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EAST LYNNE.

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF

"DANESBURY HOUSE."

Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption
Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phantoms of passion:
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.

* * * * *
This is the cross I must bear; the sin and the swift retribution.
LONGFELLOW.

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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EAST LYNNE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LADY ISABEL.

IN an easy-chair of the spacious and handsome library of his town-house, sat William, Earl of Mount Severn. His hair was grey, the smoothness of his expansive brow was defaced by premature wrinkles, and his once attractive face bore the pale, unmistakable look of dissipation. One of his feet was cased in folds of linen, as it rested on a soft velvet ottoman, speaking of gout as plainly as any foot ever spoke yet. It would seem — to look at the man as he sat there — that he had grown old before his time. And so he had. His years were barely nine-and-forty; yet in all, save years, he was an aged man.

A noted character had been the Earl of Mount Severn. Not that he had been a renowned politician, or a great general, or an eminent statesman, or even an active member of the Upper House: not for any of these had the earl's name been in the mouths of men. But for the most reckless among the reckless, for the spendthrift among spendthrifts, for the gamester above all gamesters, and for a gay man outstripping the gay; by these characteristics did the

world know Lord Mount Severn. It was said his faults were those of the head; that a better heart or more generous spirit never beat in human form; and there was much of truth in this. It had been well for him had he lived and died plain William Vane. Up to his five-and-twentieth year he had been industrious and steady, had kept his terms in the Temple, and studied late and early. The sober application of William Vane had been a byword with the embryo barristers around; Judge Vane, they ironically called him, and they strove ineffectually to allure him away to idleness and pleasure. But young Vane was ambitious, and he knew that on his own talents and exertions must depend his rising in the world. He was poor, of excellent family, but counting a relative in the old Earl of Mount Severn. The possibility of his succeeding to the earldom never occurred to him, for three healthy lives, two of them young, stood between him and the title. Yet those lives died off; one of apoplexy, one of fever in Africa, the third boating at Oxford; and the young Temple student, William Vane, suddenly found himself Earl of Mount Severn, and the lawful possessor of sixty thousand pounds a year.

His first idea was, that he should never know how to spend his money: that such a sum, year by year, could *not* be spent. It was a wonder his head was not turned by adulation at the onset; he was courted, flattered, and caressed by all classes. He became the most attractive man of his day; for, independent of his newly acquired wealth and title, he was of distinguished appearance and fascinating manners. Unfortunately, the prudence which had sustained Wil-

William Vane, the poor law student, in his solitary Temple chambers, entirely forsook William Vane, the young Earl of Mount Severn, and he commenced his career at a speed so great, that all staid people said he was going to ruin and the deuce headlong.

But a peer of the realm, and one whose rent-roll is sixty thousand per annum, does not go to ruin in a day. There sat the earl in his library now, in his nine-and-fortieth year, and ruin had not come yet — that is, it had not overwhelmed him. But the embarrassments which had clung to him, and been the destruction of his tranquillity, the bane of his existence, who shall describe them? The public knew them pretty well, his private friends better, his creditors best; but none, save himself, knew, or could ever know, the worrying torment that was his portion; well-nigh driving him to distraction. Years ago, by dint of looking things steadily in the face, and by economising, he might have retrieved his position; but he had done what most people will do in such cases — put off the evil day *sine die*, and gone on increasing his enormous list of debts. The hour of exposure and ruin was now advancing fast.

Perhaps the earl himself was thinking so, as he sat there before an ominous mass of papers which strewed the library table. His thoughts were back in the past. That was a foolish marriage of his, that Gretna Green match for love, foolish so far as prudence went; but the countess had been an affectionate wife to him, had borne with his follies and his neglect, and been an admirable mother to their only child. One child alone had been theirs, and in her thirteenth year the countess had died. If they had but been

blessed with a son — the earl groaned over the long-continued disappointment still — he might then have seen a way out of his difficulties. The boy, as soon as he was of age, would have joined with him in cutting off the entail, and —

“My lord,” said a servant, entering the room and interrupting the earl’s castles in the air, “a gentleman is asking to see you.”

“Who?” cried the earl, sharply, not perceiving the card the man was bringing. No unknown person, although wearing the externals of a foreign ambassador, was ever admitted unceremoniously to the presence of Lord Mount Severn. Years of duns had taught the servants caution.

“His card is here, my lord. It is Mr. Carlyle of West Lynne.”

“Mr. Carlyle of West Lynne,” groaned the earl, whose foot just then had an awful twinge, “what does he want? Show him up.”

The servant did as he was bid, and introduced Mr. Carlyle. He was a very tall man of seven-and-twenty, of remarkably noble presence. He was somewhat given to stooping his head when he spoke to any one shorter than himself; it was a peculiar habit, almost to be called a bowing habit, and his father had possessed it before him: when told of it, he would laugh, and say he was unconscious of doing it. His features were good, his complexion was pale and clear, his hair dark, and his full eye-lids drooped over his deep grey eyes. Altogether it was a countenance that both men and women liked to look upon, the index of an honourable, sincere nature; not that it would have been called a handsome face,

so much as a pleasing and distinguished one. Though but the son of a country lawyer, and destined to be a lawyer himself, he had received the training of a gentleman, had been educated at Rugby, and taken his degree at Oxford. He advanced at once to the earl in the straightforward way of a man who has come on business.

“Mr. Carlyle,” said the latter, holding out his hand—he was always deemed the most affable peer of the age—“I am happy to see you. You perceive I cannot rise; at least without great pain and inconvenience: my enemy, the gout, has possession of me again. Take a seat. Are you staying in town?”

“I have just arrived from West Lynne. The chief object of my journey was to see your lordship.”

“What can I do for you?” asked the earl, uneasily, for a suspicion now crossed his mind that Mr. Carlyle might be acting for some one of his many troublesome creditors.

Mr. Carlyle drew his chair nearer to the earl, and spoke in a low tone:

“A rumour came to my ears, my lord, that East Lynne was in the market.”

“A moment, sir,” exclaimed the earl, with reserve, not to say hauteur, in his tone, for his suspicions were gaining ground; “are we to converse confidentially together, as men of honour, or is there something concealed behind?”

“I do not understand you,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“In a word—excuse my speaking plainly, but I must feel my ground—are you here on the part of

some of my rascally creditors, to pump information out of me that otherwise they would not get?"

"My lord," said the visitor, "I know that a lawyer gets credit for possessing but lax notions on the score of honour, but you can scarcely suspect I should be guilty of underhand work towards you. I never was guilty of a mean trick in my life, to my recollection, and I do not think I ever shall be."

"Pardon me, Mr. Carlyle. If you knew half the tricks and *ruses* played upon me, you would not wonder at my suspecting all the world. Proceed with your business."

"I heard that East Lynne was for private sale: your agent dropped half a word to me in confidence. If so, I should wish to be the purchaser."

"For whom?" inquired the earl.

"Myself."

"You!" laughed the earl. "Egad! lawyering can't be such bad work, Carlyle."

"Nor is it," rejoined Mr. Carlyle, "with an extensive first-class connexion, such as ours. But you must remember that a good fortune was left me by my uncle, and a large one by my father."

"I know. The proceeds of lawyering also."

"Not altogether. My mother brought a fortune on her marriage, and it enabled my father to speculate successfully. I have been looking out for an eligible property to invest my money upon, and East Lynne will suit me well, provided I can have the refusal of it, and we can agree about terms."

Lord Mount Severn mused for a few moments before he spoke. "Mr. Carlyle," he began, "my affairs are very bad, and ready money I must find some-

where. Now East Lynne is not entailed; neither is it mortgaged to anything like its value, though the latter fact, as you may imagine, is not patent to the world. When I bought it a bargain, eighteen years ago, you were the lawyer on the other side, I remember."

"My father," smiled Mr. Carlyle. "I was a child at the time."

"Of course: I ought to have said your father. By selling East Lynne, a few thousands will come into my hands, after claims on it are settled; I have no other means of raising the wind, and that is why I have resolved to part with it. But now, understand: if it were known abroad that East Lynne is going from me, I should have a hornet's nest about my ears: so that it must be disposed of *privately*. Do you comprehend?"

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Carlyle.

"I would as soon you bought it as anyone else, if, as you say, we can agree about terms."

"What does your lordship expect for it—at a rough estimate?"

"For particulars I must refer you to my men of business, Warburton and Ware. Not less than seventy thousand pounds."

"Too much, my lord," cried Mr. Carlyle, decisively.

"And that's not its value," returned the earl.

"These forced sales never do fetch their value," answered the plain-speaking lawyer. "I had thought, until this hint was given me by Beauchamp, that East Lynne was settled on your lordship's daughter."

"There's nothing settled on her," rejoined the earl,

the contraction on his brow standing out more plainly. "That comes of your thoughtless, runaway marriages. I fell in love with General Conway's daughter, and she ran away with me, like a fool: that is, we were both fools together for our pains. The general objected to me; and said I must sow my wild oats before he would give me Mary: so I took her to Gretna Green, and she became Countess of Mount Severn, without a settlement. It was an unfortunate affair, taking one thing with another. When her elopement was made known to the general, it killed him."

"Killed him!" interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"It did. He had disease of the heart, and the excitement brought on the crisis. My poor wife never was happy from that hour: she blamed herself for her father's death; and I believe it led to her own. She was ill for years: the doctors called it consumption; but it was more like a wasting insensibly away, and consumption never had been in her family. No luck ever attends runaway marriages: I have noticed it since, in many, many instances: something bad is sure to turn up from it."

"There might have been a settlement executed after the marriage," observed Mr. Carlyle, for the earl had stopped, and seemed lost in thought.

"I know there might: but there was not. My wife had possessed no fortune; I was already deep in my career of extravagance; and neither of us thought of making provision for our future children: or, if we thought of it, we did not do it. There is an old saying, Mr. Carlyle, that what may be done at any time, is never done."

Mr. Carlyle bowed.

“So my child is portionless,” resumed the earl, with a suppressed sigh. “The thought, that it may be an embarrassing thing for her, were I to die before she is settled in life, crosses my mind when I am in a serious mood. That she will marry well, there is little doubt, for she possesses beauty in a rare degree, and has been reared as an English girl should be, not to frivolity and foppery. She was trained by her mother, who (save for the mad act which she was persuaded into by me) was all goodness and refinement, for the first twelve years of her life, and, since then, by an admirable governess. No fear that she will be decamping to Gretna Green.”

“She was a very lovely child,” observed the lawyer. “I remember that.”

“Ay; you have seen her at East Lynne, in her mother’s lifetime. But, to return to business. If you become the purchaser of the East Lynne estate, Mr. Carlyle, it must be under the rose. The money that it brings, after paying off the mortgage, I must have, as I tell you, for my private use; and you know I should not be able to touch a farthing of it, if the confounded public got an inkling of the transfer. In the eyes of the world, the proprietor of East Lynne must still be Lord Mount Severn—at least for some little time afterwards. Perhaps you will not object to that.”

Mr. Carlyle considered before replying: and then the conversation was resumed, when it was decided that he should see Warburton and Ware the first thing in the morning, and confer with them. It was growing late when he rose to leave.

“Stay and dine with me,” said the earl.

Mr. Carlyle hesitated, and looked down at his dress: plain, gentlemanly morning attire, but certainly not dinner costume for a peer's table.

"Oh, that's nothing," said the earl; "we shall be quite alone, except my daughter. Mrs. Vane of Castle Marling is staying with us; she came up to present my child at the last Drawing-room, but I think I heard something about her dining out to-day. If not, we will have it by ourselves here. Oblige me by touching the bell, Mr. Carlyle, and set the trouble down to the score of my unfortunate foot."

The servant entered.

"Inquire whether Mrs. Vane dines at home," said the earl.

"Mrs. Vane dines out, my lord," was the man's immediate reply. "The carriage is at the door now, waiting to take her."

"Very well. Mr. Carlyle remains."

At seven o'clock the dinner was announced, and the earl was wheeled into the adjoining room. As he and Mr. Carlyle entered it at one door, some one else came in by the opposite one. Who — what — was it? Mr. Carlyle looked, not quite sure whether it was a human being: he almost thought it more like an angel.

A light, graceful, girlish form, a face of surpassing beauty, beauty that is rarely seen, save from the imagination of a painter, dark shining curls falling on her neck and shoulders smooth as a child's, fair delicate arms decorated with pearls, and a flowing dress of costly white lace. Altogether, the vision did indeed look to the lawyer as one from a fairer world than this.

“My daughter, Mr. Carlyle; the Lady Isabel.”

They took their seats at the table. Lord Mount Severn at its head, in spite of his gout and his footstool, and the young lady and Mr. Carlyle opposite each other. Mr. Carlyle had not deemed himself a particular admirer of woman's beauty, but the extraordinary loveliness of the young girl before him nearly took away his senses and his self-possession. It was not so much the perfect contour of the exquisite features that struck him, or the rich damask of the delicate cheek, or the luxuriant falling hair; no, it was the sweet expression of the soft dark eyes. Never in his life had he seen eyes so pleasing. He could not keep his gaze from her, and he became conscious, as he grew more familiar with her face, that there was in its character a sad, sorrowful look; only at times was it to be noticed, when the features were in repose, and it lay chiefly in the very eyes he was admiring. Never does this unconsciously mournful expression exist, but it is a sure index of sorrow and suffering; but Mr. Carlyle understood it not. And who could connect sorrow with the anticipated brilliant future of Isabel Vane?

“Isabel,” observed the earl, “you are dressed.”

“Yes, papa. Not to keep old Mrs. Levison waiting tea. She likes to take it early, and I know Mrs. Vane must have kept her waiting dinner. It was past six when she drove from here.”

“I hope you will not be late to-night, Isabel.”

“It depends upon Mrs. Vane.”

“Then I am sure you will be. When the young ladies, in this fashionable world of ours, turn night into day, it is a bad thing for their roses. What say you, Mr. Carlyle?”

Mr. Carlyle glanced at the roses on the cheeks opposite to him; they looked too fresh and bright to fade lightly.

At the conclusion of dinner, a maid entered the room with a white cashmere mantle, placing it over the shoulders of her young lady, as she said the carriage was waiting.

Lady Isabel advanced to the earl. "Good bye, papa."

"Good night, my love," he answered, drawing her towards him, and kissing her sweet face. "Tell Mrs. Vane I will not have you kept out till morning hours: you are but a child yet. Mr. Carlyle, will you ring? I am debarred from seeing my daughter to the carriage."

"If your lordship will allow me — if Lady Isabel will pardon the attendance of one little used to wait upon young ladies, I shall be proud to see her to her carriage," was the somewhat confused answer of Mr. Carlyle, as he touched the bell.

The earl thanked him, the young lady smiled, and Mr. Carlyle conducted her down the broad lighted staircase, and stood bareheaded by the door of the luxurious chariot, and handed her in. She put out her hand in her frank, pleasant manner, as she wished him good night. The carriage rolled on its way, and Mr. Carlyle returned to the earl.

"Well, is she not a handsome girl?" he demanded.

"Handsome is not the word for beauty such as hers," was Mr. Carlyle's reply, in a low warm tone. "I never saw a face half so beautiful."

"She caused quite a sensation at the Drawing-room last week — as I hear. This everlasting gout

kept me in-doors all day. And she is as good as she is beautiful.”

The earl was not partial. Lady Isabel was wondrously gifted by nature, not only in mind and person, but in heart. She was as little like a fashionable young lady as it was well possible to be, partly because she had hitherto been secluded from the great world, partly from the care bestowed upon her training. During the lifetime of her mother, she had lived occasionally at East Lynne, but mostly at a larger seat of the earl's in Wales, Mount Severn: since her mother's death, she had remained entirely at Mount Severn, under the charge of a judicious governess, a very small establishment being kept up for them, and the earl paying them impromptu and flying visits. Generous and benevolent she was; timid and sensitive to a degree; gentle and considerate to all. Do not cavil at her being thus praised: admire and love her whilst you may, she is worthy of it now, in her innocent girlhood: the time will come when such praise would be misplaced. Could the fate, that was to overtake his child, have been foreseen by the earl, he would have struck her down to death, in his love, as she stood before him, rather than suffer her to enter upon it.

CHAPTER II.

THE BROKEN CROSS.

