bedroom, and sitting-room adjoining, with another bedroom opening out for Mrs. Fellerman, had been prepared.

'Just while your husband is ill,' Mrs. Manly had said apologetically, pretending she did not know the true state of the case, for which Dorothea was very grateful.

Then, when Mr. Fellerman had rested, and had taken food, and was lying down on the sofa, she for the first time appeared to him. She had dressed herself very becomingly in a light-coloured dress; the flush of expectancy had brought a light to her eyes and colour to her cheek, bringing back a great deal of her old beauty. She shut the door and stood still, not venturing to approach near. He looked up at her, and for a single moment a flash came into his eyes; then he said quietly:

'How do you do, Dorothea? I hope you are well.'

And this was all their greeting, for she burst into tears and left the room.

CHAPTER L.

RECOGNITION.

WHILE Mr. Barnard was in India, Jack Ashworth had paid a second visit to Valerian Park, where the pretty niece, Miss l'Estrange, was again staying. Although she was the niece of an Earl, she was not of that awful and serene height on the social ladder that she could afford to despise a handsome young barrister of very fair family, with fully fifteen hundred a year besides his profession, for the Admiral had saved money. Her father had a large family, and would have welcomed Jack as a son-in-law with joy. There was no doubt that she herself was in love with the fine, stalwart young man, and he was beginning to look on her with kindly eyes. She was a very bright, laughing girl, with a pleasant manner and plenty of common-sense, neither dark nor fair, neither tall nor short; she had a good figure, and she knew how to dress. She would take him round the grounds of a morning and show him the hothouses and gardens, and this occupation generally lasted until lunch-time, Jack nothing loath.

The Countess was so occupied with the child that she had little interest in anything else, and though Lord Mountain was often mentioned, and the mystery concerning him talked over, still, she no longer felt overpowering anxiety to see him. The Earl was as proud as possible of his heir presumptive, but he pondered anxiously over the fate of his son, and would gladly have heard tidings of him. He was talking about India and Buddhism one day with Jack after dinner.

'Buddhists are people who have high jinks at festivals and lead beastly lives, aren't they?—if you'll excuse my expressing myself so, my lord.' This was Jack's opinion.

The Earl's residence in Burmah and India had been strictly limited, also his reading on the subject. He replied:

'No, I don't think *that*. Ain't they those fellows who

throw themselves under the car of Juggernaut, and hang themselves up by hooks in their flesh ?' This was *his* opinion.

Mr. Barnard's arrival was now long overdue, and while everyone was wondering what had become of him, Miss l'Estrange ran in from the gardens one morning, followed by Jack.

'Oh, uncle,' she said, 'here is Mr. Barnard coming up the long avenue,' and being on the most friendly, even sisterly, terms with him, she went to meet him.

Although he was not likely to lose his heart to her, being now apparently a confirmed old bachelor, he was cordially glad to see her. Without delay she ushered him into the presence of the Earl and Countess, who welcomed him most warmly, the Earl declaring he had missed him more than he had done anyone before in his life. It was while they were talking that the door opened and little Archibald, dressed in ruby velvet, ran in.

'Here is the boy,' said the Earl, holding out his arms to his grandson.

Mr. Barnard looked at him, then uttered an exclamation of surprise.

'He is the living image of Mr. Fellerman,' he said.

CHAPTER LI.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

As soon as Dorothea was settled at the Vicarage she wrote to her mother. The latter replied instantly, begging her to come and see them at once. To this she replied that she would greatly like to see them, but she could only come on condition that no reference whatever was made to her married life; that she loved her husband still with her whole heart as she had always done, and that he also loved her in the same way, but they had known so much trouble during their married life that she could enter into no particulars concerning it.

Mrs. Challoner would have agreed to any terms in order to see her daughter, and a visit of two days was accordingly arranged; in truth, Dorothea was beginning to feel it would be better for her to be away from her husband for a day or two. Whenever he saw her alone he spoke to her in a tone of calm friendliness, making no more allusion to their Indian life than if she had been some lady on a visit. But Mr. Manly observed that when she left the room a look of intense pain came over his face. She made no appeal to him; she feared if she did so she would perhaps be compelled to leave him altogether, but every day her sad looks went to Mrs. Manly's heart.

'Dorothea,' she said one day—for the name of Rose was altogether abandoned by her own request—'if I were you, I should insist on my husband taking notice of me; beg him to do so.'

Dorothea shook her head, and Mrs. Manly remembered, with a slight flush rising to her face, a time in her own life when, probably, if she had entreated Mr. Manly to renew their engagement, he would not have done so, the time when she so wrongly distrusted him.

Mr. Fellerman said he required no attendance at night; but such attendance as he received was given by Mr. Manly, his wife never going to his room.

So when they had been a week at Newforth, Dorothea visited her father and mother at Plymouth, thankful that they were not now living in Penlist. But the visit was not productive of much pleasure. Mr. and Mrs. Challoner, though feeling deeply the meeting with their daughter, were so shocked at the change in her that Mr. Challoner forgot the compact, and exclaimed:

'It's very evident how that rascal has been treating you.'

'Hush, hush!' said Mrs. Challoner, who was quietly crying, and endeavouring to conceal her tears.

And then there was a feeling on both sides that there was a subject of constraint between them, an underlying something which must be carefully concealed. No questions were asked, and no information was volunteered, and altogether it was evident to them all that the old relations could never be entirely renewed. At the earliest moment possible, Dorothea went away, and as soon as her back was turned Mr. Challoner indulged in violent abuse of Mr. Fellerman.

But she had not been half an hour in the Vicarage before she was informed that the Earl and Countess of Valerian had arrived, and wished to see her.

As soon as Mr. Barnard had exclaimed on the likeness of the child to Fellerman, the whole matter became clear to him—Fellerman and Lord Mountain were one and the same man. He at once communicated the matter to the Earl and Countess, who, after hearing every detail about Mr. Fellerman that he could give, agreed with him that it must be so. Mr. Manly was written to and desired to put the question to his guest direct. He did so.

'Yes,' said Fellerman quietly, 'I am Lord Mountain.'

Mr. Manly made no comment, but at once telegraphed the reply, which was received at Valerian Park with joy, Mr. Barnard having fully enlarged on the marvellous gifts of Fellerman, and his great and unsolicited goodness to him at one time. 'And I'm only too thankful to have been able to do anything for him,' he added.

The Earl replied that his services on the voyage could never be forgotten by *him*, now that he knew that the invalid was his son.

Then Mr. Barnard became aware that it was his most painful duty to speak more explicitly, and accordingly he

mentioned, sparing all details that he could avoid, that he had found him habited in the robe of a Buddhist monk.

'A *Buddhist!*' echoed the Earl in horror; 'what have I done that such a fate should befall a son of mine!'

But the Countess took the matter much more kindly. 'He will abjure all that nonsense now that he is in England,' she said. *Her* idea of Buddhism was that it was a species of idle amusement for heathens or fanatics, who knew no better.

Then the subject of the daughter-in-law was touched on, and it was a matter of great relief to find that she was the daughter of a respectable gentleman of good means.

'A Buddhist might have married a pariah native woman,' said the Earl, in whose mind Brahminism, Buddhism, and the religion of the Sikhs were all one and the same.

A long and anxious consultation took place, it being finally decided that the Earl and Countess should go to Newforth, and first of all see Dorothea. She entered without having the slightest idea for what reason they had called. She was looking very beautiful and younger, having a slight colour from embarrassment. The Countess came forward and kissed her affectionately, saying:

'I am very glad to make the acquaintance of my daughter-in-law; I hope we shall be good friends, my dear.'

The Earl kissed her also, saying: 'By Jove! you are a beautiful woman.'

Dorothea looked at them in amaze. 'Am I your daughter-in-law?' she said.

They glanced at one another.

'Lord Mountain is our son,' they said simultaneously.

Dorothea still looked bewildered, and they began to fear her brain must be affected.

'Who is your husband? Lord Mountain and Mr. Fellerman are the same,' said the Earl; 'did you not know?'

'I did not know,' replied Dorothea; 'I have always known him as Mr. Fellerman.'

'He had no right to keep you in ignorance,' said the Earl, beginning to wonder if the marriage were legal.

'He told me that he was a man of rank in England,' said Dorothea painfully, 'and he asked me — at one time — whether I would like to go to the home of his father and mother.'

'With him?'

'N—no, by myself; that is to say, with my child; and I said I would rather remain at Benares. And, oh, *where* is my child?'

'Don't you even know *that?*' asked the Earl in dismay.

'He is with us, my dear,' put in the Countess with excitement; 'he is the dearest and the most beautiful child in the world, and he is outside in the carriage, and we'll have him in at once.' For the Countess had brought the child with her.

Dorothea turned pale as he ran in, then clasped him in her arms and covered his face with kisses. But he only endured her embraces, and did not return them; it was evident that he did not know her, proving that the separation must have been of long date.

'Why did you send him away?'

She coloured painfully, replying in a low tone, 'My husband wished it.'

'And now,' said the Countess eagerly, 'before we see him, as he may not be strong enough to talk much, tell us where he has been all these years, and how he escaped from the shipwreck.'

'What shipwreck?' asked Dorothea.

'What kind of terms can you be on with your husband that he should have told you nothing?' asked the Earl somewhat sharply.

'On these terms,' replied Dorothea with dignity; 'I loved him with my whole heart and fully trusted him always; as for him, he is the noblest man that ever lived, and if his religion had not compelled him sometimes to sacrifice love to duty, he would have been the most loving of husbands.'

This, at all events, was satisfactory; the Earl hereupon suggested that they would like to see Lord Mountain.

'Did you never ask your husband who he was?' asked the Countess.

'I asked him once, and he said that unless I decided on going to his relatives, in which case I should never have seen him again, he would rather not tell me for the present.'

'Did you never ask again?'

'Certainly not.'

They looked at her in incredulous amazement; surely such a married couple never lived before; what manner of man could their son be?

'You knew he was a Buddhist?' asked the Earl.

'I did not know the name of his religion until I left England; but I understood its principles.'

They were now growing painfully anxious to see Lord Mountain. Dorothea sent a messenger to apprise him, and begged them not to stop too long or talk too much, as he was still far from strong. He had been out in the garden, and had relinquished all his invalid habits, but he never could be the man he had been formerly.

He was sitting with Mr. Manly in the study; he had not seen his wife since her return home. Mr. Manly at once suggested that the visitors should be shown into the study, and himself went out. Both Lord and Lady Valerian felt a certain amount of trepidation mixed with their eagerness and expectancy. The Earl had been reading up Buddhism, and had fears lest he should find his son habited in the yellow robe of a Pongy-ee. The Countess, who had read nothing, dimly wondered whether he would not affect a costume like that in which Father Ignatius at one time of his career was accustomed to walk about the streets, and acknowledged to herself that if this were the case it would be something of a trial to the Earl and herself.

But this very handsome, stern, white-faced, aristocratic-looking man who rose to receive them was scrupulously well and most quietly dressed in the latest fashion; in point of fact, his clothes had just arrived from one of the first London tailors. There was one penance which, at all events, he had spared himself—it was just as well, perhaps, that it had never occurred to him in his life—that of going to a bad tailor.

As they entered he bowed to them with stately courtesy, in which a certain amount of reverence was infused. The Countess's eyes at once filled with tears, her dismay appeared on her face. He saw it at once, and, holding out both his hands, said, with a most touching smile, 'Mother!'

She ran forward and threw her arms round his neck and kissed him and wept; and then his father came forward and shook hands with him, and looked for the moment as if he would have liked to run out of the room.

'At present you have only my word that I am your son,' said Lord Mountain as soon as they were seated, his mother holding his hand in both hers; 'you will of course require

proofs; I have plenty with which to furnish you. In the event of my death I left my papers in most correct order with Messrs. Furnival, a firm of solicitors.'

'No,' said the Countess eagerly; 'we want *no* proofs. Who that looked into your face could doubt that you were your father's son?'

It was so; the likeness was unmistakable; the man with the stern martyr-face unquestionably strongly resembled the pleasant-faced English-looking Earl; it was perhaps the difference of expression which had prevented people from finding this out; afterwards everyone marvelled that they had not seen it before.

'Why did you keep away from us all these years?' asked the Earl.

'I had no choice until I was twenty-two years of age; a wealthy man found me after the shipwreck, and did not acquaint me with my parentage until I was twenty-one.'

'Cruel wretch!' said Lady Valerian.

The Earl meantime was studying his son's face closely.

'I am *sure* I have seen you before,' he said.

'Yes,' replied Lord Mountain calmly, 'I dined with you and my mother at Valerian Park some years ago in company with several other gentlemen.'

'By Jove!' said the Earl somewhat angrily; 'and what was your object in doing such a thing as that without declaring yourself to us?'

Not a muscle of Lord Mountain's face moved; throughout the entire interview he maintained the same imperturbable demeanour, speaking always very courteously, but without any warmth.

'At one time it was a grave question with me whether I should do so or not. Before I made up my mind I decided I would see you and ascertain *your* wishes.'

'*My* wishes!' repeated his father, astounded; 'what wish *could* I have had except to welcome you with joy? You have acted very cruelly to us.'

'Notwithstanding, it was for your own sake that I acted as I have done.'

'I do not understand you,' said the Earl with warmth; 'had such a life as that you could have led as Lord Mountain no attractions for you?'

'It had *very* great attractions for me.'

The Earl looked at his son; there could be only one solution to the enigma, that he was mad. And yet no trace of madness had ever appeared in the family before.

'I wish you would explain yourself!' he said.

'I procured an introduction to you in London society.'

'But how could you, brought up by a native—didn't you say a native?—obtain introductions to London society?'

'Notwithstanding, I did obtain them. I could have mixed in any circle I pleased. A great friend of yours, Colonel Loftus, introduced me to you, and you asked us both down for a couple of days' shooting.'

'I remember it well,' said the Earl eagerly, 'to be sure. But a lot of men were down, and I scarcely talked to you at all.'

'And *I* remember,' said the Countess with still greater excitement, 'you came into the drawing-room and talked to me for an hour, and I was delighted with you. Oh, my dear! *why* did you go away without telling us?'

'I will tell you. I watched my father attentively; I heard all the conversation going on around me; I marked his pride in his sport, and his life, and his place—not undue pride, the pride which most English noblemen possess in being owners of such houses and estates as Valerian Park. Then I wondered what he would think if I declared myself, and I knew that when he ascertained that I was a Buddhist, and intended to devote the whole of my time and money and influence to the spread of my religion, that he would have been ashamed to own me before the gentlemen then sitting around him, and that the knowledge of what I believed and did would embitter his life. So, instead of shooting, the next day I walked over the whole estate; I knew I could have loved the place well, and I seemed to have some recollection of it, but I went away that evening.'

'Oh, my dear,' said the Countess, nearly crying, '*whatever* you had thought or done we should not have been ashamed of you.'

Lord Mountain smiled.

'What do you say, sir?' he said, turning to his father.

The Earl was silent; he instinctively thought of the yellow robes, and wondered whether his son would have sat down to table in them when once he had made himself at home.

'Oh—I don't know,' he stammered; 'perhaps in time you would have thought differently.'

'*Never*,' said Lord Mountain, with so much sternness that the Earl knew that he was afraid of his son.

'But you will come and live with us now,' said the Countess beseechingly.

He smiled. 'I will return to you—one day,' he said, and without knowing why a cold chill of apprehension went to her heart, she recognised the fact that he had the countenance of a man who was not long for this world.

'Mr. and Mrs. Manly are so good as to wish me to remain here,' he said—and, indeed, Mr. Manly was most anxious that he should do so; 'for the present it is my wish to stay on with them.'

'It was good of you to send us the darling child,' said his mother.

'I thought it the best reparation I could make you for my own loss.' He said nothing of the keen suffering it had entailed on him to know that his son, of all others, would not be brought up in the Buddhist faith; this was one of his greatest sacrifices, which reverence to his father and mother had demanded of him.

'But why did you not tell your wife about anything?' asked the Earl, praising at the same time Dorothea's beauty and grace.

'She knew the child would be well off and well cared for; had she known my rank and position it would have given her an additional pang to contemplate the life I was leading.'

'He is certainly mad,' thought the Earl. And then certain money questions were gone into, Lord Mountain stating that he was amply supplied, and would not draw on any of the funds belonging to him at present.

'Do you remember this?' he said, producing from his pocket a very curious old watch.

'Yes,' said Lord Valerian, 'it was in the case of jewellery at the time of the wreck.'

'Other proof you will obtain from my solicitors; the jewellery shall be restored to you.'

'Nonsense,' said the Earl, 'give it to your pretty wife.'

They suddenly remembered that they had been enjoined not to stay too long, and after saying that they would hear his history when he was stronger, remembered also that he

had not seen the child, and asked if they should send for him.

Lord Mountain's face flushed slightly. 'I will consider the matter,' he said gravely. This was the finishing stroke, a man to consider whether he would see his own child or not after so long an absence! The Earl shook hands hastily and hurried out of the room.

Lord Mountain turned to his mother with a smile, a smile which illumined his face and went to her heart.

'Mother,' he said, holding her hands, 'if I had been brought up with you in childhood I could have loved you well; I remember faintly your kind face as I once knew it. But, as my absence from you was enforced, have I not acted rightly in staying away from you?' And the Countess through her tears could not but acknowledge that, as far as his father was concerned, he had.

'And where is the darling child to be now?' she asked.

'That shall be as his mother wishes,' he replied gently.

Dorothea, left alone with the child, had done little else but cry over him. Then the Earl appeared and she dried her tears. The Countess had no sooner joined them than a message came from Lord Mountain that he wished to see his son. Dorothea sent for Mr. and Mrs. Manly, and then said she would carry the child in herself; she was painfully desirous to see her husband again.

As soon as she had closed the study door she came up and said in a low voice, 'This is our son.'

His eyes shone, he took the boy in his arms and kissed him several times, but it was on the mother that his eyes were fixed. He seemed about to speak, when he sank down on the sofa behind him, deadly faint. She ran out with the child and called for assistance, and in a few moments he was again himself. But this decided her as to their son's whereabouts when the question was asked of her by the Countess as to where he should stay.