LADY ISABEL'S carriage continued its way, and deposited her at the residence of Mrs. Levison. Mrs. Levison was nearly eighty years of age, and very severe in speech and manner; or, as Mrs. Vane expressed it, "crabbed." She looked the image of impatience when Isabel entered, with her cap pushed all awry as she pulled at her black satin gown, for Mrs. Vane had kept her waiting dinner, and Isabel was keeping her from her tea: and that does not agree with the aged, with their health or their temper.

"I fear I am late," exclaimed Lady Isabel, as she advanced to Mrs. Levison, "but a gentleman dined with papa to-day, and it made us rather longer at table."

"You are twenty-five minutes behind your time," cried the old lady, sharply, "and I want my tea. Emma, order it in."

Mrs. Vane rang the bell, and did as she was bid. She was a little woman of six-and-twenty, very plain in face, but elegant in figure, vastly accomplished, and vain to her finger's ends. Her mother, who was dead, had been Mrs. Levison's daughter, and her husband, Raymond Vane, was presumptive heir to the earldom of Mount Severn.

“Wou’t you take that tippet off, child?” asked Mrs. Levison, who knew nothing of the new-fashioned names for such articles; mantle, bernous, and all the string of them. Isabel threw it off and sat down by her.

“The tea is not made, grandmamma!” exclaimed Mrs. Vane, in an accent of astonishment, as the servants appeared with the tray and the silver urn. “You surely do not have it made in the room!”

“Where should I have it made?” inquired Mrs. Levison.

“It is much more convenient to have it brought in ready made,” said Mrs. Vane, “I dislike the *embarras* of making it.”

“Indeed!” was the reply of the old lady; “and get it slopped over in the saucers, and as cold as milk! You always were lazy, Emma—and given to use those French words. I’d rather stick a printed label on my forehead, for my part, ‘I speak French,’ and let the world know it that way.”

“Who makes tea for you in general?” asked Mrs. Vane, telegraphing a contemptuous grimace to Isabel behind her grandmother.

But the eyes of Lady Isabel fell timidly, and a blush rose to her cheeks. She did not like to appear to differ from Mrs. Vane, her senior, and her father’s guest; but her mind revolted at the bare idea of ingratitude or ridicule cast to an aged parent.

“Harriet comes in and makes it for me,” replied Mrs. Levison: “ay, and sits down and takes it with me when I am alone, which is pretty often. What do you say to that, Madam Emma; you, with your fine notions?”

“Just as you please, of course, grandmamma.”

“And there’s the tea-caddy at your elbow, and the urn’s fizzing away, and if we are to have any tea to-night, it had better be made.”

“I don’t know how much to put in,” grumbled Mrs. Vane, who had the greatest horror of soiling her hands or her gloves: who, in short, had a particular antipathy to doing anything useful.

“Shall I make it, dear Mrs. Levison,” said Isabel, rising with alacrity. “I used to make it at Mount Severn, and I make it for papa.”

“Do, child,” replied the old lady. “You are worth ten of her.”

Isabel laughed merrily, drew off her gloves, and sat down to the table: and at that moment a young and elegant man lounged into the room. He was deemed handsome, with his clearly-cut features, his dark eyes, his raven hair, and his white teeth: but, to a keen observer, those features had not an attractive expression, and the dark eyes had a great knack of looking away while he spoke to you. It was Francis, Captain Levison.

He was grandson to the old lady, and first cousin to Mrs. Vane. Few men were so fascinating in manners (at times and seasons), in face, and in form, few men won so completely upon their hearers’ ears, and few were so heartless in their heart of hearts. The world courted him, and society humoured him: for, though he was a graceless spendthrift, and it was known that he was, he was the presumptive heir to the old and rich Sir Peter Levison.

The ancient lady spoke up. “Captain Levison; Lady Isabel Vane.” They both acknowledged the

introduction: and Isabel, a child yet in the ways of the world, blushed crimson at the admiring looks cast upon her by the young Guardsman. Strange—strange that she should make the acquaintance of those two men in the same day, almost in the same hour: the two, of all the human race, who were to exercise so powerful an influence over her future life!

“That’s a pretty cross, child,” cried Mrs. Levison, as Isabel stood by her when tea was over, and she and Mrs. Vane were about to depart on their evening visit.

She alluded to a golden cross, set with seven emeralds, which Isabel wore round her neck. It was of light, delicate texture, and was suspended from a thin, short gold chain.

“Is it not pretty!” answered Isabel. “It was given me by my dear mamma just before she died. Stay, I will take it off for you. I only wear it upon great occasions.”

This, her first grand party at a duke’s, seemed a very great occasion to the simply reared and inexperienced girl. She unclasped the chain, and placed it with the cross in the hands of Mrs. Levison.

“Why, I declare you have nothing on, but that cross and some rubbishing pearl bracelets!” uttered Mrs. Vane to Isabel. “I did not look at you before.”

“Mamma gave me both. The bracelets are those she used frequently to wear.”

“You old-fashioned child! Because your mamma wore those bracelets years ago, is that a reason for your doing so?” retorted Mrs. Vane. “Why did you not put on your diamonds?”

“ I—did—put on my diamonds; but I—took them off again,” stammered Isabel.

“ What on earth for ? ”

“ I did not like to be too fine,” answered Isabel, with a laugh and a blush. “ They glittered so! I feared it might be thought I had put them on *to look fine.* ”

“ Ah! I see you mean to set up in that class of people who pretend to despise ornaments,” scornfully remarked Mrs. Vane. “ It is the refinement of affectation, Lady Isabel.”

The sneer fell harmlessly on Isabel’s ear. She only believed something had put Mrs. Vane out of temper. It certainly had: and that something, though Isabel little suspected it, was the evident admiration Captain Levison evinced for her fresh young beauty. It quite absorbed him, and rendered him neglectful even of Mrs. Vane.

“ Here, child, take your cross,” said the old lady. “ It is very pretty; prettier on your neck than diamonds would be. You don’t want embellishing: never mind what Emma says.”

Francis Levison took the cross and chain from her hand to pass them to Lady Isabel. Whether he was awkward, or whether her hands were full, for she held her gloves, her handkerchief, and had just taken up her mantle, certain it is, that it fell; and the gentleman, in his too quick effort to regain it, managed to set his foot upon it, and the cross was broken in two.

“ There! Now whose fault was that ? ” cried Mrs. Levison.

Isabel did not answer: her heart was very full.

She took the broken cross, and the tears dropped from her eyes: she could not help it.

“Why! you are never crying over a stupid bauble of a cross!” uttered Mrs. Vane, interrupting Captain Levison’s expressions of regret at his awkwardness.

“You can have it mended, dear,” interposed Mrs. Levison.

Lady Isabel chased away the tears, and turned to Captain Levison with a cheerful look. “Pray do not blame yourself,” she good-naturedly said; “the fault was as much mine as yours: and, as Mrs. Levison says, I can get it mended.”

She disengaged the upper part of the cross from the chain as she spoke, and clasped the latter round her neck.

“You will not go with that thin string of gold on, and nothing else!” uttered Mrs. Vane.

“Why not?” returned Isabel. “If people say anything, I can tell them an accident happened to the cross.”

Mrs. Vane burst into a laugh of mocking ridicule. “‘If people say anything!’” she repeated, in a tone according with the laugh. “They are not likely to ‘say anything,’ but they will deem Lord Mount Severn’s daughter unfortunately short of jewellery.”

Isabel smiled, and shook her head. “They saw my diamonds at the Drawing-room.”

“If you had done such an awkward thing for me, Francis Levison,” burst forth the old lady, “my doors should have been closed against you for a month. There! if you are to go, Emma, you had better go: dancing off to begin an evening at ten o’clock at

night! In my time we used to go at seven: but it's the custom now to turn night into day."

"When George the Third dined at one o'clock upon boiled mutton and turnips," put in the graceless captain, who certainly held his grandmother in no greater reverence than did Mrs. Vane.

He turned to Isabel as he spoke, to hand her down stairs. Thus she was conducted to her carriage the second time that night by a stranger. Mrs. Vane got down by herself, as she best could, and her temper was not improved by the process.

"Good night," said she to the captain.

"I shall not say good night. You will find me there almost as soon as you."

"You told me you were not coming. Some bachelors party in the way."

"Yes, but I have changed my mind. Farewell for the present, Lady Isabel."

"What an object you will look, with nothing on your neck but a school-girl's chain!" began Mrs. Vane, returning to the grievance as the carriage drove on.

"Oh, Mrs. Vane, what does it signify! I can only think of my broken cross. I am sure it must be an evil omen."

"An evil—what?"

"An evil omen. Mamma gave me that cross when she was dying. She told me to let it be to me as a talisman, always to keep it safely; and when I was in any distress, or in need of counsel, to look at it, and strive to recal what her advice would be, and to act accordingly. And now it is broken—broken!"

A glaring gas-light flashed into the carriage, right into the face of Isabel. "I declare," uttered Mrs. Vane, "you are crying again! I tell you what, Isabel: I am not going to chaperone red eyes to the Duchess of Dartford's, so if you can't put a stop to this, I shall order the carriage home, and go on alone."

Isabel meekly dried her eyes, sighing deeply as she did so. "I can have the pieces joined, I dare say; but it will never be the same cross to me again."

"What have you done with the pieces?" irascibly asked Mrs. Vane.

"I folded them in the thin paper Mrs. Levison gave me, and put it inside my frock. Here it is," touching the body. "I have no pocket on."

Mrs. Vane gave vent to a groan. She never had been a girl herself, she had been a woman at ten; and she complimented Isabel upon being little better than an imbecile. "'Put it inside my frock!'" she uttered, in a tone of scorn. "And you eighteen years of age! I fancied you left off 'frocks' when you left the nursery."

"I meant to say my dress," corrected Isabel.

"Meant to say you are a baby idiot!" was the inward comment of Mrs. Vane.

A few minutes, and Isabel forgot her grievance. The brilliant rooms were to her as an enchanting scene of dreamland, for her heart was in its spring-tide of early freshness, and the satiety of experience had not come. How could she remember even the broken cross, as she bent to the homage offered her, and drank in the honeyed words poured forth into her ear?

“Halloa!” cried an Oxford student, with a long rent-roll in prospective, who was screwing himself against the wall, not to be in the way of the waltzers, “I thought you had given up coming to these places.”

“So I had,” replied the fast nobleman addressed; “but I am on the look out, so am forced into them again. I think a ball-room the greatest bore in life.”

“On the look-out for what?”

“For a wife. My governor has stopped supplies, and has vowed, by his beard, not to advance another shilling, or pay a debt, till I reform. As a preliminary step towards it, he insists upon a wife, and I am trying to choose one, for I am deeper in than you can imagine.”

“Take the new beauty, then.”

“Who is she?”

“Lady Isabel Vane.”

“Much obliged for the suggestion,” replied the earl. “But one likes a respectable father-in-law. Mount Severn and I are too much in the same line, and might clash in the long run.”

“One can’t have everything: the girl’s beauty is beyond common. I saw that rake, Levison, make up to her. He fancies he can carry all before him, where women are concerned.”

“So he does, often,” was the quiet reply.

“I hate the fellow! He thinks so much of himself, with his curled hair, and his shining teeth, and his white hands; he’s as heartless as an owl. What was that hushed-up business about Miss Charteris?”

“Who’s to know? Levison slipped out of the escapade like an eel, and the women protested that he was more sinned against than sinning. Three-

fourths of the world believed them. Here he comes ! And Mount Severn's daughter with him."

They were approaching at that moment, Francis Levison and Lady Isabel. He was expressing his regret at the untoward accident of the cross, for the tenth time that night. "I feel that it can never be atoned for," whispered he; "that the heartfelt homage of my whole life would not be sufficient compensation."

He spoke in a tone of thrilling gentleness, gratifying to the ear but dangerous to the heart. Lady Isabel glanced up, and caught his eyes fixed upon her with the deepest tenderness, a language hers had never yet encountered. A vivid blush again rose to her cheek, her eyelids fell, and her timid words died away in silence.

"Take care, take care, my young Lady Isabel," murmured the Oxonian under his breath as they passed him, "that man is as false as he is high."

"I think he's a rascal," remarked the earl.

"I know he is: I know a thing or two about him. He would ruin her heart for the renown of the exploit, because she's a beauty, and then fling it away broken. He has none to give in return for the gift."

"Just as much as my race-horse has," concluded the earl. "She is very beautiful."

CHAPTER III.

BARBARA HARE.

WEST LYNNE was a town of some importance, particularly in its own eyes, though being neither a manufacturing town nor a cathedral town, nor even the chief town of the county, it was somewhat primitive in its manners and customs. It sent two members to parliament, and it boasted a good market-place, covered over, and a large room above that, which was called the "town-hall," where the justices met and transacted their business — for the county magistrates still retained, there, that nearly obsolete name. Passing out at the town, towards the east, you came upon several detached gentlemen's houses, in the vicinity of which stood the church of St. Jude, which was more aristocratic (in the matter of its congregation) than the other churches of West Lynne. For about a mile these houses were scattered, the church being situated at their commencement close to the busy part of the place, and about a mile further on you came upon the beautiful estate which was called East Lynne. As you drove along the road you might admire its green, undulating park; not as you walked, for an envious wall, mounting itself unconscionably high, obstructed your view. Large, beautiful trees, affording a shelter, alike for human beings and for the deer, on a day of

summer's heat, rose in that park, and a great gate between two lodges on the right-hand side the road, gave you entrance to it, and conducted you to the house. It was not a very large house, compared with some country seats, but it was built in the villa style, was white and remarkably cheerful, altogether a desirable place to look upon.

Between the gentlemen's houses mentioned, and East Lynne, the mile of road was very solitary, much overshadowed by trees. One house alone stood there, and that was about three-quarters of a mile before you came to East Lynne, and full a quarter of a mile after you had passed the houses. It was on the left-hand side, a square ugly red brick house with a weathercock on the top, standing some little distance from the road. A flat lawn extended before it, and close to the palings, which divided it from the road, was a grove of trees, some yards in depth. The lawn was divided by a narrow middle gravel path, to which you gained access from the road by a narrow iron gate, which took you to the rustic portico of the house. You entered upon a large flagged hall with a reception room on either hand, and the staircase, a wide one, facing you; by the side of the staircase you passed on to the servants' apartments and offices. This place was called the Grove, and was the property and residence of Richard Hare, Esquire, commonly called Mr. Justice Hare.

The room to the left hand, as you went in, was the general sitting-room, the other was very much kept boxed up in lavender and brown holland, to be opened on state occasions. Justice and Mrs. Hare had three children, a son and two daughters. Anne

was the elder of the girls, and had married young; Barbara, the younger, was now nineteen; and Richard, the eldest—But we shall come to him hereafter.

In this sitting-room, on a chilly evening early in May, a few days subsequent to that which had witnessed the visit of Mr. Carlyle to the Earl of Mount Severn, sat Mrs. Hare, a pale, delicate woman, buried in shawls and cushions: her arm-chair was drawn to the hearth, though there was no fire: but the day had been warm. At the window sat a pretty girl, very fair, with blue eyes, light hair, a bright complexion, and small aquiline features. She was listlessly turning over the leaves of a book.

“Barbara, I am sure it must be tea-time now.”

“Time seems to move slowly with you, mamma. It is scarcely a quarter of an hour since I told you it was but ten minutes past six.”

“I am so thirsty,” murmured the poor invalid. “Do go and look at the clock again, Barbara.”

Barbara Hare rose with a gesture of impatience, opened the door, and glanced at the large clock in the hall. “It wants nine-and-twenty minutes to seven, mamma. I wish you would put your watch on of a day: four times you have sent me to look at that clock since dinner.”

“I am so thirsty,” repeated Mrs. Hare, with a sort of sob. “If seven o’clock would but strike! I am dying for my tea.”

It may occur to the reader that a lady in her own house, “dying for her tea,” might surely order it brought in, although the customary hour had not struck. Not so Mrs. Hare. Since her husband had

first brought her home to that house, four-and-twenty years ago, she had never dared to express a will in it; scarcely, on her own responsibility, to give an order. Justice Hare was stern, imperative, obstinate, and self-conceited; she, timid, gentle, and submissive. She had loved him with all her heart, and her life had been one long yielding of her will to his: in fact, she had no will; his, was all in all. Far was she from feeling the servitude a yoke: some natures do not: and, to do Mr. Hare justice, his powerful will, that *must* bear down all before it, was in fault; not his kindness: he never meant to be unkind to his wife. Of his three children, Barbara alone had inherited this will, but in her it was softened down.

“Barbara,” began Mrs. Hare again, when she thought another quarter of an hour at least must have elapsed.

“Well, mamma.”

“Ring, and tell them to be getting it in readiness, so that when seven strikes there may be no delay.”

“Goodness, mamma! you know they always do have it ready. And there’s no such hurry, for papa may not be home.” But she rose, and rang the bell with a petulant motion, and when the man answered it, told him to have tea in to its time.

“If you knew, dear, how dry my throat is, how parched my mouth, you would have more patience with me.”

Barbara closed her book, kissed her mamma with a repentant air, and turned listlessly to the window. She seemed tired, not with fatigue, but with what the French express by the word *ennui*. “Here comes papa,” she presently said.

“Oh, I am so glad!” cried poor Mrs. Hare. “Perhaps he will not mind having the tea in at once, if I tell him how thirsty I am.”

The justice came in. A middle-sized man, with pompous features, a pompous walk, and a flaxen wig. In his aquiline nose, compressed lips, and pointed chin, might be traced a resemblance to his daughter; though he never could have been half so good-looking as was pretty Barbara.

“Richard,” said Mrs. Hare from between her shawls, the instant he opened the door.

“Well?”

“Would you please let me have tea in now? Would you very much mind taking it a little earlier this evening? I am feverish again, and my tongue is so parched, I don’t know how to speak.”

“Oh, it’s near seven: you won’t have long to wait.”

With this exceedingly gracious answer to an invalid’s request, Mr. Hare quitted the room again, and banged the door. He had not spoken unkindly or roughly, simply with indifference. But, ere Mrs. Hare’s meek sigh of disappointment was over, the door was re-opened, and the flaxen wig thrust in again.

“I don’t mind if I do have it now. It will be a fine moonlight night, and I am going with Pinner as far as Beauchamp’s, to smoke a pipe. Order it in, Barbara.”

The tea was made, and partaken of, and the justice departed for Mr. Beauchamp’s, Squire Pinner calling for him at the gate. Mr. Beauchamp was a gentleman who farmed a great deal of land, and who was

also Lord Mount Severn's agent, or steward, for East Lynne. He lived higher up the road, some little distance beyond East Lynne.

"I am so cold, Barbara," shivered Mrs. Hare, as she watched the justice down the gravel path. "I wonder if your papa would say it was foolish of me, if I told them to light a bit of fire?"

"Have it lighted if you like," responded Barbara, ringing the bell. "Papa will know nothing about it, one way or the other, for he won't be home till after bedtime. Jasper, mamma is cold, and would like a fire lighted."

"Plenty of sticks, Jasper, that it may burn up quickly," said Mrs. Hare, in a pleading voice; as if the sticks were Jasper's, and not hers.

Mrs. Hare got her fire, and she drew her chair in front, and put her feet on the fender, to catch its warmth. Barbara, listless still, went into the hall, took a woollen shawl from the stand there, threw it over her shoulders, and went out. She strolled down the straight, formal path, and stood at the iron gate, looking over it into the public road. Not very public in that spot, and at that hour, but as lonely as one could wish. The night was calm and pleasant, though somewhat chilly for the beginning of May, and the moon was getting high in the sky.

"When will he come home?" she murmured, as she leaned her head upon the gate. "Oh, what would life be, without him? How miserable these few days have been! I wonder what took him there! I wonder what is detaining him! Cornelia said he was only gone for a day."

The faint echo of footsteps in the distance stole

upon her ear, and Barbara drew a little back, and hid herself under shelter of the trees, not choosing to be seen by any stray passer-by. But, as they drew near, a sudden change came over her; her eyes lighted up, her cheeks were dyed with crimson, and her veins tingled with excess of rapture—for she knew those footsteps, and loved them, only too well.

Cautiously peeping over the gate again, she looked down the road. A tall form, whose very height and strength bore a grace of which its owner was unconscious, was advancing rapidly towards her from the direction of West Lynne. Again she shrank away: true love is ever timid: and whatever may have been Barbara Hare's other qualities, her love at least was true and deep. But, instead of the gate opening, with the firm, quick motion peculiar to the hand which guided it, the footsteps seemed to pass, and not to have turned at all towards it. Barbara's heart sank, and she stole to the gate again, and looked out with a yearning look.

Yes, sure enough, he was striding on, not thinking of her, not coming to her; and she, in the disappointment and impulse of the moment, called to him.

“Archibald!”

Mr. Carlyle—it was no other—turned on his heel, and approached the gate.

“Is it you, Barbara! Watching for thieves and poachers? How are you?”

“How are you?” she returned, holding the gate open for him to enter, as he shook hands, and striving to calm down her agitation. “When did you return?”

“Only now: by the eight o'clock train. Which

got in beyond its time, having dawdled unpardonably at the stations. They little thought they had me in it, as their looks betrayed, when I got out. I have not been home yet."

"No! What will Cornelia say?"

"I went into the office for five minutes. But I have a few words to say to Beauchamp, and am going up at once. Thank you, I cannot come in now: I intend to do so on my return."

"Papa has gone up to Mr. Beauchamp's."

"Mr. Hare! Has he?"

"He and Squire Pinner," continued Barbara. "They are gone to have a smoking bout. And if you wait there with papa, it will be too late to come in, for he is sure not to be home before eleven or twelve."

Mr. Carlyle bent his head in deliberation. "Then I think it is of little use my going on," said he, "for my business with Beauchamp is private. I must defer it until to-morrow."

He took the gate out of her hand, closed it, and placed the hand within his own arm, to walk with her to the house. It was done in a matter-of-fact, real sort of a way, with nothing of romance or sentiment: but Barbara Hare felt that she was in Eden.

"And how have you all been, Barbara, these few days?"

"Oh, very well. What made you start off so suddenly? You never said you were going, or came to wish us good-bye."

"You have just expressed it, Barbara—'suddenly.' A matter of business suddenly arose, and I suddenly went up upon it."

"Cornelia said you were only gone for a day."

“Did she. When in London I find many things to do. Is Mrs. Hare better?”

“Just the same. I think mamma’s ailments are fancies, half of them: if she would but rouse herself, she would be better. What is in that parcel?”

“You are not to inquire, Miss Barbara. It does not concern you. It only concerns Mrs. Hare.”

“It is something you have brought for mamma, Archibald!”

“Of course. A countryman’s visit to London entails buying presents for his friends: at least, it used to do so in the old-fashioned days.”

“When people made their wills before starting, and were a fortnight doing the journey in the waggon,” laughed Barbara. “Grandpapa used to tell us tales of that, when we were children. But is it really something for mamma?”

“Don’t I tell you so? I have brought something for you.”

“Oh! What is it?” she uttered, her colour rising, and wondering whether he was in jest or earnest.

“There’s an impatient girl! ‘What is it?’ Wait a moment, and you shall see what it is.”

He put the parcel, or roll, he was carrying upon a garden chair, and proceeded to search his pockets. Every pocket was visited, apparently in vain.

“Barbara, I think it is gone. I must have lost it somehow.”

Her heart beat as she stood there silently, looking up at him in the moonlight. *Was it lost? What had it been?*

But, upon a second search, he came upon something in the pocket of his coat-tail. “Here it is, I believe: what brought it in there?” He opened a

small box, and taking out a long gold chain, threw it round her neck. A locket was attached to it.

Her cheeks' crimson went and came, her heart beat more rapidly. She could not speak a word of thanks; and Mr. Carlyle took up the roll, and walked on into the presence of Mrs. Hare.

Barbara followed in a few minutes. Her mother was standing up, watching with pleased expectation the movements of Mr. Carlyle. No candles were in the room, but it was bright with firelight.

"Now don't you laugh at me," quoth he, untying the string of the parcel. "It is not a roll of velvet for a dress, and it is not a roll of parchment, conferring twenty thousand pounds a year. But it is — an air-cushion!"

It was what poor Mrs. Hare, so worn with sitting and lying, had often longed for; she had heard such a luxury was to be bought in London, but never remembered to have seen one. She took it almost with a greedy hand, casting a grateful look at Mr. Carlyle.

"How am I to thank you for it?" she murmured through her tears.

"If you thank me at all, I will never bring you anything again," cried he, gaily, pleased to see her so pleased; for, whatever the justice and Barbara may have done, *he* felt lively pity for Mrs. Hare, sympathising with her sufferings. "I have heard you wish for the comfort of an air-cushion, and happening to see some displayed in a window in the Strand, it put me in mind to bring you one."

"How thin it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Hare.

"Thin! Oh yes, thin at present, because it is

not 'fixed,' as our friends over the Atlantic say. See: this is the way to fill it with air. There; it is thick now."

"It was so truly kind of you to think of me, Archibald."

"I have been telling Barbara that a visit to London entails bringing gifts for friends," returned Mr. Carlyle. "Do you see how smart I have made Barbara?"

Barbara hastily took off the chain, and laid it before her mother.

"What a beautiful chain!" uttered Mrs. Hare, in surprise. "Archibald, you are too good, too generous! This must have cost a great deal; this is beyond a trifle."

"Nonsense!" laughed Mr. Carlyle. "I'll tell you both how I came to buy it. I went into a jeweller's about my watch, which has taken to lose lately in a most unceremonious fashion, and there I saw a whole display of chains, hanging up; some ponderous enough for a sheriff, some light and elegant enough for Barbara; I dislike to see a thick chain on a lady's neck. They put me in mind of the chain she lost the day she and Cornelia went with me to Lynneborough; which loss Barbara persisted in declaring was my fault, for dragging her through the town, sight-seeing, while Cornelia did her shopping."

"But I was only joking when I said so," was the interruption of Barbara. "Of course it would have happened had you not been with me; the links were always snapping."

"Well; these chains in the shop in London put me in mind of Barbara's misfortune, and I chose

one. Then the shopman brought forth some locketts, and enlarged upon their convenience for holding deceased relatives' hair, not to speak of sweathearts', until I told him he might attach one. I thought it might hold that piece of hair you prize, Barbara," he concluded, dropping his voice.

"What piece?" asked Mrs. Hare.

Mr. Carlyle glanced round the room, as if fearful the very walls might hear his whisper. "Richard's. Barbara showed it me one day when she was turning out her desk, and said it was a curl cut off in that illness."

Mrs. Hare sank back in her chair, and hid her face in her hands, shivering visibly. The words evidently awoke some poignant source of deep sorrow. "Oh, my boy! my boy!" she wailed: "my boy! my unhappy boy! Mr. Hare wonders at my ill-health, Archibald; Barbara ridicules it; but there lies the source of all my misery, mental and bodily. Oh, Richard! Richard!"

There was a distressing pause; for the topic admitted of neither hope nor consolation. "Put your chain on again, Barbara," Mr. Carlyle said, after a while, "and I wish you health to wear it out. Health and reformation, young lady."

Barbara smiled, and glanced at him with her pretty blue eyes, so full of love. "What have you brought for Cornelia?" she resumed.

"Something splendid," he answered, with a mock serious face; "only, I hope I have not been taken in. I bought her a shawl. The vendors vowed it was true Parisian cashmere; I hope it won't turn out to be common Manchester."

“If it does, Cornelia will not know the difference.”

“I can’t answer for that. But, for my part, I don’t see why foreign goods should bear the palm over British,” observed Mr. Carlyle, becoming national. “If I wore shawls, I would discard the best French one ever made, for a good honest one from our own manufactories, Norwich or Paisley.”

“Wait till you do wear them, you would soon tell a different tale,” said Barbara, significantly.

Mrs. Hare took her hands from her pale face. “What was the price?” she inquired.

“If I tell you, you must promise not to betray it to Cornelia. She would rail at me for extravagance, and lay it up between folds of tissue paper, and never bring it out again. I gave eighteen guineas.”

“That is a great deal,” observed Mrs. Hare. “It ought to be a very good one. I never gave more than six guineas for a shawl in all my life.”

“And Cornelia, I dare say, never more than half six,” laughed Mr. Carlyle. “Well, I shall wish you good evening and go to her; for if she knows I am back, all this while, I shall be lectured.”

He shook hands with them both. Barbara, however, accompanied him to the front door, and stepped outside with him.

“You will catch cold, Barbara. You have left your shawl in-doors.”

“Oh no, I shall not. How very soon you are leaving; you have scarcely stayed ten minutes.”

“But you forget I have not been home.”

“You were on your road to Beauchamp’s, and would not have been home for an hour or two in that case,” spoke Barbara, in a tone that savoured of resentment.

“That was different; that was upon business; and nobody allows for business more readily than Cornelia. But I shall not hear the last of it, if I suffer anything but business to keep me away from her; she has five hundred inquiries, touching London, at her tongue’s end, this instant, be you very sure. Barbara, I think your mamma looks unusually ill.”

“You know how she suffers a little thing to upset her, and last night she had what she calls one of her dreams,” answered Barbara. “She says it is a warning that something bad is going to happen, and she has been in the most unhappy, feverish state possible all day. Papa has been quite angry about her being so weak and nervous, declaring that she ought to rouse herself out of ‘nerves.’ Of course we dare not tell him about the dream.”

“It related to—the—”

Mr. Carlyle stopped, and Barbara glanced round with a shudder, and drew closer to him as she whispered. He had not given her his arm this time.

“Yes; to the murder. You know mamma has always declared that Bethel had something to do with it, she says her dreams would have convinced her of it, if nothing else did, and she dreamt she saw him with—with—you know.”

“Hallijohn?” whispered Mr. Carlyle.

“With Hallijohn,” assented Barbara, with a shiver. “He appeared to be standing over him, as he lay on the floor; just as he *did* lie on it. And that wretched Afy was standing at the end of the kitchen, looking on.”

“But Mrs. Hare ought not to suffer dreams to disturb her peace by day,” remonstrated Mr. Carlyle.

“It is not to be surprised at, that she dreams of the murder, because she is always dwelling upon it, but she should strive and throw the feeling from her with the night.”

“You know what mamma is. Of course she ought to do so, but she cannot. Papa wonders what makes her get up so ill and trembling of a morning, and mamma has to make all sorts of excuses, for not a hint, as you are aware, must be breathed to him about the murder.”

Mr. Carlyle gravely nodded.

“Mamma does so harp upon Bethel. And I know that this dream arose from nothing in the world but because she saw him pass the gate yesterday. Not that she thinks it was he who did it; unfortunately, there is no room for that; but she will persist that he had a hand in it in some way; and he haunts her dreams.”

Mr. Carlyle walked on in silence: indeed, there was no reply that he could make. A cloud had fallen upon the house of Mr. Hare, and it was an unhappy subject. Barbara continued:

“But, for mamma to have taken it into her head that ‘some evil is going to happen’ because she has had this dream, and to make herself miserable over it, is so very absurd, that I have felt quite cross with her all day. Such nonsense, you know, Archibald, to believe that dreams give signs of what is going to happen? so far behind these enlightened days!”

“Your mamma’s trouble is great, Barbara; and she is not strong.”

“I think all our troubles have been great since—since that dark evening,” responded Barbara.

“Have you heard from Anne?” inquired Mr. Carlyle, willing to change the subject.

“Yes, she is very well. What do you think they are going to name the baby? Anne: after her and mamma. So very ugly a name! Anne!”

“I do not think so,” said Mr. Carlyle. “It is simple and unpretending; I like it much. Look at the long, pretentious names in our family—Archibald! Cornelia! And yours, too—Barbara! What a mouthful they all are!”

Barbara contracted her eyebrows. It was equivalent to saying that he did not like her name.

“Had the magistrates a busy day yesterday, do you know?” he resumed.

“Very much so, I believe. But you have not remained long enough for me to tell you any news.”

They reached the gate, and Mr. Carlyle was about to pass out of it, when Barbara laid her hand on his arm to detain him, and spoke in a timid voice. “Archibald.”

“What is it?”

“I have not said a word of thanks to you for this,” she said, touching the chain and locket: “my tongue seemed tied. Do not deem me ungrateful.”

“You foolish girl!—it is not worth thanks. There! now I am paid. Good night, Barbara.”

He had bent down and kissed her cheek; swung through the gate, laughing, and strode away. “Don’t say I never give you anything,” he turned his head round to say. “Good night.”

All her veins were tingling, all her pulses beating; her heart was throbbing with its sense of bliss. He had never kissed her, that she could remember, since

she was a child. And when she returned in-doors, her spirits were so extravagantly high, that Mrs. Hare wondered.