'With you, if you please,' she replied; 'at present my husband is not strong enough to bear the noise of a child, even if Mr. and Mrs. Manly were so very kind as to put up with it.'

So it was settled, to the old lady's great delight, the Manlys, however, declaring that the little boy would not inconvenience them; on the contrary, they would like to have him.

Before leaving, the Earl spoke a few words apart to Mr. Manly, and, after thanking him for his great kindness, hummed and hawed a little. 'My son, Mr. Manly, has lived abroad a great deal; doesn't understand, perhaps, English vicarage life.'

Mr. Manly replied that if so it was one of the very few things Lord Mountain did *not* understand; that he had never before met with a man of his varied and amazing ability, and that it was an intellectual treat to live in the same house with him.

'That's all very well,' said the Earl, really pleased to hear this from so talented and respected a man as Mr. Manly; 'but you really *must* excuse me; clergymen have limited incomes and great calls, and—and—in short, you understand me.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Manly, 'and whenever I want money for the parish I will come to you gladly; but as to the rest, I will send in my bill to your son when I want it for myself,' he added, laughing; for Mr. Manly, having a private income, had no intention of being repaid for his hospitality; 'and thank you very much, my lord.'

To Mr. and Mrs. Challoner, the news that Mr. Fellerman was no other than Lord Mountain was most pleasing; in place of a nameless adventurer he was a man of high rank, and their daughter had certainly married above her. Insensibly Mr. Challoner's opinion of his son-in-law began to alter; now that he found he was a lord he could not help liking him better, and this without any conscious snobbism on his part. Their grandson would be the Earl of Valerian eventually!

And then they were invited to spend the day at Valerian Park, and while the two grandmothers admired and caressed and talked over the child, the two grandfathers mutually agreed that their son and daughter were the most eccentric beings on the face of the earth, and this consensus of opinion proved a great satisfaction to them both.

CHAPTER LII.

LORD MOUNTAIN'S STORY.

It was the first time in his life since he had attained manhood that Lord Mountain had been on terms of intimacy with a man whom he heartily liked and respected; it was, in fact, the first time he had ever been brought in contact with a man for whose opinion he had any real regard. There were about these two men certain points of resemblance which drew them strangely to one another; already a warm friendship had sprung up between them. In Mr. Manly, Lord Mountain recognised a man whose religious principle was as strong and firmly established as his own, whose intellectual powers were almost as strongly developed, whose force of character was as great, whose imagination was as capable of being exercised, whose affections were as warm, and yet withal a man who lived a pleasant, genial life of active benevolence to others, thinking it the while absolutely right to be happy, and enjoy in moderation all the best gifts of the Creator. He watched him in silence, and, as he noted the trusting love between Mr. and Mrs. Manly, a dark shade came over his face.

That one of two things must take place was becoming painfully evident to Mr. Manly: either that Lord Mountain must take his wife again, or that Dorothea must go; the strain on his mind was evidently becoming too much for him, and his health was suffering. Mr. Manly ardently desired to accomplish the former; he, too, knew that Lord Mountain had not many months to live.

It was while he was considering what he could do, and how best approach the subject, that the other asked him quite unexpectedly whether he would like to hear his history.

'Beyond all things,' he replied.

'I think,' said Lord Mountain slowly, 'that I should like *you* to know what the life has been which has made me the manner of man I am;' and Mr. Manly quite understood that the story was to go no further.

'I suppose,' he continued, 'that you understand what our religion teaches.'

'I have always understood that it is a sort of agnostic atheism, but I know comparatively little of the tenets, and should be glad of information, seeing that a third of the human race believe in its doctrines.'

'We will discuss it later on,' said Lord Mountain; 'at present I will only tell you my story.

'Where we were wrecked I have no idea, it was never told me; I have reason to think this was lest I might go to the spot and find some notice concerning my loss. My nurse, a native woman, and I both came safely to shore. She in the confusion reigning on board had stolen a case containing valuable papers and jewellery and secured it about her person: with this and me she decamped. But she had not proceeded far before she was stopped and convicted of theft by a wealthy native living near, who, seeing her examine the jewels, took her into custody at his own house. (In giving my narrative, I will omit all Indian terms except any that may be necessary.) She confessed her crime, and told him who I was, and before I had been two hours with him a plan concerning me presented itself to this most remarkable man, whose name I will not give you. I will call him my protector. He had mixed blood in his veins, uniting the warlike character of a Nepaulese with the calm, contemplative mind and strong intellect which distinguish some of the Hindus; he believed intensely in his own religion, which was Buddhism grafted on to Brahminism, and he hated Christianity. He had lived in India during the Mutiny, and he would sometimes tell me, in terms of glowing indignation, of those natives who had been compelled to defile themselves by touching the greased cartridges, by which their religious feelings had been outraged, as much as if Christians had been compelled to trample under foot the consecrated bread and wine.

'But although he hated Christianity, to which he attributed this outrage, he did not dislike the English; he traded largely with them and lent them money; in fact, he had influence with many of our noble houses for this reason.

'A plan matured itself in his brain for at once largely spreading his religion, and at the same time striking a blow at Christianity. In furtherance of this he resolved to keep

me altogether, and that very night sent my nurse far up the country, warning her, under heavy penalties, never to disclose the fact that I was saved, and he himself went away the next day, taking me with him to travel about. At the same time he executed a paper, carefully detailing my discovery, which he had signed and witnessed. I was then seven years old; I am told I was a big, strong, healthy boy, with a loving disposition but a violent temper.'

'I should not have imagined that,' said Mr. Manly.

Lord Mountain smiled; his temper was only one of the many things he had subdued in himself.

'The principle on which my protector began to educate me was this: to treat me in every respect as a reasonable and reasoning being, to teach me to thoroughly despise both pain and bodily comfort, to abrogate every feeling of self as compared with the spread of the religion, and to develop to the utmost both my mental and physical attainments.'

'A very remarkable education if it could be carried out.'

'You shall judge. He began to impress upon me from the first the glory of sacrifice for others—to which end the conquest of self was essential—and the beauty of the religion which taught universal love to the exclusion of selfish and personal love. That all training must begin with *self* he urged perpetually. Punishment he never inflicted on me at first, but as soon as my mental powers were sufficiently developed through his training to understand the principle, and they were developed most rapidly, he taught me to punish myself when I committed a fault. A child's conscience is easily worked upon; before long, for a fault which in an English child would be dismissed with a warning that it must not occur again, I would deprive myself of food during a whole day, or sleep on rough stones, or something of that sort, and my protector gloried in it and told me that I was subduing my flesh. His old Brahminical notions made him think much of penance, not as an end, but a means—a means whereby the passions and affections might be subdued, and the attachment to existence lessened.'

'Do *you* believe in it?' asked Mr. Manly.

'I believe in it as men in all ages and countries have believed in it: that it is valuable in giving the mind greater play by the subduing of the body, and in some cases, though more rarely, it is in a measure expiatory. This, however, depends entirely on the class of penance selected.'

'Have you taught as you learned?'

'I have *never* inflicted penance, or even allowed it to be inflicted, where I could prevent it, except'—a shade of agony passed over his face—'except in *one* instance. A residence in India, it is well known, is bad for children. The native servants idolize them and spoil them in every possible way. Before long my temper grew ungovernable; it frightened even myself. Seeing that I could not subdue it, I went to my protector and begged him to punish me on these occasions. He did so, and, after clearly making me understand that it was of my own free will that I submitted, he would first talk to me on the binding duties of meekness and love advised in his religion, and then, taking a riding-whip, lash me with it, inflicting terrible pain. I would go away that he might not see me, and sob for hours, not at the pain so much as at the idea that such humiliation was necessary. And yet I felt that it *was* necessary, and he taught me to glory in it.'

'A most unwholesome training,' said Mr. Manly.

'Sometimes I would go to him twice a week with the confession that my temper had overcome me, when he would always flog me with the same severity, then less frequently, until by the time I was ten years old I never had occasion to go at all.'

'Do you mean to say that a boy under ten could control himself thus?'

Lord Mountain nodded, and then Mr. Manly began to understand why he had felt so much contempt for a young man like Jack Ashworth, who had no self-control.

'During all this time my education was advancing. I was carefully instructed in English and foreign languages by the best masters, and, though we travelled about constantly, my meals were always served separately, English fashion. At this time my great trouble was that I had no one to love. I remember feeling as if my heart would break sometimes for this reason. As for loving my protector, *that* was out of the question; I could not do so; neither did he wish it. His great aim was that I should love no one, in order that I might have no home ties. Whenever I loved a dog—and I loved some of the dogs very dearly—so surely did it disappear, till at last I discovered this, and refrained from exhibiting my affection. I was taught riding and driving,

and all the sports that English gentlemen delight in, and which I, too, should have delighted in; but it was clearly represented to me that they were to be pursued as lessons, not pleasures, and discontinued as soon as I began to feel they were taking my thoughts away from the graver subjects which my protector constantly conversed to me about. This command I faithfully obeyed; pleasures I had none. In short, both his and my aim was to forget, as far as might be, that I had any existence of my own, except in so far as our religion could be furthered.'

'But what was his plan?'

'I will tell you later. He was so rich that money was no object to him. He now procured the very best resident tutors for me, generally English gentlemen. They were all engaged on the same conditions, conditions to which he asked my consent before laying them down to my instructors. They were that no religious instruction of any kind was to be given, that no lessons were to be carried on after school hours (this was so that he might instruct me himself in the ethics of our religion), and that the most unvarying severity was to be exercised—that no fault, however trifling, was ever to be excused, but always punished. My tutors, as they came one by one, were generally grave, severe men, but they were always finished gentlemen—this was a *sine quâ non*. They were generally Eton or Rugby men, and with them severity meant flogging. They fulfilled their bargain, flogging me at times, not as if they cared about it, but as part of their work for very excellent pay and living; I don't believe it troubled them much, and they never punished unless they thought they had cause. But no sooner did they begin to show any personal liking for me (and in my studies I used every endeavour to advance) than they were dismissed. I have never myself understood why children should be always expected to be able to learn. Grown men sometimes cannot do it, and yet boys and girls are always obliged to come with their lessons perfect.'

'Children are frightfully over-educated,' said Mr. Manly. They were sitting in the study; the windows were wide open, and the sea-breeze blew in. 'You must not talk too much,' he continued.

'It will not hurt me now that I feel the fresh air. Do I interest you?'

'Extremely; pray go on.'

'When I was thirteen a new tutor came, a clever, bright-faced, powerful young man, but he was the most severe of them all. He flogged me perpetually, seeming to take pleasure in it. The slightest omission of punctuality, error in lessons, *gaucherie* at table, all ensured me a flogging; he never let anything escape him. I gloried in pain, as I told you, especially when, as often happened, it was totally undeserved, but I scorned to defend myself. By this time the mysticism of our religion was taking deep hold on me. I was as old in mind then as some lads of nineteen, and I was beginning to comprehend the marvels unfolded to me. Still, I often wondered why this tutor, Mr. Campbell, was so unusually severe. He had not been an hour in the house before he flogged me. We were dining, and in putting up my arm my knife touched my mouth. He thought I was in the habit of eating with my knife.'

'Though not pleasant, it would not perhaps have been an unpardonable crime in a boy of thirteen,' said Mr. Manly.

'I had been carefully trained, and, as a matter of fact, I did not do it. He instantly ordered me out of the room, and as soon as he had finished his dinner came to me, and saying, "Now, my young cub, I've come to lick you into shape," flogged me with a will. He asked me one day why I took it so quietly, and I smiled, and he threw a book at my head.'

Mr. Manly again thought of the power Mr. Fellerman's smile had had to irritate Jack Ashworth.

'This went on for over a month, and then one day he put his arm round me and said very kindly, "My boy, I'm heartily tired of all this thrashing, aren't you? and, what's more, I've come to the conclusion you don't deserve it, and if that's the case, I'll be hanged if I'll give it to you. I have had great renown as a boy-tamer. I was master at a public school, and, from what your worthy protector said to me when I first came, I was under the impression that you were a thorough young ruffian. He didn't say anything against you; on the contrary, he spoke well of your abilities and progress, but he insisted so much on the severity to be employed that I thought I had got hold of a young villain. As I saw by your countenance that you were a most determined young gentleman, I knew that if you had any curb

at all it must be a strong one. I have now made up my mind that you don't want any, and that we will be friends, and study together like gentlemen, for none of the boys I have had to do with resembled you."

'Then he shook hands with me and threw his cane into the fire, and told me to come out with him and he would teach me to fence. After that we were the best of friends. How I grew to love that man! He took me out with him constantly, and we walked, and drove, and fenced, and had boxing matches together. For the first time I knew what it was to be happy; I laughed and talked as any other boy would have done, and forgot my other aims and ends.'

'And a very good thing, too,' said Mr. Manly.

'Perhaps, if you count worldly pleasure the highest good.'

This not being at all what Mr. Manly did count, he made no further comment.

'My instruction advanced still more rapidly; I threw all my heart into it to please my tutor. Seeing where I *do* love, *how* I have loved, I have sometimes wondered what my life would have been if I had been brought up by my father and mother and my natural affections had taken their course.'

'Would that you had!' thought Mr. Manly.

'I loved this man greatly, and he was most kind to me. Whenever I seemed disinclined for study he would throw aside the books and take me out for a game, not returning until I was thoroughly fit for my work. As a rule I was very strong, but occasionally I failed. One day when I had made a series of egregious blunders in a mathematical problem—which a few weeks ago would have brought severe punishment on me—Mr. Campbell pushed away the book and said: "You're not up to the mark to-day, my boy; come along out."

'My protector, who had been watching his opportunity, appeared at the door and demanded to know the reason of this, and why I was not punished. "I'll not lay a finger on him," said Mr. Campbell, glad of the opportunity of relieving his pent-up wrath; "the boy can't do it just now, and, what's more, he *shan't* do it."

'I heard some words, spoken in my protector's usual deliberate manner and Eastern form of speech, to the effect that as he had broken the compact he could go.

'"Yes, of course I can, and I will," said Mr. Campbell, "but I'll speak my mind first. The boy is a good boy, and a brave boy, and a manly boy, and what your object has been in taking away his character I can't imagine. If you want a brute who will thrash him from morning till night, whether he deserves it or not, I dare say you'll get one, but you won't get a *gentleman.* I have done it, and I dare say the other men have done it before me, because they imagined, as I did, from your words, that he was an irreclaimable young scoundrel. He isn't anything of the sort, and you are not fit to have charge of a boy."

'My protector made a speech to the effect that the severity was ordered by my own wish.

'"Don't tell me such nonsense!" said Mr. Campbell angrily; "nothing will make me believe that an English boy likes to be thrashed!"

'He went away the next morning, parting from me most affectionately, and giving me his address. Then, after he was gone, I carefully revolved everything in my own mind, and, finding that during the last few weeks all my thoughts had been alienated from our faith, and my religious instruction had become a weariness to me, I inflicted on myself the severest penance I could think of.'

'What was that?'

'I threw Mr. Campbell's address into the fire.'

CHAPTER LIII.

THE ETHICS OF BUDDHISM.

THE setting sun threw his rays on Lord Mountain's face as he talked. Mr. Manly was beginning to understand how he had become this strong, self-controlled character. But, oh, at what a sacrifice! What could ever repay him for such a joyless youth? He thought of his own days spent at Westminster, when he was sometimes enjoying rollicking fun, sometimes perpetrating mischief, sometimes in trouble, but never solitary trouble; while here was this boy at ten years of age subduing his temper in a manner few men would have done.

There is no doubt that these silent, strong characters arouse our sympathy most fully, far more so than surface people who complain. Before the narration was concluded Mr. Manly several times felt a choking sensation in his throat.

'Did you ever see Mr. Campbell again?' he asked.

'Yes; I saw him in London some five years ago; he was and still is practising as a very successful barrister. I sought him out and dined with him at his club, but without revealing my identity; it did not suit my purpose to do so. I led the conversation to Colombo, where we had been living when I knew him, and he then told me of a very remarkable boy to whom he was tutor. "A boy," he said, "with a man's intellect and feelings (when I came to know him, which wasn't for some time), but who was in charge of a regular brute of a native prince, or merchant, or something." And even at that interval Mr. Campbell clenched his fist and banged it on the table. "I haven't common patience when I think of it," he said. "My word, how I did thrash him, and how fond I got of him afterwards!"

'"You may be quite sure," I said, "that that boy would always retain the greatest affection for you."

'He looked at me very curiously, and I rose and wished him good-bye. I heard him say under his breath: "It *is*

he, but I cannot speak to such a man as that against his will!" It is my intention, now that I am known and my recognition may be of service to him, to renew my acquaintance with him before'—he paused—'before I leave the world.'

'Have him down here,' said Mr. Manly.

Lord Mountain smiled.

'Thank you,' he said quietly, and then resumed his story.

'His words seemed to have some effect on my protector; after this no tutor was allowed to touch me; whatever punishment I received was self-inflicted, and the necessity for any occurred but seldom. I did not after this feel myself called on to suffer unnecessarily, as my will now began to assert itself, and I usually did that which I saw ought to be done. We travelled perpetually, sometimes in Europe, sometimes in Asia. I learnt all the modern languages in the countries themselves, usually in out-of-the-way towns; I learnt the Eastern dialects, and I studied both the Vedas and Pitakas.'

'What are the Pitakas?' asked Mr. Manly.

'The three great divisions of the Buddhist canonical works: discipline, metaphysics, and aphorisms in prose. I learnt also, as I grew up, chemistry, geology, botany, all the general sciences, while Eastern sages were sent for who studied the mysteries of our faith with me, and entered into the theories of metempsychosis and legendary knowledge. Then came a time when I found my taste for study and acquisition of knowledge a positive passion.' He paused.

'What did you do then?' asked Mr. Manly.

'I gave it up.'

'What a pity!' said Mr. Manly involuntarily.