“Ring for the lamp, Barbara, and you can get to your work. But don’t have the shutters closed: I like to look out on these light nights.”

Barbara, however, did not get to her work; she also perhaps liked “looking out, on a light night,” for she sat down at the window. She was living the last half hour over again. “‘Don’t say I never give you anything,’” she murmured: “did he allude to the chain, or to the—the kiss? Oh, Archibald! why don’t you say that you love me?”

Mr. Carlyle had been all his life upon intimate terms with the Hares. His father’s first wife—for the late Lawyer Carlyle had been twice married—had been a cousin of Justice Hare’s, and this had caused the families to be much together. Archibald, the child of the second Mrs. Carlyle, had alternately teased and petted Anne and Barbara Hare, boy fashion. Sometimes he quarrelled with the pretty little girls, sometimes he caressed them, as he would have done had they been his sisters; and he made no scruple of declaring publicly to the pair, that Anne was his favourite. A gentle, yielding girl she was, like her mother; whereas Barbara displayed her own will, and it sometimes clashed with young Carlyle’s.

The clock struck ten. Mrs. Hare took her customary sup of brandy-and-water, a small tumbler three parts full. Without it, she believed she could never get to sleep; it deadened unhappy thought, she said. Barbara, after making it, had turned again to the window, but she did not resume her seat. She

stood right in front of it, her forehead bent forward against the middle pane. The lamp, casting a bright light, was behind her, so that her figure might be distinctly observable from the lawn, had any one been there to look upon it.

She stood there in the midst of dreamland, giving way to all its enchanting and most delusive fascinations. She saw herself, in anticipation, the wife of Mr. Carlyle, the envied, thrice envied of all West Lyne; for, like as he was the dearest on earth to her heart, so was he the greatest match in the neighbourhood around. Not a mother but coveted him for her child; not a daughter but would have said "Yes, and thank you" to an offer from the attractive Archibald Carlyle. "I never was sure, quite sure, of it till to-night," murmured Barbara, caressing the locket, and holding it to her cheek: "I always thought he might mean something, or he might mean nothing; but to give me this—to kiss me—oh, Archibald!"

A pause. Barbara's eyes were fixed upon the moonlight.

"If he would but say he loved me! if he would but ease my aching heart! But it must come; I know it will; and if that cantankerous, cross, old Corny—"

Barbara Hare stopped. What was that, at the far end of the lawn, just in advance of the shade of the thick trees? Their leaves were not causing the movement, for it was a still night. It had been there some minutes; it was evidently a human form. What *was* it? Surely it was making signs to her!

Or else it looked as though it was. That was certainly its arm moving, and now it advanced a pace

nearer, and raised something which it wore on its head — a battered hat with a broad brim, a “wide-awake,” encircled with a wisp of straw.

Barbara Hare’s heart leaped, as the saying runs, into her mouth, and her face became deadly white in the moonlight. Her first thought was to alarm the servants; her second, to be still; for she remembered the fear and mystery that attached to the house. She went into the hall, shutting her mamma in the parlour, and stood in the shade of the portico, gazing still. But the figure evidently followed her movements with its sight, and the hat was again taken off, and waved violently.

Barbara Hare turned sick with utter terror; *she* must fathom it; she must see who and what it was; for the servants she dared not call, and those movements were imperative, and might not be disregarded; but she possessed more innate courage than falls to the lot of some young ladies.

“Mamma,” she said, returning to the parlour and catching up her shawl, while striving to speak without emotion, “I shall just walk down the path, and see if papa is coming.”

Mrs. Hare did not reply. She was musing upon other things, in that quiescent, happy mood, which a small portion of spirits will impart to one weak in body; and Barbara softly closed the door, and stole out again to the portico. She stood a moment to rally her courage, and again the hat was waved impatiently.

Barbara Hare commenced her walk towards it; an undefined sense of evil filling her sinking heart; mingling with which came, with a rush of terror, a fear of that other undefined evil—the evil Mrs. Hare had declared was foreboded in her dream.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOONLIGHT INTERVIEW.

COLD and still looked the old house in the moonbeams. Never was the moon brighter; it lighted the far-stretching garden, it illumined even the weathercock aloft, it shone upon the portico, and upon Barbara as she had appeared in it. Stealing from the portico, walked Barbara, her eyes strained in dread affright on that grove of trees, at the foot of the garden. What was it that had stepped out of the trees, and mysteriously beckoned to her as she stood at the window, turning her heart to sickness as she gazed? Was it a human being, one to bring more evil on the house, where so much evil had already fallen; was it a supernatural visitant; or was it but a delusion of her own eyesight? Not the latter, certainly, for the figure was now emerging again, motioning to her as before; and, with a white face and shaking limbs, Barbara clutched her shawl round her and went down the path in the moonlight. The beckoning form retreated within the dark trees as she neared it, and Barbara halted.

“Who and what are you?” she asked under her breath. “What do you want?”

“Barbara,” was the whispered, eager answer, “don’t you recognise me?”

Too surely she did, the voice at any rate, and a cry escaped her, telling more of terror than of joy, though betraying both. She penetrated the trees, and burst into tears as one, in the dress of a farm labourer, caught her in his arms. In spite of his smock-frock and his straw-wisped hat, and his false whiskers, black as Erebus, she knew him for her brother.

“Oh, Richard! where have you come from? What brings you here?”

“Did you know me, Barbara?” was his rejoinder.

“How was it likely—in this disguise! A thought crossed my mind that it might be some one from you, and even that made me sick with terror. How could you be so hazardous as to come here?” she added, wringing her hands. “If you are discovered, it is certain death; death—upon—you know!”

“Upon the gallows,” returned Richard Hare. “I do know it, Barbara.”

“Then why risk it?” Should mamma see you, it will kill her outright.”

“I can’t live on as I am living,” he answered, gloomily. “I have been working in London ever since—”

“In London!” interrupted Barbara.

“In London: and have never stirred out of it. But it is hard work for me, and now I have an opportunity of doing better, if I can get a little money. Perhaps my mother can let me have it; it is what I have come to ask for.”

“How are you working? What at?”

“In a stable-yard.”

“A stable-yard!” she uttered, in a deeply shocked tone. “Richard!”

“Did you expect it would be as a merchant; or a banker; or perhaps as secretary to one of her Majesty’s ministers—or that I was a gentleman at large, living on my fortune?” retorted Richard Hare, in a tone of chafed anguish, painful to hear. “I get twelve shillings a week, Barbara, and that has to find me in everything.”

“Poor Richard! poor Richard!” she wailed, caressing his hand, and weeping over it. “Oh, what a miserable night’s work that was! Our only comfort is, Richard, that you must have committed the deed in madness.”

“I did not commit it at all,” he replied.

“What!” she exclaimed.

“Barbara, I swear that I am innocent; I swear I was not present when the man was murdered; I swear that, from my own positive knowledge, my eyesight, I know no more who did it than you. The guessing at it is enough for me; and my guess is as sure and true a one as that that moon is in the heavens.”

Barbara shivered as she drew closer to him. It was a shivering subject. “You surely do not mean to throw the guilt on Bethel?”

“Bethel!” slightly returned Richard Hare. “He had nothing to do with it. He was after his gins and his snares that night, though, poacher that he is!”

“Bethel is no poacher, Richard.”

“Is he not,” rejoined Richard Hare, significantly. “The truth, as to what he is, may come out some time. Not that I wish it to come out; the man has done no harm to me, and he may go on poaching with impunity till doomsday for all I care. He and Locksley—”

“Richard,” interrupted his sister, in a hushed voice, “mamma entertains one fixed idea, which she cannot put from her. She says she is certain Bethel had something to do with the murder.”

“Then she is wrong. Why should she think so?”

“How the conviction arose at first, I cannot tell you; I do not think she knows herself. But you remember how weak and fanciful she is, and since that dreadful night she is always having what she calls ‘dreams,’ meaning that she dreams of the murder. In all these dreams Bethel is prominent; and she says she feels an absolute certainty that he was, in some way, mixed up in it.”

“Barbara, he was no more mixed up in it than you.”

“And—you say that you were not?”

“I was not even at the cottage at the time; I swear it to you. The man who did the deed was Thorn.”

“Thorn!” echoed Barbara, lifting her head. “Who is Thorn?”

“I don’t know who. I wish I did: I wish I could unearth him. He was a friend of Afy’s.”

Barbara threw back her neck with a haughty gesture. “Richard!”

“What?”

“You forget yourself, when you mention that name to me.”

“Well,” returned Richard, “it was not to discuss these things that I put myself in jeopardy. And to assert my innocence can do no good: it cannot set aside the coroner’s verdict of ‘Wilful Murder against Richard Hare, the younger.’ Is my father as bitter against me as ever?”

“Quite. He never mentions your name, or suffers

it to be mentioned; he gave his orders to the servants that it never was to be spoken in the house again. Eliza could not, or would not, remember, and she persisted in still calling your room ‘Mr. Richard’s.’ I think the woman did it heedlessly; not mischievously to provoke papa: she was a good servant, and had been with us three years, you know. The first time she transgressed, papa warned her; the second, he thundered at her, as I believe nobody else in the world can thunder; and the third time he turned her from the doors, never allowing her to get her bonnet: one of the others carried her bonnet and shawl out to the gate, and her boxes were sent away the same day. Papa took an oath that—Did you hear of it?”

“What oath? He takes many.”

“This was a solemn one, Richard. After the delivery of the verdict, he took an oath in the justice-room, in the presence of his brother magistrates, that if he could find you he would deliver you up to justice, and that he *would* do it, though you might not turn up for ten years to come. You know his disposition, Richard, and therefore may be sure that he will keep it. Indeed, it is most dangerous for you to be here.”

“I know that he never treated me as he ought,” cried Richard, bitterly. “If my health was delicate, causing my poor mother to indulge me, ought that to have been a reason for his ridiculing me on every possible occasion, public and private? Had my home been made happier, I should not have sought the society I did elsewhere. Barbara, I must be allowed an interview with my mother.”

Barbara Hare reflected before she spoke. "I do not see how it could be managed."

"Why can't she come out to me, as you have done? Is she up, or in bed?"

"It is impossible to think of it to-night," returned Barbara, in an alarmed tone. "Papa may be in at any moment; he is spending the evening at Beauchamp's."

"It is hard to have been separated from her for eighteen months, and to go back without seeing her," returned Richard. "And about the money? It is a hundred pounds that I want."

"You must be here again to-morrow night, Richard; the money, no doubt, can be yours, but I am not so sure about your seeing mamma. I am terrified for your safety. But if it is as you say, that you are innocent," she added, after a pause, "could it not be proved?"

"Who is to prove it? The evidence is strong against me; and Thorn, did I mention him, would be as a myth to other people: nobody knew anything of him."

"Is he a myth?" asked Barbara, in a low tone.

"Are you and I myths?" retorted Richard. "So! even *you* doubt me?"

"Richard," she suddenly exclaimed, "why not tell the whole circumstances to Archibald Carlyle? If any one can help you, or take means to establish your innocence, he can. And you know that he is true as steel."

"There's no other man living should be trusted with the secret, that I am here, except Carlyle. Where is it supposed that I am, Barbara?"

"Some think you are dead, some that you are in Australia: the very uncertainty has nearly killed

mamma. A report arose that you had been seen at Liverpool, in an Australian-bound ship, but we could not trace it to any foundation."

"It had none. I dodged my way to London, and there I have been."

"Working in a stable-yard!"

"I could not do better. I was not brought up to anything; and I did understand horses. Besides, a man that the police-runners were after, could be more safe in obscurity, considering he was a gentleman, than—"

Barbara turned suddenly and placed her hand upon her brother's mouth. "Be silent for your life," she whispered: "here's papa."

Voices were heard approaching the gate, that of Justice Hare and of Squire Pinner. The latter walked on, the former came in. The brother and sister cowered together, scarcely daring to breathe: you might have heard Barbara's heart beating. Mr. Hare closed the gate, and walked on up the path.

"I must go, Richard," she hastily said; "I dare not stay another minute. Be here again to-morrow night, and meanwhile I will see what can be done."

She was speeding away, but Richard held her back.

"You did not seem to believe my assertion of innocence. Barbara, we are here alone in the still night, with God above us: as truly as that you and I must some time meet Him face to face, I told you truth. It was Thorn murdered Hallijohn, and I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Barbara broke out of the trees and flew along, but Mr. Hare was already in, locking and barring the door. "Let me in, papa," she called out.

The justice opened the door again, and his flaxen wig, his aquiline nose, and his amazed eyes gazed at Barbara. "Halloa! what brings you out at this time of night, young lady?"

"I went down to the gate to look for you," she panted, "and had—had—strolled over to the side path. Did you not see me?"

Barbara was truthful by nature and habit; but, in such a cause, how could she avoid dissimulation? "Thank you, papa," she said, as she went in.

"You ought to have been in bed an hour ago," angrily responded Mr. Justice Hare.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CARLYLE'S OFFICE.

IN the centre of West Lynne stood two houses adjoining each other, one large, the other much smaller. The large one was the Carlyle residence, and the small one was devoted to the Carlyle offices. The name of Carlyle bore a lofty standing in the county; Carlyle and Davidson were known as first-class practitioners; no pettifogging lawyers were they. It was Carlyle and Davidson in the days gone by; now it was Archibald Carlyle. The old firm were brothers-in-law, the first Mrs. Carlyle having been Mr. Davidson's sister. She had died and left one child, Cornelia, who was grown up when her father married again. The second Mrs. Carlyle died when her son, Archibald, was born, and his half-sister reared him, loved him, and ruled him. She bore for him all the authority of a mother; the boy had known no other, and when a little child, he had called her Mamma Corny. Mamma Corny had done her duty by him, that was undoubted; but Mamma Corny had never relaxed her rule; with an iron hand she liked to rule him now, in great things as in small, just as she had done in the days of his babyhood. And Archibald generally submitted, for the force of habit is strong. She was a woman of strong sense, but, in some things, weak of judgment: and the rul-

ing passions of her life were love of Archibald, and love of saving money. Mr. Davidson had died earlier than Mr. Carlyle, and his fortune—he had never married—was left equally divided between Cornelia and Archibald. Archibald was no blood relation to him, but he loved the open-hearted boy better than he did his niece Cornelia. Of Mr. Carlyle's property, a small portion only was bequeathed to his daughter, the rest to his son: and in this perhaps there was justice, since the 20,000*l.* brought to Mr. Carlyle by his second wife, had been chiefly instrumental in the accumulation of his large fortune.

Miss Carlyle, or, as she was called in the town, Miss Corny, had never married; it was pretty certain she never would; people thought that her intense love of her young brother kept her single, for it was not likely that the daughter of the rich Mr. Carlyle had wanted for offers. Other maidens confess to soft and tender impressions; to a hope of being, some time or another, solicited to abandon their father's name, and become somebody's better half. Not so Miss Carlyle: all who had approached her with the love-lorn tale, she sent quickly to the right-about. The last venture was from the new curate, and occurred when she was in her fortieth year. He made his appearance at her house one morning betimes, in his white Sunday necktie, and a pair of new gloves drawn on for the occasion, colour lavender. Miss Corny, who was an exceedingly active housekeeper in her own house, a great deal more so than the servants liked, had just been giving her orders for dinner. They comprised, amongst other things, a treacle-pudding for the kitchen,

and she went herself to the store-closet with a basin, to lade out the necessary treacle. The closet opened from the dining-room, and it was while she was in it that the curate was ushered in. Miss Carlyle, who completely ignored ceremony, and had never stood upon it in her life, came out, basin of treacle in hand, which she deposited on the table while she disposed herself to listen to the reverend gentleman, who was twelve years her junior, and very diffident, so that he was some time getting his business out. Miss Corny wished him and his stammering somewhere, for she knew the pudding was waiting for the treacle, and helped him out as much as she could, putting in words when he seemed at fault for them. She supposed he wanted her name to some subscription, and she stood looking down at him with impatience, he being at least a foot shorter than she. When the startling truth at length disclosed itself, that he had come begging for *her*, and not for money, Miss Carlyle for once lost her temper. She screamed out that he ought to be ashamed of himself for a raw boy as he was, and she flung the contents of the basin over his spotless shirt-front. How the crest-fallen divine got out of the house and down West Lynne to his lodgings, he never cared to recal. Sundry juveniles of both sexes, nursing babies or carrying out parcels, collected at his heels and escorted him, openly surmising, with various degrees of envy, that he had been caught dipping his head for a sly lick into the grocer's treacle-barrel, and the indignant owner had soused him in. The story got wind, and Miss Corny was not troubled with any more offers.

Mr. Carlyle was seated in his own private room in his office the morning after his return from town; his confidential clerk and manager stood near him, one who had far more to do with the management than Mr. Carlyle himself. It was Mr. Dill, a little, meek-looking man, with a bald head. He was on the rolls, had been admitted years and years ago, but had never set up for himself: perhaps he deemed the post of head manager in the office of Carlyle and Davidson, with its substantial salary, sufficient for his ambition; and manager he had been to them when the present Mr. Carlyle was in long petticoats; he was a single man, and occupied handsome apartments near. A shrewd surmise obtained weight in West Lynne that he was a devoted admirer of Miss Carlyle, humbly worshipping her at a distance. Whether this was so or not, certain it is that he was very fond of his present master, Mr. Archibald, as he generally styled him. He was now giving an account of what had transpired during the few days of absence.

“Jones and Rushworth have come to an outbreak at last,” cried he, when he had pretty nearly arrived at the end of his catalogue, “and the upshot will be an action at the summer assizes. They were both here yesterday, one after the other, each wanting you to act for him, and will be here to-day for an answer.”

“I will not act for either,” said Mr. Carlyle; “I will have nothing to do with them. They are a bad lot, and it was an iniquitous piece of business their obtaining the money in the first instance. When rogues fall out, honest men get their own. I decline it altogether; let them carry themselves to somebody else.”

“Very good,” replied Mr. Dill.

“Colonel Bethel’s here, sir,” said a clerk, opening the door, and addressing Mr. Carlyle. “Can you see him?”

Mr. Dill turned round to the clerk. “Ask the colonel to wait. I think that’s about all,” he added to his master, as the man withdrew.

“Very well. Dill, certain papers will be down in a few days, relating to mortgages and claims on the East Lynne estate; they are coming with the title-deeds. I want them carefully looked over *by you*, and nothing said.”

Mr. Dill gave a quiet nod.

“East Lynne is about to change hands. And, in purchasing property from an embarrassed man like Mount Severn, it is necessary to be keen and cautious,” continued Mr. Carlyle.

“It is. Has he come to the end of his tether?”

“Not far short of it, I fancy; but East Lynne will be disposed of *sub rosá*. Not a syllable abroad, you understand.”

“All right, Mr. Archibald. Who is the purchaser? It is a fine property.”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “You will know who, long before the world does. Examine the deeds with a Jew’s eye. And now send in Bethel.”

Between the room of Mr. Carlyle and that of the clerks’ was a small square space, or hall, having ingress also from the house passage; another room opened from it, a narrow one, which was Mr. Dill’s own peculiar sanctum; here he saw clients when Mr. Carlyle was out or engaged, and here he issued private orders. A little window, not larger than a pane

of glass, looked out from it on the clerks' office; they called it Old Dill's peep-hole, and wished it anywhere else, for his spectacles might be discerned at it more often than was agreeable. The old gentleman had a desk also in their office, and there he frequently sat; he was sitting there in state, this same morning, keeping a sharp look out around him, when the door timidly opened, and the pretty face of Barbara Hare appeared at it, rosy with blushes.

"Can I see Mr. Carlyle?"

Mr. Dill rose from his seat and shook hands with her. She drew him into the passage, and he closed the door. Perhaps he felt surprised, for it was *not* the custom for ladies, young and single, to come there after Mr. Carlyle.

"Presently, Miss Barbara; he is engaged just now. The justices are with him."

"The justices!" uttered Barbara, in alarm, "and papa one? Whatever shall I do? He must not see me; I would not have him see me here for the world."

An ominous sound of talking: the justices were evidently coming forth. Mr. Dill laid hold of Barbara, whisked her through the clerks' room, not daring to take her the other way lest he should encounter them, and shut her in his own. "What brought papa here at this moment?" thought Barbara, whose face was crimson.

A few minutes and Mr. Dill opened the door again. "They are gone now, and the coast's clear, Miss Barbara."

"I don't know what opinion you must form of me, Mr. Dill," she whispered, "but I will tell you in confidence that I am here on some business for

mamma, who was not well enough to come herself. It is a little private matter that she does not wish papa to know of."

"Child," answered the manager, "a lawyer receives visits from many people; and it is not the place of those about him to 'think.'"

He opened the door as he spoke, ushered her into the presence of Mr. Carlyle, and left her. The latter rose in astonishment.

"You must regard me as a client, and pardon the intrusion," said Barbara, with a forced laugh to hide her agitation. "I am here on the part of mamma: and I nearly met papa in your passage, which terrified me out of my senses. Mr. Dill shut me into his room."

Mr. Carlyle motioned to Barbara to seat herself, and then resumed his own seat, beside his table. Barbara could not avoid noticing how different his manners were in his office, from his evening manners when he was "off duty." Here he was the staid, calm man of business.

"I have a strange thing to tell you," she began, in a whisper, "but—is it impossible that any one can hear us?" she broke off, with a look of dread. "It would be—it might be—death."

"It is quite impossible," calmly replied Mr. Carlyle. "The doors are double doors: did you not notice that they were?"

Nevertheless, she left her chair, and stood close to Mr. Carlyle, resting her hand upon the table. He rose, of course.

"Richard is here."

"Richard!" repeated Mr. Carlyle. "At West Lynne!"

“ He appeared at the house last night in disguise, and made signs to me from the grove of trees. You may imagine my alarm. He has been in London all this while, half starving, working—I feel ashamed to mention it to you—in a stable-yard. And oh, Archibald ! he says he is innocent.”

Mr. Carlyle made no reply to this: he probably had no faith in the assertion. “ Sit down, Barbara,” he said, drawing her chair closer.

Barbara sat down again, but her manner was hurried and nervous. “ Is it quite sure that no stranger will be coming in ? It would look so peculiar to see me here. But mamma was too unwell to come herself — or, rather, she feared papa’s questioning, if he found out that she came.”

“ Be at ease,” replied Mr. Carlyle : “ this room is sacred from the intrusion of strangers. What of Richard ? ”

“ He says that he was not in the cottage at the time the murder was committed. That the person who really did it was a man of the name of Thorn.”

“ What Thorn ? ” asked Mr. Carlyle, suppressing all sign of incredulity.

“ I don’t know : a friend of Afy’s, he said. Archibald, he swore to it in the most solemn manner : and I believe, as truly as that I am now repeating it to you, that he was speaking truth. I want you to see Richard, if possible : he is coming to the same place to-night. If he can tell his own tale to you, perhaps you may find out a way by which his innocence may be made manifest. You are so clever ; you can do anything.”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “ Not quite anything, Barbara.

Was this the purport of Richard's visit — to say this?"

"Oh no: he thinks it is of no use to say it, for nobody would believe him against the evidence. He came to ask for a hundred pounds; he says he has an opportunity of doing better, if he can have that sum. Mamma has sent me to you: she has not the money by her, and she dare not ask papa for it, as it is for Richard. She bade me say that if you will kindly oblige her with the money to-day, she will arrange with you about the repayment."

"Do you want it now?" asked Mr. Carlyle. "If so, I must send to the bank. Dill never keeps much in the house when I am away."

"Not until evening. Can you manage to see Richard?"

"It is hazardous," mused Mr. Carlyle: "for him, I mean. Still, if he is to be in the grove to-night, I may as well be there also. What disguise is he in?"

"A farm labourer's; the best he could adopt about here, with large black whiskers. He is stopping about three miles off, he said, in some obscure hiding-place. And now," continued Barbara, "I want you to advise me: had I better inform mamma that Richard is here, or not?"

Mr. Carlyle did not understand: and said so.

"I declare I am bewildered," she exclaimed. "I should have premised that I have not yet told mamma it is Richard himself who is here: but that he had sent a messenger to beg for this money. Would it be advisable to acquaint her?"

"Why should you not? I think you ought to do so."

“Then I will. I was fearing the hazard, for she is sure to insist upon seeing him. Richard also wishes for an interview.”

“It is only natural. Mrs. Hare must be thankful to hear, so far, that he is safe.”

“I never saw anything like it,” returned Barbara; “the change is akin to magic: she says it has put life into her anew. And now for the last thing: how can we secure papa’s absence from home to night? It must be accomplished in some way. You know his temper: were I or mamma to suggest to him to go and see any friend, or to go to the club, he would immediately stop at home. Can you devise any plan? You see I appeal to you in all my troubles,” she added, “as I and Anne used to do, when we were children.”

It may be questioned if Mr. Carlyle heard the last remark. He had drooped his eyelids in thought. “Have you told me all?” he asked presently, lifting them.

“I think so.”

“Then I will consider it over, and—”

“I shall not like to come here again,” interrupted Barbara. “It—it—might excite suspicion; some one might see me too, and mention it to papa. Neither ought you to send to our house.”

“Well—contrive to be in the street at four this afternoon. Stay, that’s your dinner-hour; be walking up the street at three, three precisely; I will meet you.”

He rose, shook hands, and escorted Barbara through the small hall, along the passage to the house door: a courtesy probably not yet shown to any client, by

Mr. Carlyle. The door closed upon her, and Barbara had taken one step from it, when something large loomed down upon her, like a ship in full sail.

She must have been the tallest lady in the world—out of a caravan. A fine woman in her day, but angular and bony now. Still, in spite of the angles and the bones, there was majesty in the appearance of Miss Carlyle.

“Why—what on earth!” began she—“have *you* been with Archibald?”

Barbara Hare stammered out the excuse she had given Mr. Dill.

“Your mamma sent you on business! I never heard of such a thing. Twice have I been in to see Archibald, and twice did Dill answer that he was engaged and must not be interrupted. I shall make old Dill explain his meaning for observing a mystery to me.”

“There is no mystery,” answered Barbara, feeling quite sick lest Miss Carlyle should proclaim there was, before the clerks, or to her father. “Mamma wanted Mr. Carlyle’s opinion upon a little private business, and, not feeling well enough to come herself, she sent me.”

Miss Carlyle did not believe a word. “What business?” asked she, unceremoniously.

“It is nothing that could interest you. A trifling matter, relating to a little money. It’s nothing, indeed.”

“Then, if it’s nothing, why were you closeted so long with Archibald?”

“He was asking the particulars,” replied Barbara, recovering her equanimity.

Miss Carlyle sniffed : as she invariably did, when dissenting from a problem. She was sure there was some mystery astir. She turned and walked down the street with Barbara, but she was none the more likely to get anything out of her.

Mr. Carlyle returned to his room, deliberated a few moments, and then rang his bell. A clerk answered it.

“Go to the Buck’s Head. If Mr. Hare and the other magistrates are there, ask them to step over to me.”

The young man did as he was bid, and came back with the noted justices at his heels. They obeyed the summons with alacrity : for they believed they had got themselves into a judicial scrape, and that Mr. Carlyle alone could get them out of it.

“I will not request you to sit down,” began Mr. Carlyle, “for it is barely a moment I shall detain you. The more I think about this man’s having been put in prison, the less I like it; and I have been considering that you had better, all five, come and smoke your pipes at my house this evening, when we shall have time to discuss what must be done. Come at seven, not later ; and you will find my father’s old jar replenished with the best broad-cut, and half a dozen churchwarden pipes. Shall it be so ?”

The whole five accepted the invitation eagerly. And they were filing out, when Mr. Carlyle laid his finger on the arm of Justice Hare.

“*You* will be sure to come, Mr. Hare,” he whispered. “We could not get on without you : all heads,” with a slight inclination towards those going out, “are not gifted with the clear good sense of yours.”

“Sure and certain,” responded the gratified justice: “fire and water shouldn’t keep me away.”

Soon after Mr. Carlyle was left alone, another clerk entered. “Miss Carlyle is asking to see you, sir, and Colonel Bethel’s come again.”

“Send in Miss Carlyle first,” was the answer. “What is it, Cornelia?”

“Ah! You may well ask what! Saying this morning that you could not dine at six, as usual, and then marching off, and never fixing the hour. How can I give my orders?”

“I thought business would have called me out, but I am not going now. We will dine a little earlier, Cornelia: say a quarter before six. I have invit—”

“What’s up, Archibald?” interrupted Miss Carlyle.

“Up! Nothing, that I know of. I am very busy, Cornelia, and Colonel Bethel is waiting; I will talk to you at dinner time.”

In reply to this plain hint, Miss Carlyle deliberately seated herself in the client’s chair, and crossed her legs, her shoes and her white stockings in full view: for Miss Corny disdained long dresses as much as she disdained crinoline; or, as the inflating machines were called then, corded petticoats, crinoline not having come in. “I mean, what’s up at the Hares, that Barbara should come here and be closeted with you? Business for her mother, she said.”

“Why, you know the mess that Hare and the other justices have got into; committing that poor fellow to prison, because he was seen to pull up a

weed in his garden on the Sunday," returned Mr. Carlyle, after an almost imperceptible pause. "Mrs. Hare —"

"A set of bumber-headed old donkeys!" was the complimentary interruption of Miss Carlyle. "The whole bench have not an ounce of sense between them."

"Mrs. Hare is naturally anxious for my opinion, for there may be some trouble over it, the man having appealed to the Secretary of State. She was too ill, Barbara said, to come to me herself. Cornelia, I have invited a party for to-night."

"A party!" echoed Miss Carlyle.

"Four or five of the justices; they are coming in to smoke their pipes. You must put out my father's leaden tobacco box, and —"

"They shan't come," screamed Miss Carlyle. "Do you think I'll be poisoned with tobacco-smoke from a dozen pipes?"

"You need not sit in the room."

"Nor they either. Clean curtains are just put up throughout the house, and I'll have no horrid pipes to blacken them."

"Cornelia," returned Mr. Carlyle, in a grave, firm tone, which, opinionated as she was, never failed in its effect upon her, "my having them is a matter of business; of business, you understand; and, come they must. If you object to their being in the sitting-rooms, they must be in my bed-room."

The word "business" always bore for Miss Carlyle one meaning, that of money-making. Mr. Carlyle knew her weak point, and sometimes played upon it, when he could gain his end by no other means. Her

love for money amounted almost to a passion ; to acquire it, or to hear that he was acquiring it, was very dear to her. The same could not be said of him : many and many a dispute, that would have brought him in pounds and pounds, had it gone on to an action, did he labour to soothe down ; and had reconciled his litigants by his plain, sincere advice.

“ I’ll buy you some new curtains, Cornelia, if their pipes spoil these,” he quietly resumed. “ And I really must beg you to leave me.”

“ When I have come to the bottom of this affair with Barbara Hare,” resolutely returned Miss Corny, dropping the point of contest as to the pipes. “ You are very clever, Archie, but you can’t deceive me. I asked Barbara what she came here for : business for her mamma, touching money matters, was her reply. I ask you : to hear your opinion about the scrape the bench have got into, is yours. Now, its neither one nor the other, and I tell you, Archibald, I’ll hear what it is. I should like to know what you and Barbara do with a secret between you.”

She sat bolt upright in her chair and stared at him, her lofty figure drawn to its full height. Not in features were they alike ; some resemblance, perhaps, there might be in the expanse of the forehead and the way in which the hair grew, arched from the temples : Miss Carlyle’s hair was going grey now, and she wore it in curls which were rarely smooth, fastened back by combs which were rarely in their places. Her face was pale, well-shaped, and remarkable for nothing but a hard, decisive expression ; her eyes, wide open and penetrating, were of a shade called “ green.” But, though she could not boast

her brother's good looks, there were many plainer women in West Lynne than Cornelia Carlyle.

Mr. Carlyle knew her and her resolute expression well, and he took his course, to tell her the truth. She was, to borrow the words Barbara had used to her brother with regard to him, true as steel. Confide to Miss Carlyle a secret, and she was trustworthy and impervious as he could be: but, let her once suspect that there was a secret which was being kept from her, and she would set to work like a ferret, and never stop till it was unearthed.

Mr. Carlyle bent forward and spoke in a whisper. "I will tell you if you wish, Cornelia, but it is not a pleasant thing to hear. Richard Hare has returned."

Miss Carlyle looked perfectly aghast. "Richard Hare! Is he mad?"

"It is not a very sane proceeding. He wants money from his mother, and Mrs. Hare sent Barbara to ask me to manage it for her. No wonder poor Barbara was flurried and nervous, for there's danger on all sides."