'The abrogation of *all* passions is the main feature of our religion.'

'But had you *never* any amusements, never any young companions, any ladies' society?'

'No, not during my minority. Sometimes I was taken into large cities and there mixed in the society of the world; that is to say, of the worst part of the world as recognised. I saw men's vices and I generally despised them, as I was intended to do, and sometimes, very, very occasionally, I entered into their vices; on these occasions I endeavoured to expiate my sin by severest penances, the nature of which

I will not trouble you with. By every means in my power I still endeavoured to subdue my nature, for now my religion was life to me. The five moral powers we believe in are "Faith, Energy, Recollection, Contemplation, and Intuition." We believe that by intense self-absorption and mystic meditation it is possible to attain to a most exalted state of wisdom, to mystic ecstasy, to mesmeric trance, and finally to that state of equanimity in which there is neither joy nor sorrow. I have wandered alone amidst the mighty Himalayas, whose gigantic snow-crowned peaks stretched upward to the blue sky; I have paced the huge forests of America; I have trodden the burning sands of Africa; I have visited the lonely Polynesian islands: and in all these places I have lost myself in rapt wonder. But with me these trances never tended to the extinction of idea; on the contrary, I lost myself in conceptions of unrevealed glories. The earth and all that is within it seemed to me as so many shadows, the substance of which was in the worlds around and above us. And then I would come out from these dreams, and meeting such young men as *Mr. Jack Ashworth*'—the old contempt was in his tones—'I have marvelled at them.'

'But had you no practical duties?'

'Many and many. The essence of our religion is practical charity. Its psychology and ethics are addressed not to one school only, but to the world, and we hold that dreams and visions are small compared with actual duties, and although we pay attention to the deepest questions of ethics and ontology, we place moral training above ritual or metaphysics. At the same time we believe that a lonely life is most conducive to self-conquest, and that a rapid progress in spiritual life is only compatible with retirement. By the time I was twenty-one I had mastered most of the best-known languages and studies, and I gave up learning, as I have told you.

'We were in Calcutta when I attained my majority, and it was then that my protector informed me who I was, together with his scheme. It was this: that I should return to my father's house as Lord Mountain, and, giving the weight of my name and influence and money to the cause, spread the Buddhist religion indefinitely by training young lads, English lads, who in their turn would found colleges and train hundreds, the circle ever widening. But,

as his health was now rapidly failing, he wished me to wait until he died. As it happened, I was three-and-twenty before his death, and then my plans were modified considerably. I omitted to mention that during his lifetime I was introduced into some of our best London circles by means of the influential friends he possessed, remaining in them so short a period that I could see only the outside glitter, but the fascinations had not time to exercise themselves on me.

'I went to London, but I had already seen enough to know that his plan could not be carried out, even with the aid of his vast wealth, the whole of which he left to me. I knew that English lads as a rule were stolid, manly fellows, and that they could not enter into my views without years of previous training. But with girls the case was entirely different. I saw my father, with what result you already know, and though I would gladly have taken up my title and position, I thought it best not to do so.'

'But why were you trained in English manners and customs, as a finished English gentleman? Would not the blow have been more crushing had you appeared in Eastern costume and with Eastern manners and habits?'

Lord Mountain shook his head. 'Had I done so I should not have had one hundredth part of the influence. People would have laughed and shaken their heads, and, calling me a mad fanatic, have disregarded every word I uttered, and my protector knew it.'

Mr. Manly began to think that this native must have been a very Machiavelli, but he cordially agreed with Mr. Campbell that he was a brute. The idea of thus cruelly treating a poor little unprotected lonely boy was to him most revolting. A protector!

'Have you ever inflicted cruelty on anyone?' he asked suddenly.

'Never, except on *Mr. Jack Ashworth*, if you count as cruelty rescuing Dorothea from him—*I* thought it a good action; and on Dorothea herself'—his face quivered—'but that was because she was *myself*.'

'Not a bit of it,' said Mr. Manly, seeing the pain he had caused, and wishing to make light of it; 'she isn't yourself at all. Under the married women's rights which are now in vogue she can do as she pleases. You ask my wife.'

But Lord Mountain's smile was very faint. He seemed very tired, and Mr. Manly would not allow him to talk any longer, but, after seeing that he took some refreshment, went upstairs with him and insisted on his resting. He afterwards went into the garden to take a turn in the sweet evening air. He heard a sound as of someone in distress, and, going into the arbour, found Dorothea, sobbing as if she would sob her life out; she had been beneath the library window and heard every word!

CHAPTER LIV.

A LIFE'S FAILURE.

THE next day Lord Mountain resumed his story, but Mr. Manly took good care that on this occasion Dorothea should not hear it, and bade his wife take her round to Mrs. Hatton's. That good lady was delighted to receive her; she rather liked the neighbours to know that she was on intimate terms with Lady Mountain, and informed her that her daughter Mrs. Worsley was soon coming to pay her a visit. Dorothea had gained much of her husband's strength of character, and resolved that not one word would she say about her married life to Mrs. Worsley; Mrs. Manly had asked no questions, and, even to her mother, had made no remark on the relations that existed between Lord and Lady Mountain; but the latter knew that Mrs. Worsley had not the same delicate sensibility.

It was a great proof of Mr. Manly's regard for Lord Mountain that he had given him the freedom of his study, usually a sacred place from all the household; on his return from his morning's rounds he generally found his guest seated there; it was, alas! the one sitting-room where Dorothea did not go.

'After this,' continued Lord Mountain, 'I went largely into society—ladies' and gentlemen's society always, but of different classes; I did this with an object.'

'Amongst all your studies and your varied acquaintance, did you never study Christianity, or learn its doctrines from its ministers?'

'I knew its broad principles, but I never studied it; being satisfied with my own religion, why should I? Have *you* ever deeply studied *my* religion?'

This being a Roland to Mr. Manly's Oliver, he asked no further question.

'Having given up all idea of returning to my father's house, I gave my entire attention to finding girls whom I

might train under the superintendence of a married lady whom, from motives of pity, I had already instructed in our religion. She had a brilliant intellect and, I believed, answered my purpose. Her harshness, to which I strongly objected, was, I thought, owing to her preferring the Brahminical doctrines to the Buddhist, therefore I was forced to tolerate it, for she was an admirable teacher: I have since found out that she was simply a hypocrite, and used my religion to serve her own purposes; that arrangement, like most of the things with which I have had to do in my life, has been—a failure.'

'How did you get together such a remarkable set of girls?—for I saw them all at the Dartmoor farmhouse.'

'By going all over England and searching for them; I knew at once by a girl's countenance whether she would serve my purpose.'

'But surely these girls had been brought up as Christians.'

'Outwardly, yes. It would perhaps astonish you clergymen if you knew how many pagans and unbelievers there are among your congregations. I *always* chose an empty shrine, not one in which there was any real religion to undo; I would not have done such a thing.'

'Dorothea had been religiously brought up,' for, by her own request, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Manly ever called her Lady Mountain amongst themselves.

'Ask Dorothea herself what her religion was worth; ask her what sort of clergymen she had been thrown amongst; I am not now attacking the cause, but the men, and I maintain that if you had more clergymen who believed what they preach your congregations would have more faith. You were the first clergyman I ever came across whose life spoke his belief.'

Into this subject Mr. Manly did not care to enter; he knew there was much truth in it.

'What were the girls to do?'

'To spread Buddhism; but, knowing the prejudice the name excited with everyone, I did not teach the doctrines by that name, to begin with; when they were far advanced I told them, and they all expressed themselves as anxious to go on.'

Mr. Manly could not help wondering whether Mr. Fellerman's undeniable fascination had anything to do with these resolutions.

'It was not amongst the English only, or indeed principally, that they were to teach the doctrines. I had been much in India and Burmah, and my heart had gone out to the poor people living there, who practised and believed such corrupt forms of Buddhism, the pure and simple lessons of Gautama, the founder, being smothered under metaphysical subtleties, or, more frequently, magic, witchcraft and devil-worship, accompanied with temple-worship, and puerile and feeble absurdities. I wanted them to be taught better.'

'Surely, I have read that with some portion of the Buddhists their ceremonies closely resemble those of the Roman Catholic Church.'

'They do, very closely; their ceremonies are most imposing; they have the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and the sacred essence. But that is Lamaism, which is a corruption of Buddhism. As far as I could I taught the pure doctrine, joined to the Brahminic doctrine of the Supreme Being, which in actual Buddhism is not recognised. Having largely studied the sacred writings in the original, I was able to clear away the absurdities for my pupils, and present a pure faith to them. It was my desire that, when their course was concluded, they should go back to the world, sowing the seed of the truth in those cases where family ties demanded their presence; but those who had no ties I supplied with money and means to form small colleges in India and in England, to train pupils as I had trained them.'

'And did they do so?'

'In some cases, but, like most of my other proceedings, these proved failures generally. They began ardently at first, but after a time some married and forgot their faith, and others, not being under my own direction then, taught wrongly or gave it up.'

He sighed, thinking of the result of his many years of toil, and the large sums of money he had spent.

'A few are still doing good work in India; a girl called Aurea is one of them.'

'Did you never fall in love with any of these extremely pretty girls?'

'Never, not even at first with Dorothea. Consider how rigidly I had endeavoured to govern myself during so many

years. When I saw Dorothea, I felt more strongly than I had ever felt before that I *must* win her to the cause; but I believe my feelings were then quite impersonal. I met her first one moonlight night in the Cornish lanes, in company with her lover, and as I looked on her face I felt a sense of triumph; I knew I should succeed with her. I had by this time devoted much attention to training my will in order that I might influence others; I found I generally succeeded when I attempted a thing.'

'My dear Mountain,' said Mr. Manly, 'perhaps you forget that you were a singularly handsome, attractive man, and that this may have influenced young ladies even more than your wonderful will, the power of which I do not for a moment deny; your history alone speaks to *that*.'

Lord Mountain shook his head; he had not a vestige of personal conceit. 'It was not that. I do not know whether I should have taken Dorothea away from her home had it not been for my desire to rescue her from Ashworth.'

'And yet Ashworth is a very good sort of fellow. I like him much.'

'Our tastes differ,' said Lord Mountain dryly. 'I have often accused and reproached myself with regard to her father and mother; in fact, I incurred some considerable penance before I could satisfy myself, although, as a general rule, I had totally abjured penance. I would sometimes go without food when I had any deep subject of thought, and, when alone, I limited myself to the two meals a day taken by our communities, otherwise I conformed to the customs of English people. I believe, however, that taking Dorothea away, and the manner in which it was performed, has been the only mean action to which I have to confess, and my motive was a good one.'

Mr. Manly wondered how many Christian men could say as much—one act of meanness, if it could be so called, in a lifetime, and that for a noble if mistaken motive!

'I should not probably, I dare say, have loved her—my interest in all the girls was simply fatherly—had not the Superior drawn my special attention and pity to her by her cruelty. And yet, again, I do not know; surely I *must* always have been specially drawn to her. The knowledge of my love burst suddenly upon me; can you understand the overwhelming mighty passion it became after such a life

as mine? No, I do not think any man can understand it. I was in a tempest of delirious joy; the whole world was transformed when the tumultuous flood of my long-pent-up passion and affection at length burst forth.'

'I think *I* can understand it,' said Mr. Manly.

'I could have died ten thousand deaths for her. I could have knelt at her feet and become her abject slave, and because I knew that I had it in my heart to do this, I restrained my feelings and resolved that, forasmuch as probably my whole soul and life would be filled with my love, to the exclusion of my religion, I would not marry.'

Mr. Manly looked at him attentively; even now he could scarcely be prepared for each fresh revelation of force of character shown by this marvellous man.

'But I found I *could* not subdue my love, that it was subduing me. Then I argued the matter out in every shape and form, and finding that I could by abjuring the religious life (I mean monastic life, which I had intended to enter), entail on *myself* misery only, I resolved to risk it. It was then my belief that I might possibly have to endure in consequence some long periods of pain in other worlds, thus indefinitely postponing my entrance to Nirvana, but *I thought it worth while.* Besides, as I could not bring my mind at all to my work as it was, I thought perhaps by marrying Dorothea I should once again know calmness. But, even on the night when I first told her I loved her, I *feared* the result of this too mighty love, and I knew that if ever my religion were to be again more than a name, her will must be brought into subjection to mine. How I accomplished this in one lesson, at what awful cost of suffering to myself, I cannot speak of even now.'

The look on his face was so painful to Mr. Manly to witness that he turned the subject off lightly.

'I am sure if you were to give your receipt for teaching wives that in one lesson, you would be altogether besieged by the British husbands.'

'Then, for one week only, we lived in Paradise. I fancy that all my life's sufferings have not been too dearly bought for that one week. It caused me also to disbelieve that such majesty of love *could* be the cause of future suffering. I do not believe that it will.'

'Certainly not,' said Mr. Manly warmly.

Our Paradise was disturbed by the knowledge that my community must be broken up; it seemed to me that even then I was to pay for my happiness, but I trusted that whatever befell me I might keep my wife. We went to India, and as soon as we landed I made arrangements for training pupils; I was to superintend the teaching of the lads, she of girls under my direction. To this end I taught her as much as I could on the voyage out, and in the evening after we settled down. I had been in hopes that my love for her would not come between me and my religion, but it did. My ardour seemed to increase, if possible, instead of decrease; perhaps this was owing to the constant fear in which I lived lest I might find myself compelled at length to part from her. I could not give my mind to my work for the longing I felt to return home and take her in my arms; I never was content to let her be out of my sight, my love seemed a consuming fire. As one of your greatest writers has said, "The mirror of the soul cannot reflect both earth and heaven; and the one vanishes from the surface as the other is glassed upon its deeps."'

'Oh,' thought Mr. Manly sadly, 'if he had only lived with her quietly without this idea that he might, on conscientious grounds, be obliged to part with her, before long this violent passion would have settled down into a calm, deep love which would not have interfered with his pursuits or distracted his mind.' But he was not so cruel as to say so.

'Then I tried my old plan of penance, to endeavour to subdue, if possible, my nature. I endeavoured in vain to attain to that state of mind enjoined on us, that calm contemplation which is one of the principal agencies in subduing attachment to life. But my meditations were the cause of deep remorse overtaking me. I realized then that I had failed from my purpose of the religious life, and that while I was teaching others I was myself a hypocrite, striving to make the world yield me pleasure while I exacted self-denial from others.'

'No, no,' said Mr. Manly with deep feeling, '*never* a hypocrite.'

'But I was, Manly, for I would not for a long time open my eyes to the truth, the truth that I never ought to have married. I tried penances without end, but as for my

feelings, I had lost all command over them; my love for my wife entirely distracted me. I kept the knowledge of what I suffered from her as far as I could, until at length came a day when I found that penance was no penance for the reason that I gloried in it.

'Our child was born by this time, and here arose a new danger; my attachments to the world and all in it seemed growing. I who had looked on all material things as worthless dross, my money having never been spent on anything for myself except for the purchase of actual necessaries, now found that every day my chains to earth were growing. From the first day of my boy's birth I loved him dearly; I gloried in his infant beauty. The conflict in my mind was such that I could not conceal it from Dorothea; she knew erelong all I felt. Then the dread seized her also that we might be compelled to part, and from that hour we knew no happiness. How near we drew to one another during that time I could make no one understand; I feel sure there was but one soul and life between us. A new trouble seized me—I had not only failed myself, but I had caused her to fail; at any cost this must be remedied. I could have submitted for *myself* to have gone through the most degrading metempsychosis, but I could not let *her* do so; I knew that I *must* save her from future pains. I asked her if she would give up one of her heart's warmest desires, the child; hoping that perhaps by that means our minds would return to their old allegiance. So, with her consent, I sent him to England in charge of a lady, and after a time I thought my duty to my father and mother demanded that she should transfer him to them. The pain we suffered in parting with him made me realize what they must have suffered in parting with me. His birth had been carefully registered in order that at any moment he might be recognised by my father, and I knew the charge of him would be what they would most desire.

'But this penance was unavailing; our hearts seemed to cling more closely to one another—so much so that at length neither of us could make our religion anything but secondary. Then I tried living apart from her, though under the same roof, during which time I would neither touch her hand nor speak a kind word to her. This was penance indeed. She knew why I did it, and made no

complaint, only followed me with her wistful eyes. I kept this up sometimes for three months together, and then I failed, as I have failed in everything, and, seizing her in my arms, I would devour her with my kisses. If the Karma of our actions is decided by the torments we endure, I think what I suffered during that time and one later would place me in a better position than I have any reason to hope it will. For myself, I was now reckless; I had given up even caring what would become of me, although I still went through the mockery of teaching others. But I still knew that I must save her. I questioned her, and I found that all her religion was centred in me, that apart from me she had no desires. I reasoned with her in vain; I was a shallow pretence myself, but I would not have her to be one. "I cannot help it," she said, "but I will try." And then she suggested that perhaps if she undertook penances she might regain what she had lost in her religion.

'Knowing that this was the severest form of torture that could be inflicted on me, to stand by and see her suffer, I consented. I have seen her fast until she fainted; I have seen——' He broke off, the dew standing on his forehead.

Mr. Manly would have said something, but he literally was afraid to trust his voice; in presence of so much suffering he suffered keenly himself.

'But it was all in vain, and then I knew that even for her sake there was only one course open to us—that we must separate. I fought against it as long as I could, saying that I *could* not do it, and then I knew that if she were to obtain salvation we must part.'

Mr. Manly here began to wonder if the most selfish man that ever lived had inflicted as much suffering on others as this, perhaps the most self-sacrificing man in the world.

'I asked her if she would join the child at my father's, but she refused even after she knew that I was going from her. So I placed her in the care of an elderly English couple in the native quarter of the town of Benares, lest so young and beautiful a woman living in the English quarter should excite remark, but it was close to the cantonment where the military men and their wives reside. I left full directions with my bankers and solicitors in the event of my death, and they would then communicate with her. She was to go on teaching the truth to others and try to regain her lost faith.'

'And you?' asked Mr. Manly.

'I? I left her during the night, without any farewell—I could not trust myself to take any—left her believing that I should see her face no more.'

There was a long pause; neither man would look on the other's face. After a time Lord Mountain continued speaking:

'I joined myself to a community of Buddhists living far away in the hill-country in a cave on the mountain-side. They absolved me from taking the novitiate, and I entered as a full member; they had often heard of me, and at once recognised me as a teacher instead of a learner. But their life was too easy; their rules were not strict enough for me. I left them and lived as a wandering mendicant, practising the severest rules. The rags, the want of sleep, the other hardships, I to a certain extent disregarded; but to eat food collected in a bowl from the huts of natives, all mixed indiscriminately, filled me with such loathing that I only ate sufficient to keep body and soul together; probably that is why I have so little strength now. But the solitary life restored my faith; once more I believed in my religion, and my anxiety for Dorothea ever grew. Then I failed once again, and, resolving that I could no longer live without a sight of her face, I set off for Benares, dressed in ordinary garments which I had secreted. I did not intend to speak to her, only to catch a glimpse of her sweet face, and I broke my vows in order to do it. Then I remember no more; Barnard found me. I should like to thank him personally for his kindness; I have written to him as it is.'

'But,' said Mr. Manly, 'as you *have* broken your vows, why live apart from your wife now? You told me yourself that the vow of celibacy could be set on one side at will.'

'I dare not risk the wild delight of loving her as I did, neither for her sake nor for mine—principally hers. And I cannot go on living thus much longer. We must part once more. Reviewing my whole life as I have done now, I see that it has been—a failure: that is all.'

CHAPTER LV.

MR. MANLY PREVAILS.

As soon as Lord Mountain had finished speaking he went out. Mr. Manly remained lost in thought. His wife, entering, saw by his face that he had been feeling deeply. He told her he had been hearing a most painful story from their guest.

'I grieve over him,' he said. 'Surely so wonderful a man has scarcely ever lived. Had he been a Christian, he might have been a second St. Paul. But what is more marvellous even than his life of self-denial is that in place of self-righteousness he feels nothing but the deepest humility and self-abasement. It has been thought that I have wrought and suffered, but when I think what *he* has done, with no pure light to guide him, I bow my head in shame at my shortcomings.'

Mrs. Manly found herself wondering whether, if St. Paul had been a married man, his wife would have been very happy, and questioning whether he would not have required the greatest sacrifices at her hands on account of religion. And then Mr. Manly went into the church, and, kneeling down, spent a long time in prayer, and this he did as nearly as possible every day at the same hour, until—until prayer for Lord Mountain was no longer requisite.

One thing was clear to him, that, whereas his religion could be left for a little while to take care of itself, the reconciliation with his wife must be immediate. To this end he brought his whole mind to bear on the subject, and carefully considered what argument he could adduce. Then, having prepared his line, he went to Lord Mountain and begged him to listen to him as he would to a brother, believing that he spoke from no desire for victory, but from a sense of what was due to Dorothea.

Lord Mountain heard him very patiently, then said quietly:

'It is because my whole heart inclines to agree with you that I *dare* not give your arguments the weight they deserve.'

'Think them over,' said Mr. Manly. 'I will speak of this again to you to-morrow if I may.'

When the morrow came he entirely changed his tactics, and, coming forward with a laugh, said:

'Now, Mountain, I'm going to take away the greatest pleasure you have in life.'

'What is that?' asked the other gravely.

'The pleasure of being miserable. I have come to the conclusion that you so thoroughly enjoy self-sacrifice that the greatest penance you can inflict on yourself is that of being happy. Another thing is, that your love for the human race, to the exclusion of your wife, is making a portion of the human race profoundly miserable. I am wretched at this—I can't shake it off; my wife is wretched; everyone would be wretched if he or she knew it. Your duty to us demands your reconciliation to her.'

'I wish I could see my duty in that light,' said Lord Mountain with a smile, although it was a very sad one.

'But,' said Mr. Manly more gravely, 'why is she alone to be excluded from your pity and your love? You know what she now must be suffering. Has she done anything to make void your marriage laws?'

'Most certainly not.'

'Then they are still binding?'

'They were set on one side when I took monastic vows on me.'

'You have broken through—other vows,' Mr. Manly had been on the point of saying vows regarding food and money, but hastily checked himself in deadly fear lest in future Lord Mountain should elect to go without his dinner.

'You have yourself acknowledged that the terrible means you have taken to lessen your love have all ended in failure, that you love her as much as ever.'

'That is so.'

'Try yet *one* other way. Live with her for three months without feeling that you are committing sin in doing so, without fearing that you may have to separate. At the end of that time you will find—believe me, I speak the truth—that your love has quieted down, and you can continue your religion in comfort.'

'It is because of her religion as well as mine.'

'If she is not your wife you have nothing to do with her

religion; she is a free agent. Many men love their wives too little; you love yours too much. You are *not* her husband as you are now living, and you have no right to inflict such terrible suffering on her.'

'Do you speak thus because you are preparing the way to try to convert me to your religion?'

'I speak thus,' said Mr. Manly, with the deepest earnestness, 'because I would do so as a matter of the commonest humanity to a man who had *no* religion, to *any* man, let him be a pagan, a Christian, or an atheist. No man has a right to make a woman suffer so.'

'My intellect is not so clear as it was,' said Lord Mountain wearily. 'I do not seem able to distinguish between right and wrong; I cannot see my course.'

'Oh,' said Mr. Manly, coming forward and throwing his whole heart into his beautiful voice, 'let me entreat you, Mountain, on this one occasion to submit your will to that of a man who is your inferior in intellect, but your superior in judgment in this matter. Call into play that humility which you tell me is one of the leading virtues in your religion, and be humble to *me*, do *my* bidding, believing that I know better than you. Have you ever done another man's bidding in your life since you attained man's estate?'

'Never.'

'Then do it now. I will tell you what not even my wife has heard from me—how at one time in my life I was sick, and sorrowful, and faithless, and despairing, and a man who loved me came to me, as I who love you come to you, and he told me what I ought to do, though at other times he did not consider himself capable of advising me, and I did as he said. I have always been thankful that I did so. Take your wife to your bosom, and believe me when I tell you that in your or any other religion it will be the best action you ever did in your life.'

Lord Mountain rose and faced him in silence for some five minutes. Then he said gravely:

'I will submit my will to yours.' And as he did so he slightly inclined his head.

'Shall I fetch her?' said Mr. Manly in excitement, scarcely daring to believe that his words had performed this great miracle.

'Yes.'

Mr. Manly departed forthwith. He found Dorothea walking dejectedly in the garden.

'Come,' he said—'come with me at once.' Something unusual in his voice made her look up at his face. She saw it was joyful. 'Come to your husband,' he said; 'he wants you.' For a moment her limbs lost their strength, as she understood his meaning. He put his arm round her, and almost carried her to the study door. 'Dorothea,' he said, 'keep up the same courage you have shown all along. For his sake do not give way now.'

As the door opened he saw Lord Mountain standing with arms extended, his face flushed and joyful. Mr. Manly abruptly turned his back and shut the door, leaving husband and wife together.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE SUPERIOR'S REVENGE.

SOME two hours after Mr. Manly knocked at the study door. Lord Mountain bade him enter. The latter was sitting with his arms locked round his wife, neither did he attempt to remove them at Mr. Manly's entrance.

'I have come to tell you dinner is ready, and my wife hopes you will not mind having it upstairs in your own sitting-room this evening,' he said brightly. 'It will suit us better to dine alone. And, Dorothea, after this please to remember that no ladies are allowed in my study, so that whenever you wish to get away from her, Mountain, you can come in here.'

And as he said this he scrupulously avoided looking at either of them; he felt as if it would be sacrilege to do so just yet.

They found a very nice little dinner laid upstairs, the two covers placed side by side. There was a dumb waiter, on which nearly every extra was put, so that ringing the bell could be avoided, the servants being told not to remain in the room. The dinners at the Vicarage were always well cooked and served, but very plain on principle. The dinner this evening was plain—Mr. Manly could not divest himself of the fear that Lord Mountain might refuse food, so that he had cautioned his wife as to the *menu*—but the table was prettily decked, and altogether there was a festive appearance about it.

It may be questioned, however, whether either of the diners appreciated this; they had spoken but little since they met; the contentment of both was apparently absolute, all wild excitement absent. Both felt as if they had at last attained a haven of rest where storms could come no more; they had even in this time lost the feeling that they could ever be parted again. It was happiness that was almost painful in its quiet intensity. They ate but little, and yet

were long before they rang the bell. Then came a neat maid with a message:

'Master and mistress's love, and they hoped my lord and lady would excuse their not seeing them again this evening, as they were going round to the Admiral's, and should not be back till late.'

When the dinner was cleared away neither seemed inclined to talk much.

'Dorothea,' he said at length, 'I know now the meaning of the Christian's text, "What God has joined together no man can put asunder." We will never part again.'

The next day he signified his wish to see Mrs. Challoner, who came to Newforth at once. After meeting her daughter in the garden, and being struck by the marvellous change in her countenance, she went in to Lord Mountain.

'Mrs. Challoner,' he said gravely, 'I should like to ask your forgiveness for the wrong I did you in taking away your daughter. Our religion as well as yours teaches that we reap as we sow. If you wish to know it, I have suffered greatly from the consequences of my act.'

She looked into his noble wasted face, and she too recognised the fact that he had not long to live. Now also she understood for the first time the marvellous fascination he had exercised over Dorothea.

'Oh,' she said, holding both his hands, 'I forgave you long ago. I know you both loved each other. Indeed, I never wanted you to suffer.'

And then she kissed him with tears in her eyes and went out. She knew that Dorothea was again her daughter, and that, so long as he lived, Lord Mountain would be to her as a son.

The boy came up for a couple of days, but, though his father delighted in him, the noise was too much for him continuously. Mr. Manly came in one day and found Master Archibald sitting on Lord Mountain's knee, both his little arms clasped tightly round his father's neck, his lips pressed to his cheek.

'And do you love daddy with all your heart?' he asked, in his pleasant voice, feeling the while how deeply the loss of his own child was yet regretted by him.

'Yes,' said the child, 'I loves him best of all.'

But Dorothea was not jealous; she preferred that it should be so.

It was suggested that they should now leave the Vicarage, but Mr. Manly begged that, if they did not mind doing so, they should remain yet a little while. He knew that his work, if done at all, must be done quickly. But he had many misgivings; he dared not think that he could accomplish it. Every day he spent more and more time in prayer, and feared to approach the subject. Meantime, Lord and Lady Mountain spent long days together in the country, only returning when evening fell. He was becoming perceptibly stronger.

But while these events were taking place, a heavy blow fell on Lord and Lady Valerian. One day a lady, giving her name as Mrs. Lester, called at the Park, and requested a private interview with the Earl and Countess, as her business was most important. Mrs. Worsley was with them at the time. Without asking any questions, she had arrived almost at the true state of the case respecting Lord and Lady Mountain, and was just then openly expressing her opinion.

'I'm sure, poor things! I'm glad they are happy at last. To think that all this time they might have been living together comfortably like any other married people, and gone about Buddhising to their hearts' content!'

'I wonder who Mrs. Lester is,' said the Earl, and he went out to her, leaving the Countess and Mrs. Worsley together.

In a few moments he returned, looking terribly agitated, and asked his wife to go with him to Mrs. Lester.

'There is sad news,' he said as soon as they were out of the room.

'Oh, *what* is it?' she asked, fearing that someone was dead.

'It is this,' said Mrs. Lester, in her hard, cold tones, 'that your son's marriage was illegal, and that consequently your grandson is illegitimate.'

'I'll not believe it,' said the Earl angrily; 'Mountain is an honourable man, and dearly loves his wife. He would not do such a thing.'

'There is no doubt that he *loves* her,' said Mrs. Lester with a sneer; 'but he married her notwithstanding in the dead of night on a tombstone in the churchyard, and the marriage is consequently illegal. Neither were there the requisite witnesses, or any registers signed.'

The Earl groaned. Was his son mad, or only bad?

'A marriage at midnight in a churchyard!' he said. 'Nonsense, my good lady! I am afraid there is a little romance about this statement of yours.'

'Ask Mr. Barnard,' she said; 'he married them.'

This was really news, for the chaplain had not thought it necessary to mention the circumstance; indeed, it was a most painful one to him. He was hurriedly sent for.

'I do not know you, sir,' said Mrs. Lester as he entered; 'but perhaps you will be good enough to corroborate a statement I have made. Did you marry Lord Mountain at midnight in a churchyard to his wife, or did you not?'

'I did,' said Mr. Barnard in a low voice.

'And what did you mean by such a thing as that—you, a clergyman of the Church of England?' said the Earl, speaking to Mr. Barnard for the first time angrily. 'Mountain may have been ignorant of English manners and customs, but *you* must have known what you were about.'

'They had a license. I had been a naval chaplain, and I did *not* know it was illegal, my lord. I have not to this day the slightest idea why they put it off from eleven in the morning, at which time the wedding was originally fixed.'

'You should then have refused point-blank to officiate.'

'If you knew Lord Mountain as well as *I* do, my lord,' said Mr. Barnard with spirit, 'you would know that when he decides on a thing it is almost impossible to refuse him, added to which I was under great obligations to him, which I was most desirous to fulfil.'

'It is you who have made the boy illegitimate,' said the Earl bitterly.

'Oh, surely not!' said Mr. Barnard, in most real concern. Do not take anyone's word; get counsel's opinion.'

Mrs. Lester smiled.

'You may get as many opinions as you like,' she said; 'but you will find I am right, unless it was a special license, which they had not.'

Then Mr. Barnard turned to her angrily, on the principle of the boy who has had his ears boxed boxing his younger brother.

'And pray, madam, what is your object in coming here and making all this mischief?' he asked.

'I perhaps might tell you that it was my desire to see the

truth prevail,' she said carelessly, 'but I will not do so. If you wish to know, it is because I hated Miss Challoner, and I am very glad she now has no right to any other name, and that her son is illegitimate.'

'Go away, you wicked, cruel woman!' said the Countess, speaking for the first time; 'you have destroyed the happiness of everyone, but your sin will surely be visited on you one day.'

'Perhaps,' said Mrs. Lester, shrugging her shoulders as she departed.

She had indeed destroyed their happiness. It was the most terrible blow that had ever fallen on them—worse than the loss of their son. That this child whom they now so dearly loved should be branded with shame, and have no right to his father's name! And then Mrs. Worsley was taken into counsel under promise of secrecy. She had her usual advice to offer, 'Ask Mr. Manly.'

So Mr. Manly was begged to go down, which he did at great personal inconvenience; indeed, so manifold were now the calls on his time that, in order that his parish might not be neglected, he had engaged a second curate, whose stipend he allowed Lord Mountain to pay.

He listened to the story attentively.

'And now,' said the Earl, 'Mountain must be acquainted at once. Will you acquaint him, Mr. Manly?'

'No, my lord,' said Mr. Manly firmly, though he had been much distressed at the news, 'I will *not* acquaint him.'

They looked at him for an explanation, it being an understood thing generally that he would do what everyone else shrank from doing.

Then he gave his reasons.

'I love your son as a brother,' he said; 'but it is not for this reason that I utterly refuse to give him pain. If the marriage *be* illegal, I am very sure that he contracted it in ignorance—any way, the child *cannot* now be legitimized. But a service of the Church has been performed by an ordained clergyman, and no one can hold that they are living in sin. They are never likely to have more children——'

'And why?' interrupted the Earl.

'They *might*, and if so the ceremony could still be repeated; but do you not know why?'

'No,' said the Earl, yet at the same time fearing that he did know.

'Oh,' broke in the Countess, in high shrill tones of pain, 'he means that our son has not long to live.'

Mr. Manly bowed his head.

'It is the first time in his life that he has ever had settled happiness,' he said. 'I pray you do not disturb it with this terrible news, but let him die in ignorance.'

'Is there *no* hope of his life?' asked the Countess.

'I do not know,' said Mr. Manly; 'with care I should say he perhaps might live some months. Let us all try to make them happy months.'

So he departed, giving strict orders at the Vicarage that no lady calling herself Mrs. Lester was to be admitted to the presence of either Lord or Lady Mountain, and that if such lady appeared he himself was to be instantly summoned, whether he were in or out.

But the happiness had gone from Valerian Park. The Earl would look at the boy and mutter 'Illegitimate,' and then turn and glower at Mr. Barnard, who found his position by no means pleasant, and had serious thoughts of resigning.

CHAPTER LVII.

BUDDHISM *versus* CHRISTIANITY.

It was not without grave dismay that Mr. Manly contemplated the present position of affairs and realized its sadness. But the more he thought over the matter the more firmly convinced he was that he was right. For it was his opinion that Dorothea would not long outlive her husband; if so, then why disturb the happiness of either? Like the Earl, he felt some irritation against Mr. Barnard, knowing that no power on earth would have made *him* perform such a ceremony, but he entirely forgot that Mr. Barnard had never possessed his strength of character. That Lord Mountain had believed the marriage legal he was sure of; if not, why had the birth of the child been so carefully registered in his own name?

Mrs. Lester did not appear at the Vicarage; she was by no means anxious to be found by Lord Mountain, for she made sure that he would fulfil his words and have her apprehended. She remained for the present in concealment in Plymouth, never going out of doors, and, believing that he was aware of what she had done, she lived in daily fear of arrest.

For a few days Mr. and Mrs. Manly left their guests as entirely to themselves as it was possible to do: they all dined and breakfasted together, but saw little more of one another during the day. In the house, when alone, Dorothea seemed to live in her husband's arms, speaking little, but full of the most devout thankfulness and content. There was none of that wild joy in his love which he had feared; he was always grave, generally silent; but what he felt was absolute rest. For a time he had given up all vexed questions connected with his religion, but, had he not done so, his mind was now in that calm state that, had he possessed the strength, he might have gone into any subject connected with it. They had arranged to go away shortly for some weeks, promising to return to the Vicarage,

for Lord Mountain had as much regard for Mr. Manly as Mr. Manly had for him.