"Is he at their house?"

"How could he be there, and his father in it? He is in hiding two or three miles off, disguised as a labourer, and will be at the Grove to-night to receive this money. I have invited the justices, to get Mr. Hare safe away from his own house: if he saw Richard, he would undoubtedly give him up to justice, and — putting graver considerations aside — that would be pleasant neither for you nor for me. To have a connexion hanged for wilful murder, would be an ugly blot on the Carlyle escutcheon, Cornelia."

Miss Carlyle sat in silence, revolving the news, a contraction on her ample brow.

“And now you know all, Cornelia, and I do beg you to leave me, for I am overwhelmed with work to-day.”

She rose without a word, passed out, and left her brother in peace. He snatched up a note, the first apparently that lay to hand, put it in an envelope, sealed and addressed it to himself. Then he called in Mr. Dill, and gave it to him. The latter looked in surprise at the superscription.

“At eight o’clock to-night, Dill, bring this to my house. Don’t send it in, ask for me. You understand.”

The old gentleman replied by a nod, and put the note in his pocket.

Mr. Carlyle was walking down the street at three o’clock that afternoon, when he met Barbara Hare. “It is all arranged,” he said to her in passing. “I entertain the bench of justices to-night, Barbara, to pipes and ale, Mr. Hare being one.”

She looked up in doubt. “Then — if you entertain them, you will not be able to come and meet Richard.”

“Trust to me,” was all his answer, as he hurried on.

CHAPTER VI.

RICHARD HARE, THE YOUNGER.

THE bench of justices did not fail to keep their appointment: at seven o'clock they arrived at Miss Carlyle's, one following closely upon the heels of another. The reader may dissent from the expression "Miss Carlyle's," but it is the correct one, for the house was hers, not her brother's. Though it remained his home, as it had been in his father's time, the house was amongst the property bequeathed to Miss Carlyle.

Miss Carlyle chose to be present, in spite of the pipes and the smoke, and she was soon as deep in the discussion as the justices were. It was said in the town that she was as good a lawyer as her father had been: she undoubtedly possessed sound judgment in legal matters, and quick penetration. At eight o'clock a servant entered the room and addressed his master.

"Mr. Dill is asking to see you, sir."

Mr. Carlyle rose, and came back with an open note in his hand.

"I am sorry to find that I must leave you for half an hour. Some important business has arisen, but I will be back as soon as I can."

"Who has sent for you?" immediately demanded Miss Corny.

He gave her a quiet look, which she interpreted into a warning not to question. "Mr. Dill is here, and will join you to talk the affair over," he said to his guests. "He knows the law better than I do: but I shall not be long."

He quitted his house, and walked with a rapid step towards the Grove. The moon was bright, as on the previous evening. After he had left the town behind him, and was passing the scattered villas already mentioned, he cast an involuntary glance at the wood, which rose behind them on his left hand. It was called Abbey Wood, from the circumstance that in old days an abbey had stood in its vicinity, all trace of which, save tradition, had long passed away. There was one small house, or cottage, just within the wood, and in that cottage had occurred the murder for which Richard Hare's life was in jeopardy. It was no longer occupied, for nobody would rent it or live in it.

Mr. Carlyle opened the gate of the Grove, and glanced at the trees on either side him, but he neither saw nor heard any signs of Richard's being concealed there. Barbara was at the window, looking out, and she came herself and opened the door to Mr. Carlyle.

"Mamma is in the most excited state," she whispered to him as he entered. "I knew how it would be."

"Has he come yet?"

"I have no doubt of it, but he has made no signal."

Mrs. Hare, feverish and agitated, with a burning spot on her delicate cheeks, stood by her chair, not occupying it. Mr. Carlyle placed a pocket-book in

her hands. "I have brought it chiefly in notes," he said, "they will be easier for him to carry than gold."

Mrs. Hare answered only by a look of gratitude, and clasped Mr. Carlyle's hand in both of hers. "Archibald, I *must* see my boy; how can it be managed? Must I go into the garden to him, or may he come in here?"

"I think he might come in; you know how very bad the night air is for you. Are the servants astir much this evening?"

"Things seem to have turned out quite kindly," said Barbara. "It happens to be Anne's birthday, so mamma sent me just now into the kitchen with a cake and a bottle of wine, desiring them to drink her health. I shut the door and told them to make themselves comfortable; that if we wanted anything, we would ring."

"Then they are safe," observed Mr. Carlyle, "and Richard may come in."

"I will go and ascertain whether he is come," said Barbara.

"Stay where you are, Barbara, I will go myself," interposed Mr. Carlyle. "Have the door open when you see us coming up the path."

Barbara gave a faint cry, and, trembling, clutched the arm of Mr. Carlyle. "There he is! See: standing out from the trees, just opposite this window."

Mr. Carlyle turned to Mrs. Hare. "I shall not bring him in immediately. For, if I am to have an interview with him, it must be got over first, that I may go back home to the justices, and keep Mr. Hare all safe."

He proceeded on his way, gained the trees, and

plunged into them; and, leaning against one, stood Richard Hare. Apart from his disguise, and the false and fierce black whiskers, he was a blue-eyed, fair, pleasant-looking young man, slight, and of middle height, and quite as yielding and gentle as his mother. In her, his mild yieldingness of disposition was rather a graceful quality; in Richard it was regarded as a contemptible misfortune. In his boyhood he had been nicknamed Leafy Dick, and when a stranger inquired why, the answer was, that as a leaf is swayed by the wind, so he was swayed by everybody about him, never possessing a will of his own. In short, Richard Hare, though of an amiable, loving nature, was not overburdened with what the world calls brains. Brains he certainly had, but they were not sharp ones.

“Is my mother coming out to me?” asked Richard, after a few interchanged sentences with Mr. Carlyle.

“No. You are to go in-doors. Your father is away, and the servants are shut up in the kitchen and will not see you. Though if they did, they could never recognise you in that trim. A fine pair of whiskers, Richard.”

“Let us go in, then. I am all in a twitter till I get away. Am I to have the money?”

“Yes, yes. But, Richard, your sister says you wish to disclose to me the true history of that lamentable night. You had better speak while we are here.”

“It was Barbara who wanted you to hear it; I think it of little moment. If the whole place heard the truth from me, it would do no good, for I should get no belief: not even from you.”

“Try me, Richard: in as few words as possible.”

“Well—there was a row at home about my going so much to Hallijohn’s. The governor and my mother thought I went after Afy: perhaps I did, perhaps I didn’t. Hallijohn had asked me to lend him my gun, and that evening, when I went to see Af—when I went to see some one—never mind——”

“Richard,” interrupted Mr. Carlyle, “there’s an old saying, and it is sound advice, ‘Tell the whole truth to your lawyer and your doctor.’ If I am to judge whether anything can be attempted for you, you must tell it to me; otherwise, I would rather hear nothing. It shall be sacred trust.”

“Then, if I must, I must,” returned the yielding Richard. “I did love the girl; I would have waited till I was my own master to make her my wife, though it had been for years and years. I could not do it, you know, in the face of my father’s opposition.”

“Your wife?” rejoined Mr. Carlyle, with some emphasis.

Richard looked surprised. “Why, you don’t suppose I meant anything else! I wouldn’t have been such a blackguard.”

“Well, go on, Richard. Did she return your love?”

“I can’t be certain. Sometimes I thought she did, sometimes not; she used to play and shuffle, and she liked too much to be with—him. I thought her capricious—telling me I must not come this evening, and I must not come the other; but I found out they were the evenings she expected him. We were never there together.”

“You forget that you have not indicated ‘him’ by any name, Richard. I am at fault.”

Richard Hare bent forward till his black whiskers brushed Mr. Carlyle’s shoulder. “It was that cursed Thorn.”

“Mr. Carlyle remembered the name Barbara had mentioned. Who was Thorn? I never heard of him.”

“Neither did anybody else, I expect, in West Lynne. He took precious good care of that. He lived some miles away, and used to come over in secret.”

“Courting Afy?”

“Yes, he did come courting her,” returned Richard, in a savage tone. “Distance was no barrier. He would come galloping over at dusk, tie his horse to a tree in the wood, and pass an hour or two with Afy. In the house, when her father was not at home; roaming about the wood with her, when he was.”

“Come to the point, Richard: to the evening.”

“Hallijohn’s gun was out of order, and he requested the loan of mine. I had made an appointment with Afy to be at her house that evening, and I went down after dinner, carrying the gun with me. My father called after me to know where I was going: I said, out with young Beauchamp, not caring to meet with his opposition; and the lie told against me at the inquest. When I reached Hallijohn’s, going the back way along the fields and through the wood path as I generally did go, Afy came out, all reserve, as she could be at times, and said she was unable to receive me then, that I must go back home. We had a few words about it, and as we were speak-

ing, Locksley passed, and saw me with the gun in my hand; I gave way to her, she could do just what she liked with me, for I loved the very ground she trod on. I gave her the gun, telling her it was loaded, and she took it in-doors, shutting me out. I did not go away; I had a suspicion that she had got Thorn there, though she denied it to me; and I hid myself in some trees near the house. Again Locksley came in view and saw me there, and called out to know why I was hiding. I went farther off, and did not answer him—what were my private movements to him?—and that also told against me at the inquest. Not long afterwards, twenty minutes, perhaps, I heard a shot, which seemed to be in the direction of the cottage. ‘Somebody having a late pop at the partridges,’ thought I: for the sun was then setting, and at the moment I saw Bethel emerge from the trees, and run in the direction of the cottage. That was the shot that killed Hallijohn.”

There was a pause. Mr. Carlyle looked keenly at Richard Hare in the moonlight.

“Very soon, almost in the same minute, as it seemed, one came panting and tearing along the path leading from the cottage. It was Thorn. His appearance startled me: I had never seen a man show more utter terror. His face was livid, his eyes seemed starting, and his lips were drawn back from his teeth. Had I been a strong man, I should surely have attacked him; I was mad with jealousy; for I then saw that Afy had sent me away that she might entertain him.”

“I thought you said this Thorn never came but at dusk?” observed Mr. Carlyle.

“ I never knew him to do so until that evening. All I can say is, he was there then. He flew along swiftly, and I afterwards heard the sound of his horse’s hoofs, galloping away. I wondered what was up, that he should look so scared ; I wondered whether he had quarrelled with Afy. I ran to the house, leaped up the two steps, and—Carlyle—I fell over the prostrate body of Hallijohn ! He was lying just within, on the kitchen floor, dead. Blood was round about him, and my gun, just discharged, was thrown near : he had been shot in the side.”

Richard stopped for breath. Mr. Carlyle did not speak.

“ I called to Afy. No one answered. No one was in the lower rooms ; and it seemed that no one was in the upper. A sort of panic came over me, a fear : you know they always said at home I was a coward : I could not have remained another minute with that dead man, had it been to save my own life. I caught up the gun, and was making off, when—”

“ Why did you catch up the gun ?” interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

“ Ideas pass through our minds quicker than we can speak them, especially in these sort of moments,” was the reply of Richard Hare. “ Some vague notion flashed on my brain that *my gun* ought not to be found near the murdered body of Hallijohn. I was flying from the door, I say, when Locksley emerged from the wood, full in view, and, what possessed me I can’t tell, but I did the worst thing I could do—flung the gun in-doors again, and got away, although Locksley called after me to stop.”

“ Nothing told so much against you as that,” ob-

served Mr. Carlyle. "Locksley deposed that he had seen you leave the cottage, gun in hand, apparently in great commotion; that the moment you saw him, you hesitated, as from fear, flung back the gun, and escaped."

Richard stamped his foot. "Ay; and all owing to my cursed cowardice. They had better have made a woman of me, and brought me up in petticoats. But let me go on. I came upon Bethel: he was standing in that half-circle where the trees have been cut. Now I knew that Bethel, if he had gone straight in the direction of the cottage, must have met Thorn quitting it. 'Did you encounter that hound?' I asked him. 'What hound?' returned Bethel. 'That fine fellow, that Thorn, who comes after Afy,' I answered, for I did not mind mentioning her name in my passion. 'I don't know any Thorn,' returned Bethel, 'and I did not know anybody was after Afy, but yourself.' 'Did you hear a shot?' I went on. 'Yes, I did,' he replied; 'I suppose it was Locksley, for he's about this evening.' 'And I saw you,' I continued, 'just in the moment the shot was fired, turn round the corner in the direction of Hallijohn's.' 'So I did,' he said, 'but only to strike into the wood, a few paces up. What's your drift?' 'Did you not encounter Thorn, running from the cottage?' I persisted, 'I have encountered no one,' he said, 'and I don't believe anybody's about but ourselves and Locksley.' I quitted him and came off," concluded Richard Hare; "he evidently had not seen Thorn, and knew nothing."

"And you decamped the same night, Richard. It was a fatal step."

“Yes, I was a fool. I thought I’d wait quiet, and see how things turned out; but you don’t know all. Three or four hours later, I went to the cottage again, and I managed to get a minute’s speech with Afy. I never shall forget it; before I could say a syllable she flew out at me, accusing me of being the murderer of her father, and she fell into hysterics out there on the grass. The noise brought people from the house—plenty were in it then—and I retreated. ‘If *she* can think me guilty, the world will think me guilty,’ was my argument, and that night I went right off, to stop in hiding for a day or two, till I saw my way clear. It never came clear: the coroner’s inquest sat, and the verdict floored me for ever. And Afy—but I won’t curse her—fanned the flame against me, by denying that any one had been there that night. She had been at home alone, she said, and had strolled out at the back door, to the path that led from West Lynne, and was lingering there when she heard a shot. Five minutes afterwards she returned to the house, and found Locksley standing over her dead father.”

Mr. Carlyle remained silent, rapidly running over in his mind the chief points of Richard Hare’s communication. “Four of you, as I understand it, were in the vicinity of the cottage that night, and from one or other the shot no doubt proceeded. You were at a distance, you say, Richard; Bethel also could not have been—”

“It was not Bethel who did it,” interrupted Richard; “it is an impossibility. I saw him, as I tell you, in the same moment that the gun was fired.”

“But now, where was Locksley?”

“It is equally impossible that it could have been Locksley. He was within my view at the time, at right angles from me, deep in the wood, away from the paths altogether. It was Thorn did the deed, beyond all doubt, and the verdict ought to have been wilful murder against him. Carlyle, I see you don't believe my story.”

“What you say has startled me, and I must take time to consider whether I believe it or not,” replied Mr. Carlyle, in his straightforward manner. “The most singular thing, if you witnessed Thorn's running away from the cottage in the manner you describe, is, that you did not come forward and denounce him.”

“I didn't do it because I was a fool, a weak coward, as I have been all my life,” rejoined Richard. “I can't help it: it was born with me, and will go with me to my grave. What would have been my word, that it was Thorn, when there was nobody to corroborate it? and the discharged gun, mine, was a damnatory proof against me.”

“Another thing strikes me as curious,” cried Mr. Carlyle. “If this man, Thorn, was in the habit of coming to West Lynne, evening after evening, how was it that he was never observed? This is the first time I have heard any stranger's name mentioned in connexion with the affair, or with Afy.”

“Thorn chose by-roads, and he never came, save that once, but at dusk or dark. It was evident to me at the time that he was courting her in secret. I told Afy so; and that it argued no good for her. You are not attaching credit to what I say, and it is only what I expected; nevertheless, I swear that I have related facts. As surely as that we—I, Thorn,

Afy, and Hallijohn—must one day meet together before our Maker, I have told you truth.”

The words were solemn, their tone earnest, and Mr. Carlyle remained silent, his thoughts full.

“To what end, else, should I say this?” went on Richard. “It can do me no service: all the assertion I could put forth, would not go a jot towards clearing me.”

“No, it would not,” assented Mr. Carlyle. “If ever you are cleared, it must be by proofs. But—I will keep my thoughts on the matter, and should anything arise—What sort of a man was this Thorn?”

“In age he might have been three or four-and-twenty, tall and slender; an out-and-out aristocrat.”

“And his connections? Where did he live?”

“I never knew. Afy, in her boasting way, would say he had to come from Swainson!” a ten-mile ride.”

“From Swainson!” quickly interrupted Mr. Carlyle. “Could it be one of the Thorns of Swainson?”

“None of the Thorns there that I know. He was a totally different man, with his perfumed hands, and his rings, and his dainty gloves. That he was an aristocrat, I believe, but of bad taste and style, displaying a profusion of jewellery.”

A half smile flitted over Mr. Carlyle’s face. “Was it real, Richard?”

“It was. He would wear diamond shirt-studs, diamond rings, diamond pins; brilliants, all, of the first water. My impression was, that he put them on to dazzle Afy. She told me once that she could be a grander lady, if she chose, than I could ever make her. A lady on the cross, I answered her, but

never on the square. Thorn was not a man to entertain honest intentions to one in the station of Afy Hallijohn; but girls are as simple as geese."

"By your description it could not have been one of the Thorns of Swainson. Wealthy tradesmen, fathers of young families, short, stout, and heavy as Dutchmen, staid and most respectable. Very unlikely men, are they, to run into an expedition of the sort."

"What expedition?" questioned Richard. "The murder?"

"The riding after Afy. Richard, where is Afy?"

Richard Hare lifted his face in surprise. "How should I know? I was just going to ask you."

Mr. Carlyle paused. He thought Richard's answer an evasive one. "She disappeared immediately after the funeral; and it was thought—in short, Richard, the neighbourhood gave her credit for having gone after and joined you."

"No! did they? what a pack of idiots! I have never seen or heard of her, Carlyle, since that unfortunate night. If she went after anybody, it was after Thorn."

"Was the man good-looking?"

"I suppose the world would call him so. Afy thought such an Adonis had never been coined, out of fable. He had shiny black hair and whiskers, dark eyes and handsome features. But his vain dandyism spoilt him."

Mr. Carlyle could ascertain no more particulars, and it was time Richard went in-doors. They proceeded up the path. "What a blessing it is the servants' windows don't look this way," shivered Richard, treading on Mr. Carlyle's heels. "If they should be looking out up-stairs!"

His apprehensions were groundless, and he entered unseen. Mr. Carlyle's part was over; he left the poor banned exile to his short interview with his hysterical and tearful mother, Richard nearly as hysterical as she, and made the best of his way home again, pondering over what he had heard.

Not a shadow of doubt had hitherto existed in his mind that George Hallijohn had met his death at the hands of Richard Hare. But, in defiance of the coroner's jury, and the universal opinion, he had never believed it to be *wilful* murder. Richard was mild, kind, inoffensive, the last man to be guilty of cruelty, or to commit a deliberate crime; and Mr. Carlyle had always thought that, could the truth be brought to light, the fatal shot would be found to have been the result of an accident, or, at worst, a scuffle, in which the gun might have gone off. It was rumoured that Hallijohn had objected to Richard's visits to his daughter, and it might have come, that night, to an outbreak.

Who was this Thorn? He certainly could not be a creation of Richard's inventive faculties; still, it was strange that his name had never been mentioned; that himself and his visits were unknown to the neighbourhood. Was the fellow an aristocrat, as Richard had called him, shallow-pated and contemptible, with his shiny hair and his bejewelled fingers, or was he a member of the swell mob? And was he in truth the real author of the murder? Be it as it would, sufficient food had been supplied to call forth all Mr. Carlyle's acumen—and he possessed no slight share.

The magistrates made a good evening of it, Mr. Carlyle entertaining them to supper, mutton-chops

and bread-and-cheese. They took up their pipes for another whiff when the meal was over, but Miss Carlyle retired to bed: the smoke, to which she had not been accustomed since her father's death, had made her head ache and her eyes smart. About eleven they wished Mr. Carlyle good night and departed, but Mr. Dill, in obedience to a nod from his superior, remained.

"Sit down again a moment, Dill; I want to ask you a question. You are intimate with the Thorns of Swainson: do they happen to have any relative, a nephew, or cousin perhaps, a dandy young fellow?"

"I went over last Sunday fortnight to spend the day with young Jacob," was the answer of Mr. Dill, one wider from the point than he generally gave. Mr. Carlyle smiled.

Young Jacob! He must be forty, I suppose."

"About that. But you and I estimate age differently, Mr. Archibald. They have no nephew: the old man never had but those two children, Jacob and Edward. Neither have they any cousin. Rich men they are growing now: Jacob has set up his carriage."

Mr. Carlyle mused, but he expected the answer, for neither had he heard of the brothers Thorn, tanners, curriers, and leather-dressers, possessing a relative of the name. "Dill," said he, "something has arisen, which, in my mind, casts a doubt upon Richard Hare's guilt. I question whether he had anything to do with the murder."

Mr. Dill opened his eyes. "But his flight, Mr. Archibald? And his stopping away?"

"Suspicious circumstances, I grant: still, I have good cause to doubt. At the time it happened, some dandy fellow used to come courting Afy Hallijohn in

secret: a tall, slender man, as he is described to me, bearing the name of Thorn, and living at Swainson. Could it have been one of the Thorn family?"

"Mr. Archibald!" remonstrated the old clerk: "as if those two respected gentlemen with wives and babies, would come sneaking after that fly-away Afy?"

"No reflection on them," returned Mr. Carlyle. "This was a young man, three or four-and-twenty, a head taller than either. I thought it might be a relative."

"I have repeatedly heard them say that they are alone in the world; that they are the two last of the name. Depend upon it, it was nobody connected with them. Who says anybody came over after Afy, Mr. Archibald? I never knew but of one doing so, and that was Richard Hare."

Mr. Carlyle could not say "Richard himself told me," so he left the question unanswered. "Sufficient grounds have been furnished me to cast a doubt upon Richard Hare's guilt, and to lay it upon this Thorn," he observed. "And I intend to institute a little private investigation, under the rose, and see if any fact can be brought to light. You must help me."

"With all my heart," responded Mr. Dill. "Not that I believe it could have been any one but Richard."

"The next time you go to Swainson, try and discover whether a young fellow named Thorn (whether connected with the Thorns or not) was living there at the time. Good-looking, black hair, whiskers, and eyes, and given to deck himself out in diamond pins, studs, and rings. He has been called an aristocrat to me, but I think it equally likely that he was a

member of the swell mob, doing the fine gentleman—which they always overdo. See if you can ferret out anything.”

“ I will,” said Mr. Dill. And he wished Mr. Carlyle good night.

The servant came in to remove the glasses and the obnoxious pipes, which latter Miss Carlyle had ordered to be consigned to the open air the instant they were done with. Mr. Carlyle sat in a brown study: presently he looked round at the man.

“ Is Joyce gone to bed ? ”

“ No, sir. She’s just going.”

“ Send her here when you have taken away those things.”

Joyce came in, the upper servant at Miss Carlyle’s. She was of middle height, and would never see five-and-thirty again; her forehead was broad, her grey eyes were deeply set, and her face was pale. Altogether she was plain, but sensible-looking. She was the half-sister to the Afy Hallijohn.

“ Shut the door, Joyce.”

Joyce did as she was bid, came forward, and stood by the table.

“ Have you ever heard from your sister, Joyce ? ” began Mr. Carlyle, somewhat abruptly.

“ No, sir,” was the reply. “ I think it would be a wonder if I did hear.”

“ Why so ? ”

“ If she could go off after Richard Hare, who had sent her father into his grave, she would be more likely to hide herself and her doings, than to proclaim them to me, sir.”

“ Who was that other, that fine gentleman, who came after her ? ”

The colour mantled in Joyce's cheeks, and she dropped her voice. "Sir! did you hear of him?"

"Not at the time. Since. He came from Swainson, did he not?"

"I believe so, sir. Afy never would say much about him. We did not agree upon the point; I said a person of his rank would do her no good; and Afy flew out when I spoke against him."

Mr. Carlyle caught her up. "His rank! what was his rank?"

"Afy bragged of his being next door to a lord; and he looked like it. I only saw him once; I had gone home early, and there he sat with Afy. His white hands were all glittering with rings, and his shirt was finished off with shining stones, where the buttons ought to be."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Never since, never but that once, and I don't think I should know him if I did see him. He got up, sir, as soon as I went into the parlour, shook hands with Afy, and left. A fine upright man he was, nearly as tall as you, sir, but very thin; those soldiers always do carry themselves well."

"How do you know he was a soldier?" quickly rejoined Mr. Carlyle.

"Afy told me so. 'The captain,' she had used to call him; but she said he was not a captain yet a while—the next grade below it. A—a—"

"Lieutenant?" suggested Mr. Carlyle.

"Yes, sir, that was it; Lieutenant Thorn. As he was going through the kitchen that evening he dropped his handkerchief, such a beauty, it was. I picked it up, but Afy snatched it from me, and,

running to the door, called after him, ‘ Captain Thorn, you have dropped your handkerchief,’ and he turned and took it from her. And when he was fairly off, she began upon me for coming home and spoiling sport, and we had a quarrel. I had seen young Hare also the same evening in the wood, dodging about as if he waited for the other to go. ‘ She’ll come to no good between the two,’ was my thought, and I said it to her, and a fine passion it put her in. It was but a week afterwards that—the evil happened to poor father.”

“ Joyce,” said Mr. Carlyle, “ has it never struck you that Afy is more likely to have followed this Lieutenant Thorn than Richard Hare ? ”

“ No, sir,” answered Joyce ; “ I have felt certain always that she is with Richard Hare, and nothing can turn me from the belief. All West Lynne is convinced of it.”

Mr. Carlyle did not attempt to “ turn her from the belief.” He dismissed her, and sat on still revolving the case in all its bearings.

Richard Hare’s short interview with his mother had soon terminated. It lasted but a quarter of an hour, both dreading interruption from the servants. And with the hundred pounds in his pocket and desolation at his heart, the ill-fated young man once more quitted his childhood’s home. Mrs. Hare and Barbara watched him steal down the path in the tell-tale moonlight, and gain the road, both feeling that those farewell kisses, they had pressed upon his lips, would not be renewed for years, and might be never.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS CARLYLE AT HOME.

THE church clocks of West Lynne struck eight one lovely morning in July, and then the bells chimed out, giving token that it was Sunday. Simultaneously with the bells, Miss Carlyle burst out of her bed-room in one of her ordinary morning costumes, but not the one in which she was wont to be seen on a Sunday. She wore a buff gingham gown, reaching nearly to her ankles, and a lavender print "bedgown," which was tied round the waist with a cord and tassels, and ornamented off below it with a frill. It had been the morning costume of her mother in the old-fashioned days, and Miss Carlyle despised new fashions too much to discard it. Modern ladies might cavil at the style, but they could not at the quality and freshness of the materials, for in that Miss Carlyle was scrupulously particular. On Sunday mornings it was her custom to appear attired for the day, and her not doing so now proved that she must have some domestic work in prospect. Her head-dress cannot be described; it was like nothing in the mode book or out of it: some might have called it a turban, some a night-cap, and some might have thought it was taken from a model of the dunce's cap and bells in the parish school; at any rate, it was something very high, and expansive, and white, and stern, and imposing.

Miss Carlyle stepped across the corridor to a door opposite her own, and gave a thump at it, sufficiently loud to awaken the seven sleepers. "Get up, Archibald."

"Up!" cried a drowsy voice within. "What for? It's only eight o'clock."

"If it's only six, you must get up," repeated Miss Carlyle, in her authoritative manner. "The breakfast is waiting, and I must have it over, for we are all at sixes and sevens."

Miss Carlyle descended the stairs, and entered the breakfast-room, where all appeared in readiness for the meal. She had a sharp tongue on occasion, and a sharp eye always, which saw everything. The room looked on to the street, and the windows were up, their handsome white curtains, spotless as Miss Carlyle's head-dress, waving gently in the summer breeze. Miss Carlyle's eyes peered round the room, and they caught sight of some dust. She strode into the kitchen to salute Joyce with the information. Joyce stood at the kitchen fire, superintending the toasting of some bacon.

"How dare you be so negligent, Joyce? You have never dusted the breakfast-parlour."

"Never dusted it!" returned Joyce; "where could your eyes have been ma'am, to see that?"

"On the dust," replied Miss Carlyle. "Go and put yours on it, and take the duster with you. I cannot sit down in an untidy room. Just because you have a little extra work to do this morning, you are turning lazy."

"No, ma'am," retorted Joyce, with spirit, for she felt the charge was perfectly unfounded, "I have exerted myself to the utmost this morning. I was up

at five o'clock to get the double work comfortably over, that you might have no occasion to find fault, and I was as particular over the breakfast-parlour as I always am. You insist upon having the windows thrown up, and of course the dust will fly in."

Joyce retreated with her duster just as a bell was heard to ring, and a most respectable-looking serving-man of middle height, portly form, fair complexion, and a scant portion of hair that was turning grey, entered the kitchen.

"Do you want anything, Peter?" inquired Miss Carlyle.

"Master's shaving water, ma'am. He has rung for it."

"Master can't have it, then," was the retort of Miss Carlyle. "Go and say so. Tell him that the breakfast's waiting, and he must shave afterwards."

Peter retired with the message, most probably softening it in the delivery, and Miss Carlyle presently returned to the breakfast-parlour and seated herself at the table to wait for her brother.

Miss Carlyle, the previous evening, had embroiled herself in a dispute with her cook. The latter, who was of a fiery temper, retorted insolently, and her mistress gave her warning, for insolence from a servant she never put up with, and rarely indeed was it offered her. The girl, in her heat of passion, said she did not want to wait for warning, she'd go at once; and off she went. Miss Carlyle pronounced the house well rid of her. Miss Carlyle was rigid upon one point—that of having as little work done upon a Sunday as possible, and when the Sunday's dinner was of a nature that could be put forward

upon the Saturday, it was required to be done: upon this rock, had Miss Carlyle and the cook split. To add to the inconvenience, the housemaid was from home, enjoying a holiday.

Mr. Carlyle came into the breakfast-room, completely dressed: he had an invincible dislike to appear like a sloven, and he had shaved in cold water. "Why are we breakfasting at eight this morning?" he inquired.

"Because I have so much to do. And if I cannot get breakfast over early I shall never finish it in time for church," was the reply of Miss Carlyle. "The cook's gone."

"The cook gone!" repeated Mr. Carlyle.

"It all happened after you went out to spend the evening, and I did not sit up to tell you. We are to have ducks for dinner to-day, and she knew they were to be stuffed and prepared yesterday, the gravy made, and the giblet-pie made and baked; in short, everything done, except just the roasting. I asked her last night if it was done. 'Oh, yes, it was all done,' she said; and I told her to bring me the giblet-pie to look at, knowing she has a knack of burning the crust of her pies. Well, she could not; she had told me a falsehood, Archibald, and had got no pie to bring, for the ducks were untouched, just as they came into the house; she had idly put it all off till to-day, thinking I should never find her out, but my asking for the pie floored her. She was insolent, and what with that and the lie, I gave her warning, but she chose to leave last night. I have got it all to do myself this morning."

"Can't Joyce do it?" returned Mr. Carlyle.

"Joyce! Much she knows about cooking; Joyce's

cooking won't do for my table. Barbara Hare is going to spend the day here."

"Indeed."

"Barbara called last evening, full of trouble. She and the justice had been having a dispute, and she said she wished I would invite her for to-day. Barbara has been laying in a stock of finery; the justice caught sight of it as it came home, and Barbara suffered. Serve her right, vain little minx. Just hark at the bells, clattering out!"

Mr. Carlyle lifted his head. The bells of St. Jude's church were ringing out a merry peal, as for a wedding, or for any other festivity. "What can that be for?" he exclaimed.

"Archibald, you are not half as sharp as I was at your age. What should they be ringing for, but out of compliment to the arrival of Lord Mount Severn?"

"Ay; no doubt. The East Lynne pew is in St. Jude's Church."

East Lynne had changed owners, and was now the property of Mr. Carlyle. He had bought it as it stood, furniture and all; but the transfer had been conducted with secrecy, and was suspected by none. Whether Lord Mount Severn thought it might prevent any one getting on the scent, or whether he wished to take farewell of a place he had formerly been fond of, certain it is that he desired to visit it for a week or two. Mr. Carlyle most readily and graciously acquiesced; and the earl, his daughter, and retinue had arrived the previous day.

West Lynne was in ecstasies. It called itself an aristocratic place, and it indulged hopes that the earl might be intending to confer upon it permanently the

light of his presence, by taking up his residence again at East Lynne. The toilettes prepared to greet his admiring eyes were prodigious, and pretty Barbara Hare was not the only young lady who had thereby to encounter the paternal storm.