It was now that Mr. Manly began to feel ever more fear of the work before him, that of trying to alter the religion of a man with so much faith in his own, and such a man! But he knew that, however much he might dread it, the work, if to be done at all, must be commenced before Lord Mountain left the Vicarage.

They had had some idea of spending a few days at Valerian Park when their tour was ended, but whereas Mr. Manly had formerly been greatly in favour of this plan, he now in conversation seemed to throw every obstacle in its way, which somewhat surprised Lord Mountain, who, having submitted his judgment to that of Mr. Manly in one instance, seemed inclined to submit to it in every instance.

'I wonder if you would submit to a penance from me if I imposed one on you?' Mr. Manly said one day with a laugh.

'I think I might safely promise I would,' said Lord Mountain with his grave smile. 'I do not suppose it would be a very heavy one.'

'It would be by no means a light one; but I don't know that I shall let you go unless you do promise.'

'What is it?'

'That you will implicitly obey your wife while you are away, do whatever she tells you in the matter of food and drink, and let her feed and pet and cosset you to her heart's content. I am quite sure that to be uncomfortable is second nature with you, therefore this penance.'

Lord Mountain smiled and said that he would promise.

And now, after spending a still longer period than usual in prayer, his heart yet more distrustful of himself, Mr. Manly prepared to commence his work. He invited Lord Mountain into his study, and asked him to give him an outline of the Buddhist faith, which, he said, he had always understood was a most charitable and liberal one.

'This is one of our maxims,' said Lord Mountain. 'The schools of philosophy are always in conflict, and the noise of their passionate discussions rises like the waves of the sea. Heretics of the various sects attach themselves to particular teachers, and by different routes walk to the same goal.'

'A very liberal sentiment,' said Mr. Manly, 'but, although you consider me a heretic, I do not suppose our talk will ever rise to "passionate discussion." Proceed.'

'The object of our religion is "to gain the haven of peace in the power over the human heart of inward culture and of love to others,"' quoted Lord Mountain. '"To cease from all wrong-doing; to get virtue; to cleanse one's own heart; to prefer righteousness to almsgiving"—this is the Buddhist religion. Buddhism pure does not in reality recognise a Supreme Being, neither prayer nor worship. It starts with the belief that the taint of misery hangs over our life, and that the only means of escaping from this misery, and the endless cycle of unsatisfying changes which befall a man after leaving this life, is by subduing all evil in one's nature, and by lessening every attachment to life, striving to obtain Nirvana; in other words, eternal bliss with complete cessation from idea, and consequent liberation from metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul. All the actions and affections of a being throughout his migrations leave their impressions and stains upon him, and the sum of these determines at each stage what form of existence he must next assume until Nirvana is reached. This is Buddhism pure, and very seldom met with. Perhaps you would prefer to hear my own belief, which partakes of Brahminism?'

'I should very much prefer it,' said Mr. Manly.

'I believe with the Brahmins that "the universe existed originally only in darkness, undiscoverable, as if it were wholly immersed in sleep. Then the Self-existent power, himself undiscerned, but making this world discernible, appeared in glory, dispelling the gloom. He whom the mind alone can perceive, whose essence eludes the external organs, who has no visible parts, who exists from eternity—even he, the Soul of all beings, whom no being can comprehend, shone forth in person; he having willed to produce various beings from his own divine substance, first with a thought created the waters." The first being produced from the Self-existent was Brahma, the great forefather of all spirits; he created the heavens and the earth; then he drew forth mind, already existing substantially, though unperceived by sense. He next produced the elements. From Brahma individual souls emanate; the soul, therefore, is not born, neither does it die; it is infinite, immortal, intelligent, sentient and true. By overcoming the tangible and gross elements of the body, the soul more nearly approaches the Creator and spiritual existence. The effect of the human will is largely recog-

nised, and the liberation which takes place from the body at death enables the soul to reside in heaven or hell. But only for a time: it will eventually return to earth in the form of body decided on by the Karma of a man's actions when in the flesh, and live again until Nirvana is reached. The heavenly systems are unknown and unknowable from beginning to end. Nirvana I believe to be open to the lowest outcasts, as do all the Buddhists. The Brahminical sacrifices I do not believe in.'

'Are they considered expiatory?'

'Yes.'

'The Brahminical doctrine of the threefold Deity I have always believed: the Creator, the God incarnate, and the Divine essence. They acknowledge many other deities, minor ones, but on these points I have never made up my mind: I neither believe nor disbelieve in them.'

'You surely have read some Christian books,' said Mr. Manly, struck by the similarity of the belief.

'A few.'

'Which have insensibly influenced you,' he thought. He was rejoiced to find that his work might not be so arduous as he expected.

'Gautama, the first Buddha, was very early regarded as omniscient and absolutely sinless; by his mystic wisdom the worlds were made, though he was not the Creator. He came down from heaven, without an earthly father, abandoning splendour for poverty. His mother had dreams and visions from heaven; it was told her that the child would be a son, a universal monarch, who would remove the veils of ignorance and sin from the world.'

'Is all this in the Buddhist sacred writings?'

'About the Buddha? Every word—also what is to follow; it is a literal translation, and not solely my belief.'

'What date is it supposed to be!'

'It is *supposed* about 500 years B.C.'

'*Wonderful!*' said Mr. Manly.

'At his birth earth and heaven united to pay him homage, angels and archangels were present with their harps. At his conception ten thousand worlds were filled with light, the blind received sight, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, the crooked became straight, the lame walked, the imprisoned were set free, all nature bloomed, all beings

in earth and heaven rejoiced, the fires of hell were extinguished, the torments of the lost mitigated. At his birth he exclaimed: "I am the Chief of the World."'

'*Wonderful!*' said Mr. Manly again.

'When he was presented in the temple, all the gods did him honour; he was considered the "Water in fire, Light in darkness, Liberator of those chained in sin, Physician of those diseased; by him were truth and salvation." He rode away from the grandeur of his father's house on the chariot of the Sun, he himself the "Immeasurable Light." He was tempted by devils, but overcame temptation; his first sermon was concerning the rolling onward of the royal chariot-wheel of righteousness. He was transfigured by the setting sun. At his death trees and flowers rendered him homage, and the angels sang heavenly songs to strengthen him; having avenged every obstacle, he disappeared in glory in the mist. To recapitulate, the Buddha before birth is a god; to speak correctly, he is not born, but incarnates himself among men for their good and salvation; his conception was miraculous, without mortal father; from his birth he was powerful, irresistible; as he advanced in space he illumined the worlds, proclaiming his own supremacy, until after his dispute with the Storm Demon he appeared in sovereign splendour.'

'Oh,' said Mr. Manly, 'whether this account is legendary or otherwise, what a beautiful thing it is to know that, whatever their names, the great truths are universal!'

'In fairness, I ought to say that this beautiful teaching is constantly obscured by debasing superstitions, and confused by the subtlest metaphysical distinctions, which ruin its beauty and simplicity. It was my aim to restore this, and help to bring in "the spirit of kindness out of which all virtues rise; by the strength of which the Buddhist church will once more triumph throughout the world, and conquer all sin and unbelief."'

'What do you understand by angels?'

'They are those beings in heaven which are the present result of the actions of men; they will produce the Buddhas of the future. Every earthly mortal Buddha has his pure and glorious counterpart in the mystic world, free from the debasing conditions of the material world.'

'I am very much obliged to you for all you have told me,' said Mr. Manly; 'and I consider your faith in many respects a very beautiful one, and largely resembling our own.'

He was well aware that moderation in argument is the surest mode of convincing others, and that a one-sided view is generally false.

'But,' he said, 'I see weak points in your system.'

'Point them out.'

'Speaking frankly, as apart from what you have learned to believe, have you never felt that the almost absolute extinction of idea in Nirvana is somewhat terrible, especially to such a man as you, with warm affections, large intellect and great powers?'

'I have felt it so sometimes.'

'Would not a life in which these powers were continued, immeasurably developed, in which all the manifold wonders of all the worlds of space were by degrees made known to you, in which your warmest affections for others were continued, in which you had no fear of further metempsychosis, be preferable?'

'It would.'

'Have you never felt, when in loneliness and sorrow, that longing after a *personal* God, as conveyed by the words "Our Father"?'

'That I have felt.'

'Do you believe that the known types of nature are but as the shadows of the invisible worlds, which presage their glories?'

'I do.'

'Then what becomes of the love you feel to your child, if it be not the type of something grander?'

'I do not know.'

'Oh,' said Mr. Manly warmly, 'continue your faith if you will; what do names matter? Take your God for our God, your incarnate Deity for ours, your Divine Essence for our Third Person; keep up your works of charity and love; practise within reasonable limits your self-denial; but believe that all that inward peace and salvation which you have tried to buy by terrible suffering, and by your own acknowledgment have tried in vain, is already bought for you.'

'I do not understand you.'

'Do you believe that if your present life's sufferings (and I know no man who has suffered so much and so nobly) were found vain to procure you that peace after which you strive, that in another life you could ever suffer or do *more?*'

'No, I do not.'

'If, then, you have failed now, you will fail always, and be no nearer Nirvana. Your conceptions are very grand, I allow, but what becomes of the uneducated who cannot enter into them? Keep them, by all means, but graft them on to something better, something which more entirely satisfies the need of the human heart, and is suited to the ignorant and learned alike.'

Lord Mountain listened in some surprise; he had been prepared for total dissent, but not for this adaptation of doctrine. Whereas he had made up his mind to be convinced by nothing which Mr. Manly might bring forward, he now, owing to his great moderation, gave full weight to what he said.

'I have listened to the account of your religion, and greatly admired it,' said Mr. Manly; 'I want you to listen, or rather read, the history of mine.'

'I will do so.'

Mr. Manly took down a New Testament and gave him. He read it during great part of the day, with one arm round his wife, but it did not appear to make much impression on him or to interest him. Seeing this, the next day Mr. Manly presented him with a handsomely bound copy of St. Paul's Epistles, which he begged him to keep for his own.

These attracted him from the very first; he read them most attentively.

'I wonder,' he said two or three days after, 'if you Christians who read these so often appreciate them as I do, studying them for the first time. This Paul was a man with whom I most strongly sympathize: I enter into his ardent feelings, his labours, his love for others, his splendid imagery, but above all into those higher flights of imagination which he as a rule veils from his readers, but sometimes displays. *He* was a man who understood the immaterial and spiritual world, as *I* understand it.'

'I cordially agree with you,' said Mr. Manly; 'but you will not get many people to believe it; what they can

touch and taste and handle is often the ultimatum of their belief.'

There was no further conversation on the subject; a day or two afterwards, as Lord and Lady Mountain were about to leave the Vicarage, the former said:

'I have your books with me; I will study them. I do not see that they entirely contradict mine. I am beginning to think there must be some truth in your religion, since *Paul* believed in it.'

This was rather reversing the order of things, but Mr. Manly was amply satisfied. As they drove away he repeated Scheffler's lines to himself:

> 'Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
> Yet not within thyself, thy soul will be forlorn:
> The cross of Golgotha thou lookest to in vain,
> Unless within thyself it be set up again.'

CHAPTER LVIII.

JACK'S ASSAULT.

On leaving the Vicarage Lord and Lady Mountain established themselves for a short time in one of the lovely villages on the banks of the Thames not far from Streatley. The same quiet peace filled both their hearts; they seemed to have done with unrest for ever. As for other society, they neither of them desired it; he had begun to talk to her as of yore, only that in place of the mystic conversation in which he formerly delighted, a more solid substratum of reality was to be found; as often as not their conversation turned on these Epistles of Paul. Now he never hid a thought from her; as never before in their lives they were now one. But though they had no wish for society as a rule, he asked Mr. Campbell, his former tutor, down to dinner, and gave him, in barest outline, his history.

Mr. Campbell was a big, gentlemanly-looking man with a good voice, a keen, pleasant face, and a large fund of conversation. He was immensely delighted at being invited, and reverted with great pleasure to their days at Colombo.

'They were pleasanter for me than for you, I am afraid,' he said; 'I have never forgiven myself for being such a brute to you.'

Lord Mountain smiled.

'I assure you I have always retained the very warmest recollection of you and your kindness to me.'

'You must have a very forgiving disposition; very few boys but would have borne malice, if not at the time, certainly afterwards, for such an amount of thrashing as I gave you. After I left I wondered sometimes if some of the punishment was not totally undeserved. I assure you I couldn't get it off my mind for a long time.'

'It was very often totally undeserved,' said Lord Mountain with a smile; 'the native servants were not slow to avail themselves of such an opportunity for hiding omissions of

theirs; you often thought I was in fault when in reality they were.'

'Why in the world didn't you say so?' asked Mr. Campbell in surprise.

'Into that subject we will not enter. I am very glad to be able to express my sense of your past kindness and to assure you I never forgot you.'

'And how is that old brute of an Indian prince, your guardian?'

'He is dead.'

'I am uncommonly glad to hear it,' said Mr. Campbell warmly, 'for if you hadn't been one of the best and most wonderful boys that ever lived you would have given him a knock on the head for his brutal conduct to you.'

'Let us change the subject,' said Lord Mountain; 'he believed he was right in what he did.'

And then the conversation became general, and when Mr. Campbell went away he declared that his host was a most delightful companion, though he added:

'By Jove! I shouldn't like to tackle him now; I'm not afraid of many people, but, greatly as I like him, I'm rather afraid of him!'

During all this time Jack Ashworth was abroad; he had heard nothing of recent events. He had gone on a lengthy tour, and no news of him had been received.

Two months passed away—quiet, blissful months. Lord Mountain seemed certainly stronger, though he himself did not entertain the slightest hope of his recovery. To please his wife he had obtained the best advice, but no doctor would give more than a very doubtful chance that he would ever be really well. So Dorothea knew that their time together would be short, unless, as she now imagined, her own life would be of equally short duration.

They had been wandering together one evening in the twilight under the trees, when she found she had left a book at some little distance. He offered to fetch it, but this she would not hear of, as he looked tired; she said she would get it herself if he would sit down and wait for her. Mindful of his promise, he did so, and was surprised at the length of time she was away. But at the tree where she found the book she saw a lady who was reading the name, 'Lady Mountain,' which was on the title-page. The lady was Mrs. Lester.

Dorothea was on the point of going away—she could not overcome her horror of this woman—but Mrs. Lester stopped her. She had ascertained by this time that Lord and Lady Mountain were not aware that their son was illegitimate, and could not resist this unexpected opportunity for revenge.

'Well, Lady Mountain,' she said slowly, 'are you aware that you have not the slightest right to your title?'

'I have every right,' said Dorothea with dignity, 'and I should prefer not to speak to you. Good-evening.'

But Mrs. Lester was not thus to be put off.

'It is now a great many years since I have seen you; it is scarcely polite to shake me off because I tell you the truth.'

'It is *not* the truth,' said Dorothea firmly.

'I can prove it. Do you suppose, *can* you suppose, that your midnight marriage was legal?'

'Certainly I do. I knew, and still know, little of English forms and ceremonies, but I know my husband has not deceived me.'

'Perhaps not intentionally, but it is as I state; your marriage is illegal and your son illegitimate; he can never bear his father's title.'

Dorothea turned pale; here was indeed an awful calamity.

'It is not true,' she said at length.

'It *is* true. Ask Lord and Lady Valerian; they have known it a long while, and I believe your fine Vicarage friends know it also.'

It flashed on Dorothea's mind how Mr. Manly had tried to dissuade them from visiting at Valerian Park; could it have been for this reason? Perhaps they would not tell her husband on account of his health; if that were so, then neither would she.

'I hope,' she said slowly, 'that you are *now* satisfied with your cruel revenge, Mrs. Lester.'

'I am quite satisfied,' she replied, and walked away, leaving England that night.

That evening Lord Mountain, who sat as usual with his arms about his wife, said:

'Dorothea, my child, what is it? There is surely something amiss.'

She smiled and said she was tired. But during the night he put his hand on her face and found it wet with tears.

'Dorothea, my little one,' he said, speaking in his most tender tones, 'thou must tell me what is wrong. It will grieve me more to know that thou art in trouble than to learn the trouble itself. What is it?'

'*Must* I tell you?' she asked.

'Yes; we have no secrets from one another now.'

And then she told him all. But to her surprise he expressed neither dismay nor vexation, and said:

'It is false, Dorothea—it is false. Do you not remember our going to the registry office as soon as we had finished our journey? Whether the churchyard ceremony is binding or not I do not know, but I made sure that the other was. The certificate is now with my solicitors.'

It was quite true. Some time before the marriage Mr. Fellerman had feared some hitch, owing to the illness of the clergyman; he had accordingly, in case of accidents, given the requisite notice, and when the wedding was postponed till midnight, he had determined that in any case they would go also to the registrar.

The news was personally communicated to the Earl and Countess, who welcomed not only it but them with the greatest joy and delight. The Earl was wildly excited.

'Why did you not apply to me or to my solicitor?' asked his son.

It then transpired that everyone had so taken the matter for granted that they had not thought of applying to the solicitor. But from this time the Earl's respect for Lord Mountain vastly increased.

'Who could have supposed that he had such a head for business?' he said; 'and how in the world were we to imagine they had been to a registrar?'

It was also a great relief to Mr. Barnard, who expressed his satisfaction in no measured terms.

'I'm afraid I rather bullied you into marrying me,' said Lord Mountain with a smile.

'I think you did,' returned Mr. Barnard; 'but I wish I could tell you *how* glad I was to do anything for you.'

'You have done more than you imagine,' said the other gravely, 'and you have earned my own and my wife's lasting gratitude.'

After a very short visit, during which everyone was delighted with everyone else, Lord and Lady Mountain re-

turned to Newforth Vicarage, the child remaining at Valerian Park, where the pretty niece, Miss l'Estrange, was also staying.

To no one was the news of the legal marriage more welcome than to Mr. Manly. He was devoutly thankful. And then Lord Mountain told him of Mrs. Lester's conduct, detailing her story so that, as he said, Dorothea might, in case of necessity, be protected from her after his death. He spoke now of his death as a settled matter, and Mr. Manly could not say him nay.

'Shall you take any steps now?' he asked.

The other shook his head.

'I will write to her; that is all.'

The days were drawing in, but the weather was still mild. While Mrs. Manly and Dorothea talked together in the house, Mr. Manly and Lord Mountain paced up and down the garden. The latter had been saying in what perfect order, as far as he knew, he had left his affairs.

'I do not think my wife will outlive me very long,' he said. 'Something in her face tells me she will not, for she has never been strong, but I have left her a sum of money provisionally. I purpose spending the whole of my Indian money in legacies, knowing that my boy will not only have my father's possessions, but Mr. Challoner's. He will be very rich.'

'Do you feel *sure* you have not long to live?' asked Mr. Manly in a tone of pain.

'Quite sure. I know you will be kind to my boy. Oh, Manly!' he said feelingly, 'what a friend you have been to me!' And then a sudden flash of intelligence passed between them. 'You wish to hear what my faith now is,' he continued.

'Yes.'

'I have recognised my God as your God, your incarnate Deity as mine, your Divine Spirit as mine. I have assured myself how much grander your idea of heaven is to the human soul, the poor, storm-tossed, weary soul, than our painful transmigrations and final Nirvana. I have acknowledged that all my works and sufferings have been worse than useless, and have never brought me peace; I have accepted your idea of a personal God who may be communicated with by mortals; but whether it be that you are

right on all these points, who shall say? I ask myself whether it may not be possible that the *same* merciful realization of the Deity actually came to various parts of the world in order to teach mankind, consummating His work finally by His death in Palestine—in other words, that Christ and the Buddha are one. It is my belief that true metempsychosis is this, that when we leave one body here we obtain another of more exalted powers in a higher sphere, and that possibly we may go on exchanging one body for another until such a glorious pitch of perfection has been reached as the mind of man here below has never contemplated. With each change of body we shall probably approach the Godhead more nearly. Therefore is it that when people die they cannot return to this earth; they belong to a different order of creation. I understand why to us finite beings the Supreme Being is unknowable; seeing what marvels of other spheres await us, why He must *always* be unknowable to us men here on earth. But if indeed this incarnate Deity of yours has already purchased my salvation apart from anything that I have done, if indeed He be this merciful, loving Being of whom Paul speaks, he will know that *I would like to believe it, and I would believe it all if I could.*'

Then Mr. Manly knew that his work was fully done, and that he dared not now interfere between any man's conscience and his God. He put his hand up to his eyes and could not trust himself to speak, but in his heart he was devoutly praising God.

They continued talking, still walking up and down the lawn, on which the moonlight shadows had begun to fall, while a pale streak of silver was on the sea beyond. The church opposite looked stately and dark, giving a feeling of solemnity to the quiet scene. Lord Mountain was talking of his past life.

'My deepest regret now is that I should have inflicted so much pain and suffering on my wife. Her married life must have been one long misery.'

He said no more. A powerful hand struck him to the ground, and there stood Jack Ashworth, his face in a flame.

CHAPTER LIX.

FORGIVENESS.

THE assault was not unwitnessed. Both Mrs. Manly and Lady Mountain were near, and came forward. The latter threw herself on the ground beside her husband with an agonized cry. As for Mr. Manly, his anger was such that he would not trust himself to speak, except to bid his wife run for help to carry Lord Mountain into the house.

'You and I can carry him in,' said Jack sullenly.

'You shall not touch him,' said Dorothea, raising her head, her face glowing with anger and contempt.

But there was no help for it. There were no men-servants at the Vicarage, and the maids would be useless. So Mr. Manly and Jack carried him upstairs, and laid him on his bed, and then the latter disappeared.

For a time all was confusion; but after two doctors had been sent for and arrived, shaking their heads over the patient, who had neither moved nor spoken, Mr. Manly went out, intending to telegraph to town for further medical assistance. By the garden gates he met Jack Ashworth.

'What are you doing here?' he asked roughly.

'I thought it was quite possible, seeing messengers going in and out, that you had sent for the police. Well, I'm not going to run away. Here I am, ready to be taken up.'

'Where are you staying?' asked Mr. Manly, in suppressed tones.

'I intend to put up at the Lion. I suppose I ought to say I'm sorry for what I've done. Well, I'm *not*. I'm not the least sorry. I have just arrived from abroad, and came the first thing to see you. As I walked up the garden I caught sight of Mrs. Fellerman, looking just as lovely as she used, though different, as if she had been through a great deal. All my old feelings came back for the moment, and, to avoid her, I struck through the trees to get to the front-door. Then I heard that brute of a husband of hers

say that he had done nothing but inflict suffering on her—*inflict*, mind you—so I knocked him down, and I say again, I'm glad I did it, and I'm quite willing to go to gaol for it.' He spoke with a reckless, defiant air.

To think that anyone should deliberately attack a man with so short a time to live as Lord Mountain shocked Mr. Manly; but, in addition, he felt violently angry, more angry than he had ever done before in his life. He had never known so ardent an inclination in his whole career to knock another man down as he did now. He looked on the assault as such a cowardly one. He bit his lips, and clasped his hands tightly behind his back, lest he should give way to his feelings.

'I don't wish to hear a word you have to say,' he said in those same suppressed tones. 'Go away.'

'I shall stay at the Lion until I know whether I'm wanted or not. I shall not stir outside the doors until you send to me,' said Jack doggedly; 'so that if the police want me there I am.'

Mr. Manly found himself wishing that a little of that discipline which Lord Mountain had undergone in his youth had been applied to Jack.

'I shall ascertain the wishes of Lord Mountain on the subject before I send to you,' he said, still biting his lips.

'And who is Lord Mountain?'

'The man you have known as Fellerman. Go away.'

And Mr. Manly turned his back on him.

Jack walked away, feeling first of all that he gloried in what he had done.

It was as he had said; the sight of Dorothea after so long a time had stirred momentarily all those feelings of long ago, bringing back to his memory the time when he loved her so dearly and would have made her his wife but for Fellerman. His old hatred to the latter returned in full force, becoming uncontrollable when he overheard his words.

He had just come to England, and, having made up his mind that he would propose to Violet l'Estrange if he thought her father would accept him as a suitor, he had gone down to Newforth to ask Mr. Manly's opinion on the subject, Jack having no notion of being shown the door by anyone's father. Then a flash of recollection came over him which dismayed him. Lord Mountain was the son of the Earl of

Valerian, for whom Mr. Barnard had been vainly searching when Jack was last at Valerian Park. Oh, what had he done? How could he come forward now? For, in spite of any old feelings, he now loved Violet very dearly: not with the romance which he attached to Rose in old days, and which he knew he never could feel again, but with an honest, genuine affection, which, perhaps, in the long-run, would be productive of greater happiness. And now this must be set on one side.

He lounged restlessly about the coffee-room all that evening, every time the door opened expecting either a policeman or Mr. Manly, and when he went to bed at twelve o'clock, this restless feeling would not leave him.

So in place of being a nameless adventurer, as he had always considered him, this man Fellerman was greatly his superior in rank and, as he could not but know, in intellect. For the first time he began to faintly understand why Rose had preferred him to himself.

He rose early the next morning and breakfasted in the public room. Then, feeling that in the circumstances he ought to be alone, he ordered a private sitting-room and sat there. Every moment he expected some message or visitor, but no one came.

He did not know how to get through the time. He could not settle down to read or write; he did not care even to smoke; and he was too proud to break his word and go out. He had no doubt now but that he would be arrested, remembering the dislike and contempt which Fellerman had always entertained for him; and, apart from this, he thought of the anger displayed on the faces of Mr. Manly and the injured man's wife, and knew that from them he had no mercy to hope for.

That Mr. Manly should be so angry surprised him much: in former days he had taken quietly his outbursts about Fellerman; neither had he ever before seen his temper rise in such an unmistakable manner. He could not forget him as he stood there biting his lips.

Now that he thought of going to prison in cold blood, the prospect appeared very terrible. There would be the taking before the magistrate, and the trial, and the shame and disgrace, in addition to the prison life, which would be very hard to bear; he could never hold up his head again.

Hour after hour went by, till at last he could stand the suspense no longer. He gave a messenger half a crown and bid him quietly ascertain from the Vicarage, without giving his name, how Lord Mountain was. The message brought was that he was very ill indeed.

This also surprised Jack. Unless his head were struck by a stone or something of that sort, how could one blow have seriously injured so strong a man? For of his illness Jack had heard nothing.

The day dragged its weary length. During the time that came after he thought he endured less than he had done on this day of suspense and expectation. Night came, and still no word was sent to him.

The next morning, as he was thinking of writing a letter to Mr. Manly, the latter entered. Apart from Lord Mountain's condition, he had not cared to come sooner, until he could subdue his anger in Jack's presence. It was, perhaps, for this reason that he found it such hard work, that his face was very grave and composed.

As he entered, Jack involuntarily put out his hand.

Mr. Manly just as involuntarily put his hands behind his back; then, seeming to remember the course he had marked out for himself, he said quietly:

'If anyone had told me, Ashworth, that you could strike down a man with one foot in the grave, I would have said that it was not possible.'

'*What!*' said Jack in horror. 'Have I been such a villain as that? I did not know that he was ill.'

It was a relief to Mr. Manly to find that the case was not quite so bad as he had thought, though bad enough in all conscience.

'How is he?' continued Jack.

'He is very ill. He will never leave his bed again.'

'Oh,' said Jack bitterly, 'I am very glad that my father is dead. I suppose I am a murderer?'

Mr. Manly thought that, as far as feeling had gone, Jack had been one; but he was now beginning to feel sorry for the young man, and he spoke to him very gently.

'I have a message for you from Lord Mountain.'

'What is it?' asked Jack, thinking of the Fellerman of old days with the smile of contempt on his face.

'It is that he never realized until within the last two

months the great wrong he did you in taking away your bride from you, and that he now freely forgives you.'

Jack's cup of remorse was now full; never had he appeared so contemptible in his own eyes. He did not know what to say for a time, and then he walked to the window, and, without looking at Mr. Manly, said, in a low voice:

'Will you tell him that I am very much ashamed of what I have done, and that I did not know that he was ill.' After a pause, he continued: 'And—does *she* forgive me?'

'*That*,' said Mr. Manly, 'is a little too much to expect. I do not suppose that she will ever forgive you. But we have agreed that the matter is to be entirely hushed up. Not even the doctors know anything except that he has had a fall. His wife will say nothing, neither will my wife and I. I think, Ashworth, that you will never forget this sad experience of yours.'

'Never!' said Jack. 'I feel now that I would rather go to gaol for it, as I deserve.'

He left Newforth at once.

CHAPTER LX.

LORD MOUNTAIN'S DEATH.

LORD MOUNTAIN lay quietly in his bed; the doctors thought he might perhaps live three weeks. He desired that the Earl and Countess and his child should be summoned now to take farewell of him, in order that his last time might be spent with his wife, undisturbed by anyone save Mr. Manly. So they came, and their parting scene was very touching.

During the short visit that Lord Mountain had paid to Valerian Park he had endeared himself greatly to his mother; he talked with her constantly, and infused into his manner a certain reverential affection which was very pleasing to her. She mourned sadly when she heard the news; the Earl, too, was greatly overcome.

'Just as he was getting over his nonsense, and we were becoming such friends,' he said. So he bade him farewell with tears in his eyes, not understanding in the least what he meant when he said: 'If Mr. Ashworth should one day find himself in trouble, I hope you will befriend him'; but he faithfully promised that he would.

The Countess was overcome with grief, but her son smiled, and, pointing to his child, said: 'Mother, this boy will be your son in future, for Dorothea will not remain long after me. You will be good to her as long as you can, I know.' Then he kissed the child and blessed him, and turned away his face as the boy was taken away from him at last.

The days passed very quietly, but as he grew weaker he would sometimes lose full consciousness and tell them he saw visions. Sometimes they were those of mystic and glorious worlds, and sometimes they were such as St. Paul saw. But whatever their nature they were never terrible; all his sufferings seemed forgotten. To Dorothea he would talk as of old. Then, as the end was drawing near, he said to her: 'Dorothea, my child, I fear I have not always guided thee right. If, indeed, the Christian's creed be the

true one, and we are to live in worlds of glory on leaving this earth, without ever having to undergo this weary fleshly life again, I would like to assure thee of it. Thou hast been so near to me, thy spirit and mine have dwelt so closely together that I cannot think they will be long apart. Knowing that I did it in ignorance, if I taught thee falsely, it will be forgiven me; perhaps I might even now be permitted to guide thee right. If Paul's visions are true, and for myself I do not doubt them, then, if I may, I will appear to thee as thou leavest this earth, so that together we may enter these glorious worlds.'

She bent over him and kissed him, saying nothing.

To Mr. Manly he spoke but little, neither did the former once question him as to his faith. In presence of this grand, silent soul, it seemed to him he could but hold his peace. He prayed for him yet more fervently, but he said no word. Then came the day when Lord Mountain's hours were numbered, and Mr. Manly was called to take his last farewell. He came in with sternly composed face, and, kneeling down beside the bed, placed both his hands on those of his friend, looking long and silently into his face, with tears in his eyes.

'Is all well with you, my brother?' he said at length.

'All is well,' was the reply. Then he smiled faintly and said, 'Farewell, until we meet again.'

Mr. Manly laid his lips on Lord Mountain's forehead and walked out of the room. He locked himself in his study and denied himself to all comers.

Dorothea remained alone with her husband; her arms were round him, the setting sun shone on his face. He looked at her until the shadows fell, and with the shadows came the Angel of Death.

CHAPTER LXI.

RETRIBUTION.

THE body of Lord Mountain was to be taken to Valerian Park for interment. But the day after his death his mother came to the Vicarage, and, with streaming eyes, asked if the service of the Church of England might be read over the grave of one with her son's views.

'He has been baptized?' asked Mr. Manly.

'Yes, when he was an infant.'

'Surely it can be read,' said the clergyman. 'I do not presume to give my opinion positively, but it seems to *me* that his place in heaven will be a very high one.'

Then his mother went to look on her son's most beautiful face as he lay surrounded by white flowers.

She had scarcely left the Vicarage, when another visitor arrived to see Mr. Manly, a lady who kept her veil down until she was shown into the study. When she raised it she displayed a haggard, handsome face, on which the mark of great suffering was imprinted.

'Is it true that Lord Mountain is dead?' she asked.

'It is quite true,' replied Mr. Manly.

'I had a letter from him this morning; I only received it with the news of his death. It was written some time ago, but only reached me to-day, as I was travelling about. I am Mrs. Lester.'

'And, being Mrs. Lester, do you dare to come here,' he asked sternly—'you who did your utmost to injure the dead man and his wife!'

'Do not reproach me,' she said; 'I am heart-broken. I loved him dearly.'

'I have no pity for you,' said Mr. Manly; 'do not talk to me of love. You nourished hatred in your heart for years, if not against him, against his wife, who had never injured you, and on the first opportunity you brought forward your well-matured scheme of revenge, which I am happy to tell

you has fallen to the ground, as the marriage was legal. Do you call *this* love?'

'I *did* love him,' she said; 'I loved him ever since I first knew him, although I do not think he ever really liked me. I worked for him, I could have died for him.'

'You hated him,' said Mr. Manly in his sternest voice, 'and you displayed your hatred. Had it been a momentary feeling I could have understood it, but with you it has lasted for years.'

'And do you not know what a small barrier there is between great love and hatred when jealousy comes too? I loved him, I repeat.' And then she besought Mr. Manly to let her see the body of Lord Mountain, and Mr. Manly sternly refused. She begged and implored, throwing up her hands and beseeching him.

'If it depended on *me*,' he said, 'I would still refuse you; but the matter is in the hands of his wife. If she will grant your request, I have no right to deny it.'

'Before you ask her, let me tell you how *he* forgave me,' she said brokenly, and, taking out the letter, showed him the pieces of her own confession of murder, which he had torn into fragments and enclosed to her, accompanied by a letter in which he said he forgave her for her futile revenge, and he hoped if she were again inclined to injure his wife she would stay her hand, remembering that she herself had been forgiven.

'And just as I had read it,' she said, 'I saw the news of his death in the paper.'

'I will ask Lady Mountain,' said Mr. Manly; 'but should she invite my opinion I shall not endorse your request. I cannot but think that this should be your fitting punishment.' For although Mr. Manly had forgiven every enemy of his own—and he had at one time been much injured—he could scarcely at present forgive the enemies of the man he had loved so dearly.

But Dorothea did not ask his opinion. 'My husband forgave her,' she said, 'and he would wish it. But do not let her come near me.'

So Mr. Manly himself took her to the room where Lord Mountain lay in all the majesty of death, and the scene that took place was so painful that at length Mr. Manly led her forcibly from the room.

'Go your way,' he said gently, as he walked with her through the garden; 'I am willing to believe that you repent.'

'I do,' she said; 'I shall never know another happy day. After long years my sin has found me out.'

That evening the removal to Valerian Park took place; Lord Mountain was to be buried in the family vault adjoining the chapel. Mr. Barnard was asked to read the service conjointly with Mr. Manly, but the former refused.

'I couldn't do it,' he said; 'I should cry like a child.'

But when the day came the man who had loved Lord Mountain better than any brother read the service throughout without a quiver in his beautiful voice until he came to the committal sentence, when he paused slightly, and, raising his tones, emphasized the words 'in *sure* and *certain* hope of the Resurrection to eternal life.' And to the end of her days the Countess was grateful to him for doing so: it seemed to put an end to all her doubts.

The will, when read, was a very remarkable one, owing to the number of the bequests. To Mr. Manly was left ten thousand pounds; to Mrs. Manly one thousand, which was to be settled on her separately, as a mark of the testator's appreciation of her sweet kindness to his wife; to Mr. Campbell three thousand pounds, which greatly astonished that gentleman. Mr. Barnard was left one thousand, coupled with the explanation that the sum would have been larger had it not been for his expectations from his father. But, in reality, Lord Mountain had been of opinion that Mr. Barnard, for the present, was better without too much money, in order that he might not relinquish his work. Then there were legacies without end. Not to the poor, strictly speaking, but to poor ladies, widows and orphans, sick and struggling clerks, young men who wanted a start in life, and so on, until everyone marvelled. How had he heard of these cases? But that he had not only heard of them, but studied them, was obvious, for in no one instance was the money ill-bestowed; and then it was remembered that a large amount of correspondence had always passed through his hands. There was a large sum of money left for founding a college in India to train native teachers: the rules laid down were very explicit, for the most liberal views to be inculcated, combining as far as possible the Christian and Buddhist religions.

As soon as the funeral was over, Dorothea went to her father and mother's house with her little son. She was not exactly ill, but all strength seemed gone from her. She had never possessed a good constitution, and anxiety and privation, as well as the climate of India, had all told on her; she knew very well that she had not long to live. Mrs. Challoner remarked that she scarcely seemed to grieve; she discovered afterwards that she firmly believed that her husband's spirit was still near her, waiting for her.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE TRIAL.

JACK ASHWORTH was miserable. From the moment that he heard of Lord Mountain's forgiveness he had loathed himself, and as soon as he knew that he was dead he went about feeling that he had the brand of Cain on his forehead. He was living in London, and in the day-time he did his work, but in the evening he roamed restlessly about in the parks or in the country, taking long walks, and returning, knocked up, at a late hour. He could not sleep in peace; he knew no cessation from the grinding remorse which now assailed him. He went to Brighton, then to other places for change, but all in vain; he could not shake off his load of care.

'I killed him,' he would say to himself sometimes, 'or if I did not do so I have often wished to do it.'

His face grew haggard and lined with care; his fellow barristers often wondered what was amiss with 'that good fellow Ashworth.'

'Oh that he had had more self-command,' he thought, 'for if so this terrible business would never have happened.' He had seen Mr. Manly once since the funeral, and the latter had spoken very kindly to him, but had told him that he believed Lord Mountain had loved his wife almost more than any man had done yet, and that the suffering he had heard him refer to was due to certain religious views, the nature of which he was not at liberty to mention. For the fact of Lord Mountain having been a Buddhist was not made generally public. These words only increased Jack's remorse; he saw every day more clearly how greatly he had been to blame.

The Earl had wondered greatly that he had not been to see them, for matters had been so far advanced between him and Violet l'Estrange that at any moment he might have proposed and been joyfully accepted. Lord Valerian

supposed he had stayed away owing to the recent bereavement in the family, until his son's message recurred to him and he knew there must be something wrong.

Mr. Manly was returning one evening from a round of parochial visits, when he met Jack near the Vicarage, looking harassed and ill. He invited him in.

'No, thank you,' said Jack; 'after what has occurred I could never face Mrs. Manly again.'

'Mrs. Manly is upstairs, and will not come down'; for a son had lately been born to them, to their great delight.

But Jack still refused, saying:

'I cannot enter your doors, but I want to speak to you. I can't bear my life much longer, and I'm going to give myself up to the police.'

The loss of his friend had been a great grief to Mr. Manly, but it did not warp his judgment.

'You will be ill-advised if you do so, Ashworth,' he said, 'for you must consider that in this case you will open up fresh wounds; furthermore, that all the parties concerned in it are your personal friends, as well as his.'

'I can't help it,' said Jack, 'I can't go on living as I'm doing now. I killed him, and I would rather be in prison than bear this remorse any longer.'

'No,' said Mr. Manly firmly, although the subject was one of great pain to him, 'you did not kill him. He told me only a few minutes before you struck him that he had not long to live.'

'Oh that I had only known it before doing such a cowardly thing as to strike a sick man!' said Jack. 'But sick or well, I *meant* to strike him down.'

Mr. Manly talked with him for some time, pointing out the great distress he would cause everyone were he to give himself up, and after awhile he consented to forego his scheme. But some four weeks after Mr. Manly was sent for to London, and informed by Mr. Challoner that Jack had given himself up to the police for the manslaughter of Lord Mountain, and was shortly to go before the magistrates.

This news caused dismay at Valerian Park, where Jack was held in high esteem, and, indeed, everywhere except by Mr. Polwheel at Penlist, who rubbed his hands, saying:

'Now, Mr. Jack and Mr. Challoner, I'll be even with 'ee for doin' me out of my hunderd pound.'

With great reluctance Mr. and Mrs. Manly gave evidence before the magistrate, and the prisoner, who reserved his defence, was committed for trial.

The sad part of the business was that everyone came forward unwillingly, and that, until Jack's confession, no one, except Mr. and Mrs. Manly and Dorothea, had had the slightest idea that a blow had been struck.

'I can't believe it of that nice fellow,' said the Earl, and then he again remembered his son's words.

The trial came on very shortly. Jack appeared in the dock looking pale but very manly; his imprisonment had been too short to leave much trace on him, though already it had been terrible to him.

He pleaded guilty, so that in the opening speech his counsel could say little in his favour, reserving his arguments to finally defeat his adversary, the counsel for the prosecution, who turned out to be Mr. Campbell. Now Mr. Campbell, instead of having the generally unprejudiced feeling of the prosecuting counsel, felt most strongly on the subject of Lord Mountain, and determined to do his very utmost to secure the conviction of Jack, whom, although a fellow-barrister, he firmly believed, after hearing of the blow, to be a scoundrel. His legacy had touched him much, and he found himself often thinking of the boy for whom eventually he had formed so much regard, so that now he exerted his utmost abilities to assist the lawyers who collected the evidence. It was plain he was strongly biased, and the fact was he had made interest to be in the case at all.

It was hoped by everyone that Dorothea could be spared the pain of being present; but Mr. Campbell made the strongest point of her appearing. He knew that the sight of this beautiful young widow, in her deep mourning, would be one of his best points with the jury. She came into court with her father and mother, looking very lovely, a faint flush on her delicate cheeks. The Earl and Lady Valerian were there also, as were Mr. and Mrs. Manly and Mr. Barnard.

The trial was expected to be necessarily a very short one. Both Mr. and Mrs. Manly gave their evidence with the greatest reluctance, but no cross-examination could shake the fact that they both saw the blow given. But Mr. Manly stated that not five minutes before Lord Mountain had told

him he had not long to live. Then the doctors' evidence was taken, and although they knew his life would have been a short one, there was not the slightest doubt that what they had believed a fall had certainly done serious harm. Then came witnesses as to character, which were very satisfactory until, to everyone's surprise, Mr. Polwheel stepped into the box.

Dorothea had sat quietly throughout the former part of the trial, but on the appearance of this witness she flushed painfully, and Jack became visibly uneasy.

He stated that he had known for years past that Mr. Jack Ashworth had borne malice against Lord Mountain, or Mr. Fellerman as he was called then. That he himself, being much about at nights, had heard him say to Miss Challoner, when he was out with her in the dead of the night, that he would break Mr. Fellerman's neck. How that he was furious with him almost from the first day he had seen him, as he, Polwheel, very well knew. How that Miss Challoner's carryings on with Mr. Barnard, and Mr. Jack, and Mr. Fellerman, all at the same time, and all out o' doors at night, were such that Mr. Challoner turned Mr. Jack out of the house, and Mr. Barnard had to leave the place, and then after all she ran after Mr. Fellerman on her wedding-day. That at first he would not have anything to do with her, but she begged him so hard to marry her that, after living with her for some time first, he did it to please her, being always an honourable gentleman.

The fury depicted on the countenances of most of the friends at this juncture was excessive; counsel on both sides had long ago endeavoured to stop this terrible witness, but as the whole of his evidence had been given in one sentence, it had not been found practicable to do so. Dorothea had flushed scarlet, and Jack clenched his hands in rage, while the Earl and Mr. Barnard were equally disconcerted. And then it was universally decided that this was not evidence; but seeing that the judge, and jury, and the whole court had heard it, and that to-morrow it would be in every paper in England, it was no great consequence whether it were evidence or not. Mr. Polwheel having done his worst, retired well pleased, saying:

'It would have been cheaper to have paid my hunderd pound.'

'That witness of yours was a great mistake, Campbell,' said a barrister, large numbers of whom were in court, owing to Jack being one of them and much liked.

'Yes,' said Mr. Campbell, terribly annoyed, he himself having been at considerable pains to hunt him up; 'but who could have imagined the man would have been such a fiend as to say so much more than he arranged, or that all these revelations could have been made?'

It so happened that the presiding judge was a personal friend of Jack's, and although we are far from saying that the fact of being a friend of the prisoner's could have weight with any judge, yet, oddly enough, certain things were winked at, so that when counsel on both sides agreed to put forward witnesses to rebut what was *not* evidence, nothing was said to stop them; indeed, it seemed the desire of everyone in court to give the lie to this terrible witness.

So Mr. Challoner was called to prove that he had always been on friendly terms with Jack and liked him, and had never turned him out of doors, and Mr. Barnard to prove that although he had proposed to Miss Challoner, he had always treated her and thought of her with the greatest respect, and Mr. Manly to prove that she had lived in a community of ladies before her marriage, and never with Fellerman; but nothing could shake the fact that Jack had said he would break his neck, and Mr. Campbell remained triumphant.

Part of the company were in deadly fear lest the midnight marriage should have been brought to light, which it certainly would have been had not Mrs. Lester repented of her sins and done no further mischief, but fortunately nothing was said.

To all those who had loved Lord Mountain so dearly, it was inexpressible pain to hear his name mentioned thus, and Jack now realized how, in his remorse and desire to atone for his crime, he had made everyone far more wretched than before.

The case being at length concluded after a severe cross-examination of the doctors (whose evidence became so confused at last that it amounted to nothing), Mr. Campbell began his speech.

Those who heard him say that never either before or since did he so distinguish himself, for he brought his

warmest feelings to bear on the case, being a warm-hearted though quick-tempered man.

He began his speech by the strongest eulogium on the character of Lord Mountain, saying that he had known him when a boy of thirteen. How his character had always been that of a brave, noble, honest, manly boy; how to screen servants he had endured undeserved punishment without a word; how he had nobly borne unmerited hardships; and how his intellect and his heart were far exalted above his fellows. 'The boy was father to the man.' He gave a sketch of his career as far as he knew it, dwelling on his goodness, his nobility, his generosity. He described how he had been the mainstay and succour of hundreds of people, any of whom would at any moment prove his words if necessary; how he had lived a life of hardship in India, in order that he might do good to the poor ignorant natives.

He told how this man, with magnificent culture and intellect, and every physical and mental gift, had abjured society for the sake of his fellow-creatures, he who would have been an ornament to any circle, and how in the pursuance of his high aims he had first met Miss Challoner. His learned brother, the counsel for the defence, would probably tell them that the prisoner had endured great wrongs in being deprived of his bride on the wedding-day—that would no doubt be his strongest point. But what was the real state of the case? Lord Mountain had recognised in Miss Challoner a young lady of great intellect and pure and lofty nature, and at any cost determined for her own sake to save her from this young man, the prisoner, a young man of low tastes and fiery nature, and great instability of character (poor Jack winced) who would have lowered her lofty character to his own, and for whom she had no love whatever—*that* everyone was agreed on. The wedding was, in fact, only a family arrangement. As for the lies of the man Polwheel, they had been amply disproved, with the exception of the fact that the prisoner said he would break Mr. Fellerman's neck, which was very important evidence of malice of long standing. He had omitted to mention that Lord Mountain, out of sheer kindness of heart, and to enable him to do more good, had cheerfully sacrificed both his title and position, so that for the present he would speak of him as Mr. Fellerman.

Solely for her own sake, and without the slightest wish to marry her, he took this gifted young lady away from her home in order to save her from this low-minded young man, and placed her instantly with a community of high-class ladies, as the respected Vicar of Newforth had abundantly proved. But on seeing more of this most lovely girl he had desired to marry her, which he did openly and honourably, she not leaving the side of the matron with whom she resided until she became Mr. Fellerman's wife.

Now, the counsel for the defence, having regard to the fact that Jack had given himself up, and thinking that as he pleaded guilty the case would be quickly disposed of, was totally unprepared for this violent onslaught, and had amassed little or no evidence as to the previous life of Lord Mountain. The speech was followed by everyone in court with the deepest interest, the barristers openly wondering what had put Campbell's back up so much.

He wished to impress on everyone that Lady Mountain had never had a stain on her character, as the counsel for the defence would assert as vehemently as himself. But he had not told the gentlemen of the jury how that before she was married, while she was living with the ladies of the community, the prisoner had come to see her, and, without a word of provocation, had violently attacked Mr. Fellerman, and would have struck him down had not Miss Challoner bravely received the blow obliquely on her shoulder, which was much bruised.

This was news to everyone in court except Dorothea, out of whom Mr. Campbell had wormed it, quite against her will. Poor Jack looked down; the case was looking very black against him, as he was well aware. For the first time he thoroughly appreciated how greatly his impetuosity told against him, and how this long hatred was bearing its fruits.

Mr. Fellerman had nobly refrained from retaliating at Miss Challoner's request; indeed, his whole conduct towards the prisoner had been invariably marked by the greatest kindness and forbearance.

Sensation in court.

It would probably be told the gentlemen of the jury that the prisoner's great love for Miss Challoner had been the cause of the violence displayed by him, but what was the

true state of the case? It was that he immediately went to London, and wasted his substance in riotous living. He gambled, he drank, he lived a dissipated life; did *this* look like a young man who had a great love in his heart? Why, these facts were known, thoroughly known, to the respected Vicar of Newforth as well as to himself, and probably to many, many others.

As Jack was quite certain that Mr. Manly would not betray confidence, he began to think that Mr. Campbell must be omniscient.

The jury would then know what value to place on the statement of his learned brother when he declared that this dissipated young man was consumed with love for Miss Challoner.

Jack involuntarily drew himself up, and Mrs. Challoner looked at him with pitying, loving eyes. To see this fine, generous young man, whom she had always loved, placed in such a humiliating position through his own folly, and, as she could not but own, by the wrong her daughter had done him, was very painful to her.

Mr. Campbell went on to describe how nobly Lord and Lady Mountain had lived in India, sacrificing health, wealth, and comfort to the good of others, and how, after their return, they had gone to the Vicarage at Newforth, he in very ill health after a sunstroke; he detailed the anxiety Lady Mountain had naturally suffered on his account, when without the smallest provocation the prisoner had suddenly appeared, and struck this sick man to the ground —this noble man who, having spent his life for others, had not long to live himself.

Great sensation in court.

He wished to state, not only from the testimony of others, but from his own personal experience, that a more loving or a nobler couple never lived on the face of the earth than Lord and Lady Mountain. As to the former, whose life the prisoner had materially shortened, he would exemplify the nobility of his character by stating that, as the Vicar of Newforth had proved in his evidence, he freely forgave his assailant; but what that Vicar did *not* know was this (here he produced a letter), that this deeply-injured man, out of the love and charity he bore to all mankind, had written this letter, which he had placed with his

lawyers, to the effect that should any proceedings ever be taken against the prisoner, he wished it to be known that he earnestly hoped they would be abandoned ; but if not, having done him a great wrong in taking away his bride, he now wished to repair it by stating that Mr. Ashworth had doubtless considered he had ample provocation, and in any case his life had been almost at an end before the blow was struck.

By this time the jury began to think Jack the greatest villain that ever lived, and he himself acknowledged that he had no idea he was such a pitiful scoundrel.

The counsel concluded his speech with a virulent attack on Jack and on Polwheel, and another panegyric on Lord Mountain.

But the effect of this really splendidly-delivered speech, Mr. Campbell having great power as an orator, and a trick of carrying away his hearers, was a little annulled by the Earl, who had not the smallest right to do it, getting up and saying :

'My son was a very noble man—I did not know till now how noble ; but although Mr. Ashworth struck him, he is nothing like the scoundrel he has just been made out, and we all like him.'

This totally unexpected hit from his own side was very irritating to Mr. Campbell, knowing as he did that the Earl ought not to have spoken at all. Then there was an adjournment for lunch, and the prisoner's counsel, who was no other than his great friend, Mr. McArthur, was wild with rage that so many of Mr. Campbell's statements could not be denied. He begged to be allowed to controvert some of them, but Jack was firm.

'I am guilty,' he said, 'and I have brought all this on myself.'

Then Mr. McArthur made his speech, in which Jack's character was to a certain extent rehabilitated. As to the assault, he said it was not denied ; on the contrary, the prisoner had without the smallest necessity given himself up, so as to declare the truth, although he well knew it would be the ruin both of his social and business prospects. But it was made in total ignorance of the state of Lord Mountain's health, and in consequence of imagining that Lady Mountain had been systematically ill-treated, in which

case any man would have struck a blow in defence of so young and lovely a lady, to say nothing of the very great provocation he had received in having her stolen away from him on his wedding-day.

Then the learned counsel described in glowing terms the consternation and grief that had reigned in Penlist on that day, he himself having been present. Was *this* no light wrong to avenge, he asked? would it not rankle in any man's mind for years?

Dorothea had put down her veil, but she was still the observed of all observers. She began to think that she was amply reaping what she had sown.

'A great deal had been said about the nobility of Lord Mountain's character. He did not for a moment deny it; but the nobility of the prisoner's character was also displayed when he expressly told him, his own counsel, not for one moment to say one word which could in any way controvert this, or seek to throw blame on Lord Mountain.'

Sensation in prisoner's favour.

The counsel then vehemently defended the character of Lady Mountain (by Jack's express orders), and as violently abused Polwheel, who, when he read the report of the case in the papers, began to wish he had never given evidence, especially as every man in Penlist obtained a paper and kept it.

After proceeding to show that in Lord Mountain's state of health any blow such as was given could not materially alter the duration of his life, he enlarged on Jack's personal character, stating that though for a very short time he had lived a reckless life—*as many of the gentlemen now in court had done also*—it was in consequence of heavy grief, but that he had always been the best of sons, the most generous and honourable of men, both before and since; that he was welcomed in every circle of society, and that the Earl of Valerian himself, the most deeply injured of all present, except Lady Mountain, had paid him a spontaneous tribute, as they had all heard. As to the remark that he would break Mr. Fellerman's neck, every man in his senses would know that this was said as a jest, for at that time he had no cause of provocation against him, as even the perjured witness Polwheel would allow. The blow on the hillside was given, he said, just after his bride was stolen

from him, and while he was smarting under heavy wrongs. Then, after enlarging with great force on the friendship felt for the prisoner by everyone present, Mr. McArthur concluded his speech.

Then came the summing-up, which the papers, as usual, said was a careful one. And it certainly was careful, seeing that all the way through it inclined to the prisoner's side. There had been a great deal of irrelevant evidence brought forward, but the real point for the jury to consider was whether the blow given had shortened the life of Lord Mountain or not. If it had, it would be their duty to find the prisoner guilty of manslaughter. They were not to consider the very great pain it would cause all the relatives and friends of Lord Mountain, should the prisoner be found guilty, etc., etc., the effect of this being that the jury instantly *did* consider it, and gave it due weight in their deliberations.

Before his lordship's speech was concluded, he paid a warm tribute to the memory of Lord Mountain (in order to show that he was in no way biased), but capped it with an equally good rendering of Jack's character. But throughout the trial it had been the desire of everyone present to say no word which could reflect on the dead man. Mr. McArthur declared that his hands had been completely tied in consequence; indeed, if he had had his way, which Jack peremptorily refused, he would have represented Mr. Fellerman as a consummate villain. Mr. Polwheel did not escape from the judge's scathing remarks, everyone was agreed on all sides that he was a proper object for detestation.

The jury then retired to consider their verdict. This was a moment of great suspense to Jack. He expected five years' penal servitude, and his heart shrank within him. He had faced the shame and disgrace, but the consequences would be still harder to bear. He had now lost, he imagined, his future wife, his friends, his position, his peace of mind, his character—for what? For an insane championship of a woman who in consequence would always look on him with detestation as having been her husband's murderer, and as having caused her poignant grief. Oh, that he had possessed some of this self-control which all the testimony proved was a salient point in Lord Mountain's character; and then he thought of the Latin quotation he himself had

made years ago at the dinner-table at Penlist, 'Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.' It seemed that his impetuous nature would come to the fore, do what he would.

Mr. McArthur was rubbing his hands with glee over the judge's summing-up, and even Jack's friends shrugged their shoulders, while Mr. Campbell was furious, and said it was a disgrace to the Bench.

The jury were three-quarters of an hour considering their verdict, many of them, seeing how well he was befriended, being in favour of letting him off altogether; but they at length, owing to his own pleading, brought in a verdict of guilty, strongly recommending him to mercy.

Jack's heart beat when sentence was about to be given, although he was outwardly calm, while everyone looked up with interest. Dorothea had left the court, but the others remained, all full of anxiety and fear; indeed, in no previous trial had there been so much personal feeling displayed either by judge, counsel, or witnesses.

The sentence was that the prisoner be imprisoned for three months as a first-class misdemeanant.

It was received with evident signs of disapproval, the prevailing impression being that it was far too light, until Jack said, in a low voice:

'I thank you, my lord; I deserved a heavier sentence.'

And immediately the whole tide of public opinion was in his favour. He left the court with a great load taken off his mind, Mr. Campbell saying *sotto voce* as he passed:

'You scoundrel, I wish I'd had the training of *you*, instead of the man to whom none of us could hold a candle.'

CHAPTER LXIII.

PRISON LIFE.

THERE was a feeling of surprise when the true character of Lord Mountain became generally known. People began to wonder why they had not been acquainted with this noble and gifted man. But the comment made by Mrs. Worsley was, 'Well, I had no idea he was such a saint, but sometimes saints are so infinitely more aggravating to live with than sinners.'

Mr. Manly went to visit Jack in prison as soon as possible. He had resumed all his old kindness to the young man, although he still felt keenly any wrong that had been done to the dearest friend he would ever know.

The first words spoken by Jack were:

'The sentence isn't heavy enough.'

Mr. Manly, although he was glad that Jack would not have to endure a long confinement, which would be like moral death to him, was himself of opinion that, seeing the nature of the offence, and knowing the hatred Jack had encouraged for so long, the sentence was far too light in a retributive point of view. He had no wish whatever that it should have been heavier, but he knew very well that if Polwheel had been on his trial for the same assault, he would as likely as not have received ten years' penal servitude.

'It's scarcely punishment at all, except the disgrace,' said Jack; 'as a first-class misdemeanant I can dress as I please (I *am* devoutly thankful for that), eat and drink what I please, furnish my own room, I believe, have any company I please, and, except go out, do whatever I like. All these fellows I know will be coming in to cheer me up if they are allowed, and there will be, for anything I know to the contrary, card-playing and all that, and I dare say I shall end by being worse than I was before. I am not sure, but I *think* I may do as I please.'

This was a very serious view of the subject to Mr. Manly, who had had great hopes of what the imprisonment might effect in increased stability of character to Jack. But before saying anything he began to talk of Lord Mountain, telling Jack a great many details of the enormous self-sacrifices that he had made, and how he never in his life considered his own enjoyment. He also spoke of his great love for his wife.

'It shows me,' said Jack, 'how utterly I have been in the wrong all the way through. I started by believing him a villain, and I always did believe him one. When I heard him say he had inflicted pain on his wife, by Jove! I don't know what I *did* think, except that he was capable of any brutality, whereas I see it is *I* who have been the brute and inflicted the greatest suffering on her. As I said, my punishment isn't anything like heavy enough.'

'It is quite open to you to increase it,' said Mr. Manly gravely.

'How?'

'By denying these gay friends of whom you speak, should they be allowed to come, and only seeing a few chosen men whom you do not feel would do you harm.'

'Yes,' said Jack sadly, 'I'll do that. I don't want to be as I was before; I can't get rid of my remorse yet, and don't suppose I ever shall. It would be rather a satisfaction to me to take it out of myself. I'll tell you what I'll do. I won't see anyone except you and McArthur.'

'You need not be *quite* so exclusive.'

'Yes, it will be best, or they will all come. And I won't have in any furniture or anything; I will live as an ordinary prisoner, food and all.'

'That is not necessary,' said Mr. Manly; 'the food would be a great trial to you, and so would the other discomforts.'

But Jack had made up his mind, and Mr. Manly did not seek to further dissuade him, believing that one exercise of self-denial would do him no harm, seeing that he had never denied himself in his life.

So Jack lived on prison fare, and slept on a hard bed, and denied himself to all comers, except Mr. McArthur, who told him that he was mad so often that Jack quarrelled with him, and desired him not to come again.

Mr. Manly came up whenever he could, but that was but

seldom, and the time seemed as if it would never go. The first month went by tolerably, then Jack's resolution began to fail; what in the world was he making a martyr of himself for? And then he thought of Lord Mountain and his self-denial, and resolved that in this one instance he would not be beaten. The Governor was very kind to him, but he had long, lonely hours of reflection, and he made some use of them; he wondered at the life he had led at times. He began to count the time to his release: two months, between eight and nine weeks, sixty-one days. His face grew white and haggard; he did not now say his sentence was too light. At the end of the second month Mr. Manly urged him to give up his self-denial and procure comforts for himself, but Jack for once in his life was firm.

'I would rather feel I had suffered something,' he said, 'for I deserve it. I am more sorry for what I did every day.'

So the days dragged on their weary length. The Earl, although he had spoken for Jack in court, having remembered his son's request, was greatly incensed against him, and declared he should never enter his doors again, but Lady Valerian sought to appease him.

'Remember he never had a mother,' she said, 'and that our son wished to screen him.'

There was some talk of Jack being disbarred, but even Mr. Campbell forbore to press this, and Jack's friends moved heaven and earth in his favour, so the matter was allowed to drop.

CHAPTER LXIV.

JACK'S REPENTANCE.

DOROTHEA was fading visibly; she knew herself that she had not long to live. She had accepted the invitation of the Earl and Countess to stay at Valerian Park, feeling that she would like to die there, near where the body of her husband lay. She spent hours alone, but they did not seem to be miserable hours; every day she looked forward, as it seemed, to dying. Her mother stayed there also, and Mr. Challoner had an open invitation to come whenever he pleased; indeed, nothing could exceed the kindness shown by Lord and Lady Valerian.

Dorothea had returned quite naturally to the religion of the Church of England, and for the first time in her life found it something far more than a mere creed. But from the time on board the steamer, when she had turned to Mr. Barnard and said 'Thank God,' there had been no real difficulty with her; she had discovered by herself that no empty systems of philosophy thoroughly satisfy the human soul, and she had never enjoyed her husband's deep faith in the Buddhist religion, or fully shared in his beautiful and exalted views. At times, from force of habit, she would repeat aloud some of the many beautiful passages from the Vedas in exaltation of the Supreme Deity, passages which in force, poetry, and fervour fully equal any to be found in our prophets; in fact, some of them are very similar.

Mr. Manly frequently came down and conversed with her, for he knew that she, unlike her husband, needed a great deal of guidance. He talked for hours on occasion, with that clearness of idea which always distinguished his words, and he always left her happier.

'After all,' he said, 'we should be far happier could we realize that we know, and can know, nothing at present. Far better is it to do our daily task cheerfully, as unto God, than to be for ever exercising, straining, and wearying our minds over unknown mysteries. What should we think of a man who, instead of enjoying the lovely level country through

which he was passing, was always craning his neck in the fruitless endeavour to see over a chain of distant mountains?'

She attended the chapel service every day as long as she was able, and seemed to find a comfort in the liturgy.

The time came when Jack was to be released from prison. There had been much conversation at Valerian Park concerning him, in which both the Countess and Violet had entreated the Earl to remember his promise to Lord Mountain, and befriend the young man.

'I don't want to injure him,' he said; 'but I don't want to see him. It would be an insult to Dorothea.'

But Dorothea declared that she only wished to do as her husband had directed, and that she thought he would be glad that the Earl should countenance him.

It was universally agreed that this would have more effect with the world than anything else, and that if good were to be done it must be done at once. Violet had a long interview with her uncle alone, in which she begged and implored and entreated him to fetch Jack out of prison himself. This he resolutely refused to do. Then she cried, and renewed her entreaties.

'You surely wouldn't marry him now?' he said.

'I surely would if he asked me; and though I am *very* sorry for poor Lord Mountain, I am sure he would have wished me to be happy.'

This seemed everyone's trump card with regard to Jack—the great goodness and kindness of Lord Mountain's feelings towards everyone.

So at last the Earl consented, sorely against his will, and, at Dorothea's request, to something else as well.

Mr. Manly had intended to fetch Jack out and ask him to stay at the Vicarage, but on hearing of the proposed arrangement declared that it would be infinitely better, and do more for him than any other thing. But he went to see him two days before his release, and invited him to pay them a visit at Newforth as soon as he could. By express desire he said nothing about the Earl's proposed scheme.

'You are very kind,' said Jack, 'but I can't stay with you. I'm not fit for respectable society since I have been in a felon's cell.'

The confinement and fare had now told on him terribly; he looked the shadow of himself, and seemed thoroughly dejected.

'Nonsense,' said Mr. Manly in his most cheerful tones. 'You have hitherto borne yourself like a man; do so now, and fight against the feeling that you will henceforth be an outcast. We don't intend to let you be one. The moment that you can come I shall expect you at the Vicarage, and your old friend, my wife, will gladly welcome you. Don't give me the trouble of fetching you, which I shall certainly do if you don't come without.'

Jack felt as if he would choke, more especially at the kind way in which 'your old friend, my wife,' was said.

Then Mr. Manly put his hand on the young man's shoulder, and said some very kind but very solemn words, which Jack remembered as long as he lived, and were the cause of a certain humility regarding his own merits which never entirely forsook him.

The weather was now cold, clear, and frosty. The prison comforts had been very scanty, so that when, on December 31—for he had spent his Christmas Day in prison, and, by his own request, in complete solitude—he came out of the prison doors, he was greatly altered, and bore the mark of no inconsiderable suffering.

A brougham was standing in the street with the blinds down, and the Governor himself conducted him towards it. He supposed it had been specially provided for him, which, indeed, was the case, but inside were the Earl and Violet l'Estrange.

The former had intended to be very stiff in his demeanour, but the sight of Jack's changed face touched him; so much so that it made him feel thoroughly uncomfortable. He stopped the brougham, a hired one, and said he would get up beside the driver.

Then Jack was informed that he was to go to Valerian Park for a day, because Dorothea, who was very ill, wished to speak to him.

'I hope I haven't killed her too—from grief,' said Jack moodily.

And then Violet's sweet eyes were fixed on him, beaming with love and compassion, and before they had reached the railway-station, somehow, both her arms were round his neck, and she was telling him that she loved him with her whole heart, and not only loved but honoured and believed in him. So Jack began to think that perhaps his life was not entirely ruined, and that if this sweet girl believed in him, perhaps,

in the long-run, other people might. But he was very grave and silent, and felt his position keenly when, after the journey, he arrived at Valerian Park. He knew that all the servants were looking at him with interest and admiration as 'that young barrister as killed Lord Mountain,' and his cheeks flushed painfully, for he was weak from insufficient and distasteful food, when he entered the presence of Lady Valerian, although Violet hung lovingly on his arm. He had thought he could not feel more remorse and humiliation than he had already experienced, but when the Countess put out her hand, and said in her kind voice, 'Mr. Ashworth, I am glad that you have come to see us; we will never remember anything against you now,' he knew that his enemy had heaped coals of fire on his head.

He did not see Dorothea that night, she kept her own rooms entirely now; but Mrs. Challoner came forward and kissed him, and Mr. Barnard and Mr. Challoner shook hands warmly with him, and the kinder everyone was, the more deeply Jack suffered. More than once that evening he felt he would have liked to run out of the room, and get away from so much goodness and kindness.

As it was New Year's Eve, Mr. Barnard suggested that they should go out and listen to the chimes at midnight, which were rung from the old church in the heights above Valerian Park. So he, Jack, and Violet went out in the clear frosty night. The stars were shining, and Jack thought of the self-same night some years ago, on which he had threatened to break Fellerman's neck.

They walked about a little, waiting for twelve to strike, and then somehow Mr. Barnard disappeared.

'Have you seen the chapel?' asked Violet.

'No,' said Jack.

She took him into the beautiful little building, which was richly carved and decorated. The moon shone across the chancel, lighting up a handsome tablet to the memory of Lord Mountain, and bearing tribute to his noble life. Jack put his hand to his eyes; his own life appeared too hard to him. But Violet led him out on to the terrace, and, clinging to him, begged him to think of her and of the new life that would open with the New Year.

Just then the bells rang their sweet chime. He took her in his arms, and said gently, 'I will begin a new and a better life from this moment.'

CHAPTER LXV.

'BELOVED, I AM READY.'

'The life that shines beyond our broken lamps,
'The lifeless, timeless Bliss.'

WHEN the morrow came, Dorothea was too ill to see Jack, but she sent him a message assuring him of her forgiveness, *because*—this word was underlined—because it would be her husband's wish. He felt very thankful that she did not wish to see him, knowing that the interview could only be productive of pain to them both.

He went to Newforth Vicarage, and Violet received an invitation also, which she gladly accepted. To anticipate a little, we will mention that they were married before long, and that in course of time Jack overcame his remorse and sense of shame; but a certain gravity of demeanour always characterized him in the future, and his prison lessons were not thrown away on him; he lived to be both respected and honoured, and Mrs. Challoner fulfilled her promise of years ago, and was as a mother to his wife.

While he was staying at Newforth, Mr. Manly was begged to go down to Valerian Park for a week, as it was thought Dorothea could not live longer.

She was looking much the same as usual, though very thin, and was able to talk to him as before. For the first time she entered into her husband's life with him.

'Oh,' she said, 'what a mournful life his was! Now everyone is praising and honouring him when it is too late, but in all his life it seems to me that no one ever spoke to him in praise—he with his marvellous gifts! Think of his most sad boyhood and manhood.'

'I am not sure that it was altogether sad—to him. Besides, you appreciated him,' said Mr. Manly.

'But I never told him so: he was so far above me that it would have seemed presumption on my part to have told him how much I admired him. Did *you* ever do so?'

'Well, no. The fact is I, too, held him in too much esteem to be able to speak of it without appearing fulsome.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea, clasping her wasted hands, 'I do not think husband and wife were *ever* to one another what we were, and latterly there was no need of words between us. He promised me that if all you told him were true he would come for me himself if he could.'

'My dear Dorothea,' said Mr. Manly gravely, 'you must not regulate your faith by what was probably a sick man's fancy. The realities remain whether he come or not. I do not wish to say that such things never have been or never could be, but it would be far wiser not to expect them; indeed, you have no grounds for doing so.'

'I have,' she replied; 'for if he ever told me what was wrong, he might well be allowed, as he said, to lead me right. Besides, he thought that, when illness attacks you, it sometimes enables you to see what at other times is invisible, by weakening the fleshly covering separating mind from the spiritual world, and on the approach of death those bonds of the body are entirely dissolved. Even brain diseases, he said, might be only a distorted and unnatural effort to overcome materialism. Oh, yes, I *know* he will come for me if he can, and if you have told us the truth'—and she repeated the Brahminic hymn:

> 'From the unreal lead me to the real,
> From darkness lead me to the light,
> From death lead me to Immortality.'

Mr. Manly saw argument was useless, and said no more, only every day continued his ministrations to her.

On the day of her death she bade a tender and loving farewell to the Earl and Countess, and afterwards to her child, her father and mother, begging that Mr. Manly alone would remain with her. He knew the reason, and awaited the result in some fear. He had just risen from praying with her, when suddenly her face became illumined with joy; she started up, saying, 'He is here! Do you not see him?'

'No,' said Mr. Manly, turning round.

'He comes; he holds me in his arms! Oh, my beloved, I am ready!' and with these words on her lips she died.

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