Miss Carlyle completed her dinner preparations, all she did not choose to trust to Joyce, and was ready for church at the usual time, plainly but well-dressed. As she and Archibald were leaving their house, they saw something looming up the street, flashing and gleaming in the sun. A pink parasol came first, a pink bonnet and feather came behind it, a grey brocaded dress, and white gloves.

“The little vain idiot!” ejaculated Miss Carlyle. But Barbara sailed up the street towards them, unconscious of the apostrophe.

“Well done, Barbara!” was the salutation of Miss Carlyle. “The justice might well call out! you are finer than a sunbeam.”

“Not half so fine as many another in the church will be to-day,” responded Barbara, as she lifted her shy blue eyes and blushing face to answer the greeting of Mr. Carlyle. “West Lynne seems bent on out-dressing the Lady Isabel. You should have been in at the milliner’s yesterday morning, Miss Carlyle.”

“Is all the finery coming out to-day?” gravely inquired Mr. Carlyle, as Barbara turned with them towards the church and he walked by her side and his sister’s, for he had an objection, almost as invincible as a Frenchman’s, to give his arm to two ladies.

“Of course,” replied Barbara. “The earl and his daughter will be coming to church.”

“Suppose she should not be in peacock’s plumes,” cried Miss Carlyle, with an imperturbable face.

“Oh, but she’s sure to be—if you mean richly dressed,” cried Barbara, hastily.

“Or, suppose they should not come to church?” laughed Mr. Carlyle. “What a disappointment to the bonnets and feathers!”

“After all, Barbara, what are they to us, or we to them?” resumed Miss Carlyle. “We may never meet. We insignificant West Lynne gentry shall not intrude ourselves into East Lynne. It would scarcely be fitting: or be deemed so by the earl and Lady Isabel.”

“That’s just what papa said,” grumbled Barbara. “He caught sight of this bonnet yesterday, and when, by way of excuse, I said I had it to call on them, he asked whether I thought the obscure West Lynne families would venture to thrust their calls on Lord Mount Severn, as though they were of the county aristocracy. It was the feather put him out.”

“Is is a very long one,” remarked Miss Carlyle, grimly surveying it.

Barbara was to sit in the Carlyle pew that day, for she thought the farther she was off the justice the better: there was no knowing but he might take a sly revengeful cut at the feather in the middle of service, and so dock its beauty. Scarcely were they seated, when some strangers came quietly up the aisle; a gentleman who limped as he walked, with a furrowed brow and grey hair; and a young lady. Barbara looked round with eagerness, but looked away again: they could not be the expected strangers, the young lady’s dress was too plain. A clear muslin dress with small lilac sprigs upon it, and a straw bonnet: Miss Corny might have worn it herself on a week day, and not have found herself too smart;

but it was a pleasant dress for a hot summer's day. But the old beadle, in his many-caped coat, was walking before them sideways with his marshalling baton, and he marshalled them into the East Lynne pew, unoccupied for so many years.

"Who in the world can they be?" whispered Barbara to Miss Carlyle.

"The earl and Lady Isabel."

The colour flushed into Barbara's face, and she stared at Miss Corny. "Why — she has no silks, and no feathers, and no anything!" cried Barbara. "She's plainer than anybody in the church!"

"Plainer than any of the fine ones — than you, for instance. The earl is much altered, but I should have known them both anywhere. I should have known her from her likeness to her poor mother; just the same eyes, and sweet expression."

Ay, those brown eyes, so full of sweetness and melancholy: few, who had once seen, could mistake or forget them, and Barbara Hare, forgetting where she was, looked at them much that day. "She is very lovely," thought Barbara, "and her dress is certainly that of a lady. I wish I had not had this streaming pink feather. What fine jackdaws she must deem us all!"

The earl's carriage, an open barouche, was waiting at the gate at the conclusion of the service. He handed his daughter in, and was putting his gouty foot upon the step to follow her, when he observed Mr. Carlyle. The earl turned and held out his hand. A man who could purchase East Lynne was worthy of being received as an equal, though he was but a country lawyer.

Mr. Carlyle shook hands with the earl, approached

the carriage, and raised his hat to Lady Isabel. She bent forward with her pleasant smile, and put her hand into his.

“I have many things to say to you,” said the earl. “I wish you would go home with us. If you have nothing better to do, be East Lynne’s guest for the remainder of the day.”

He smiled peculiarly as he spoke, and Mr. Carlyle echoed it. East Lynne’s guest! that is what the earl was, at present. Mr. Carlyle turned aside to tell his sister.

“Cornelia, I shall not be home to dinner, I am going with Lord Mount Severn. Good day, Barbara.”

“Mr. Carlyle stepped into the carriage, was followed by the earl, and it drove away. The sun shone still, but the day’s brightness had gone out for Barbara Hare.

“How does he know the earl so well? how does he know Lady Isabel?” she reiterated in her astonishment.

“Archibald knows something of most people,” replied Miss Corny. “He saw the earl frequently when he was in town in the spring, and Lady Isabel once or twice. What a lovely face she has.”

Barbara made no reply. She returned with Miss Carlyle to the attraction of the ducks and the gibletpie, but her manner was as absent as her heart, and that had run away to East Lynne.

Oh, the refinement of courtly life, the unnecessary profusion of splendour! thought Mr. Carlyle, as he sat down to the earl’s dinner-table that day. The display of shining silver, of glittering glass, of costly china; the various wines and the rich viands, too varied and rich for the earl’s gout; the many ser-

vants in their handsome livery ; the table's pleasant master, and its refined young mistress ! In spite of the earl's terrible embarrassments, he had never yet curtailed the pomp of home expenditure : how he had maintained it was a marvel ; how long he would succeed in maintaining it was another. Very unnecessary and unjustifiable was the splendour, under the circumstances, but it had its attractions. Exceeding great were the attractions that day, all things combined. Take care of your senses, Mr. Carlyle.

Isabel left them after dinner, and sat alone, her thoughts running on many things. On her dear mother, with whom she was last at East Lynne, on the troublesome gout that would not quite leave her father, and on the scenes she had lately mixed in in London. She had met one there so constantly that he had almost become dangerous to her peace, or would have done so, had she remained much longer ; even now, as she thought of him, a thrill quickened her veins ; it was Francis Levison. Mrs. Vane had been guilty of worse than thoughtlessness, to throw them so frequently together. Mrs. Vane was a cold, selfish, and a bad woman ; bad, inasmuch as, save her own heartless self, she cared for no human being on the face of the wide earth.

With a sigh, Isabel rose, and scattered her reflections to the winds. Her father and his guest did not appear to be in a haste to come into tea, and she sat down to the piano.

The earl was certainly not in a haste ; he never was in a haste to quit his wine ; every glass was little less than poison to him in his state of health, but he would not forego it. They were deep in

conversation, when Mr. Carlyle, who was speaking, broke off in the middle of a sentence and listened.

A strain of the sweetest music had arisen; it seemed almost close to his ear, but he knew not whence it came; a voice, low and clear and sweet, was accompanying it, and Mr. Carlyle held his breath. It was the Benedictus, sung to Mornington's chant.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people. And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us: in the house of his servant David."

The conversation of the earl and Mr. Carlyle had been of the eager bustling world, of money getting and money spending, money owing and money paying, and that sacred chant broke in upon them with strange contrast, soothing to the ear, but reproving to the heart.

"It is Isabel," explained the earl. "Her singing carries a singular charm with it; and I think that charm lies in her subdued, quiet style: I hate squalling display. Her playing is the same. Are you fond of music?"

"I have been reproached by scientific performers with having neither ear nor taste for what they style good music," smiled Mr. Carlyle; "but I like *that*."

"The instrument is placed against the wall, and the partition is thin," remarked the earl. "Isabel little thinks she is entertaining us, as well as herself."

Indeed she did not. She sang chant after chant, now one psalm to them, now another. Then she sang the collect for the seventh Sunday after Trinity, and then she went back again to the chants. And Mr. Carlyle sat on, drinking in that delightful music, and never heeding how the evening was running on into night.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. KANE'S CONCERT.

BEFORE Lord Mount Severn had completed the fortnight of his proposed stay, the gout came back seriously. It was impossible for him to move away from East Lynne. Mr. Carlyle assured him he was only too pleased that he should remain as long as might be convenient, and the earl expressed his acknowledgments; he hoped soon to be re-established on his legs.

But he was not. The gout came and the gout went; not positively laying him up in bed, but rendering him unable to leave his rooms: and this continued till October, when he grew much better. The county families had been neighbourly, calling on the invalid earl, and occasionally carrying off Lady Isabel, but his chief and constant visitor had been Mr. Carlyle. The earl had grown to like him in no common degree, and was disappointed if Mr. Carlyle spent an evening away from him, so that he had become, as it were, quite domesticated with the earl and Isabel. "I am not equal to general society," he observed to his daughter, "and it is considerate and kind of Carlyle to come here and cheer my loneliness."

"Extremely kind," said Isabel. "I like him very much, papa."

"I don't know anybody whom I like half as well," was the rejoinder of the earl.

Mr. Carlyle went up as usual the same evening, and in the course of it the earl asked Isabel to sing.

“I will if you wish, papa,” was the reply, “but the piano is so much out of tune that it is not pleasant to sing to it. Is there nobody in West Lynne who could come here and tune my piano, Mr. Carlyle?” she added, turning to him.

“Certainly there is. Kane would do it. Shall I send him to-morrow?”

“I should be glad; if it would not be giving you too much trouble. Not that tuning will benefit it greatly, old thing that it is. Were we to be much at East Lynne, I should get papa to exchange it for a good one.

Little thought Lady Isabel that very piano was Mr. Carlyle’s, and not hers. The earl coughed, and exchanged a smile and a glance with his guest.

Mr. Kane was the organist of St. Jude’s church, a man of embarrassment and sorrow, who had long had a sore fight with the world. When he arrived at East Lynne the following day, Lady Isabel happened to be playing, and she stood by and watched him begin his work. She was courteous and affable; she was so to every one; and the poor music-master took courage to speak of his own affairs, and to prefer an humble request — that she and Lord Mount Severn would patronise and personally attend a concert he was about to give the following week. A scarlet blush came into his thin cheeks as he confessed that he was very poor, could scarcely live, and that he was getting up this concert in his desperate need. If it succeeded — well: he could then go on again: if not, he should be turned out of his home, and his

furniture sold for the two years' rent he owed — and he had seven children.

Isabel, all her sympathies awakened, sought the earl. “Oh, papa! I have to ask you the greatest favour! Will you grant it?”

“Ay, child, you don't ask them often. What is it?”

“I want you to take me to a concert at West Lynne.”

The earl fell back in surprise and stared at Isabel. “A concert at West Lynne!” he laughed. “To hear rustics scraping the fiddle! My dear Isabel!”

She poured out what she had just heard, with her own comments and additions. “Seven children, papa! and if the concert does not succeed he must give up his home, and turn out into the streets with them — it is, you see, almost as a matter of life or death to him. He is very poor.”

“I am poor myself,” said the earl.

“I was so sorry for him when he was speaking. He kept turning red and white, and catching up his breath in agitation: it was painful to him to tell of his embarrassments. I am sure he is a gentleman.”

“Well, you may take a pound's worth of tickets, Isabel, and give them to the upper servants. A village concert!”

“Oh, papa, it is not that; can't you see it is not? If you and I promise to be present, all the families round West Lynne will attend, and he will have the room full. They will go because we do; he said so: if they thought it was our servants who were going, they would keep away. Just think, papa, how you would like for this furniture to be taken away from

you! and his having a full concert would stop it. Make a sacrifice for once, dearest papa, and go, if it be only for an hour: *I* shall enjoy it, if there's nothing but a fiddle and a tambourine."

"You gipsy! you are as bad as a professional beggar. There; go and tell the fellow we will look in for half an hour."

She flew back to Mr. Kane, her eyes dancing. She spoke quietly, as she always did, but her own satisfaction gladdened her voice.

"I am happy to tell you that papa has consented. He will take four tickets, and we will attend the concert."

The tears rushed into Mr. Kane's eyes: Isabel was not sure but they were in her own. He was a tall, thin, delicate-looking man, with long white fingers, and a long neck. He faltered forth his thanks, and an inquiry whether he might be allowed to state openly that they would be present.

"Tell everybody," said she, eagerly — "everybody you meet, if you think it will be the means of inducing people to attend. I shall tell all friends who call upon me, and ask them to go."

When Mr. Carlyle came up in the evening, the earl was temporarily absent from the room. Isabel began to speak of the concert.

"It is a hazardous venture for Kane," observed Mr. Carlyle. "I fear he will only lose money, and add to his embarrassments."

"Why do you fear that?" she asked.

"Because, Lady Isabel, nothing gets patronised at West Lynne; nothing native; and people have heard so long of poor Kane's necessities, that they think

little of them. If some foreign artist, with an unpronounceable name, came flashing down to give a concert, West Lynne would flock to it."

"Is he so very, very poor?"

"Very. He is half starved."

"Starved!" repeated Isabel, an expression of perplexity arising to her face as she looked at Mr. Carlyle, for she scarcely understood him. "Do you mean that he does not have enough to eat?"

"Of bread he may, but not of much better nourishment. His salary, as organist, is thirty pounds, and he gets a little stray teaching. But he has his wife and children to keep, and no doubt serves them before himself. I dare say he scarcely knows what it is to taste meat."

The words brought a bitter pang to Lady Isabel. Not enough to eat! Never to taste meat! And she, in her carelessness, her ignorance, her indifference—she scarcely knew what term to give it—had not thought to order him a meal in their house of plenty! He had walked from West Lynne, occupied himself an hour with her piano, and set off to walk back again, battling with his hunger. A word from her, and a repast had been set before him out of their superfluities, such as he never now sat down to: and that word she had not spoken.

"You are looking grave, Lady Isabel."

"I am taking contrition to myself. Never mind; it cannot now be helped; but it will always be a dark spot on my memory."

"What is it?"

She lifted her repentant face to his, and smiled. "Never mind, I say, Mr. Carlyle; what is past cannot be recalled. He looks like a gentleman."

“Who? Kane? A gentleman bred: his father was a clergyman. Kane’s ruin was his love of music; it prevented his settling to any better-paid profession; his early marriage also was a drawback, and kept him down. He is young still.”

“Mr. Carlyle, I would not be one of your West Lynne people for the world. Here is a poor gentleman struggling with adversity, and you won’t put your hands out to help him!”

He smiled at her warmth. “Some of us will take tickets, I for one, but I don’t know about attending the concert. I fear few will do that.”

“Because that’s just the thing that would serve him! if one went, another would. Well, I shall try and show West Lynne that I don’t take a lesson from their book; I shall be there before it begins, and never come out till the last song is over. I am not too grand to go, if West Lynne is.”

“You surely do not think of going!”

“I surely do think of it. And papa goes with me; I persuaded him. And I have given Mr. Kane the promise.”

Mr. Carlyle paused. “I am glad to hear it; it will be a perfect boon to Kane. If it once gets abroad that Lord Mount Severn and Lady Isabel intend to honour the concert, there won’t be standing room.”

She danced round with a little gleeful step. “What high and mighty personages Lord Mount Severn and Lady Isabel seem to be! If you had any goodness of heart, Mr. Carlyle, you would enlist yourself in the cause also.”

“I think I will,” he smiled.

“Papa says you hold sway at West Lynne. If

you proclaim that you mean to go, you will induce others."

"I will proclaim that you do," he answered. "That will be sufficient. But, Lady Isabel, you must not expect much gratification from the performances."

"A tambourine will be quite enough for me; I told papa so. I shan't think of the music, I shall think of poor Mr. Kane. Mr. Carlyle, I know you can be kind if you like; I know you would rather be kind than otherwise, it is to be read in your face; try and do what you can for him."

"Yes, I will," he warmly answered.

Mr. Carlyle sold many tickets the following day; or, rather, caused them to be sold. He praised the concert far and wide, and proclaimed that Lord Mount Severn and his daughter would not think of missing it. Mr. Kane's house was besieged for tickets, faster than he could write his signature in their corner, and when Mr. Carlyle went home to luncheon at mid-day, which he did not often do, he laid down two at Miss Corny's elbow.

"What's this? Concert tickets! Archibald, you have never gone and bought these!"

What would she have said had she known that the two were not the extent of his investment!

"Ten shillings to throw away upon two paltry bits of cardboard!" chafed Miss Carlyle. "You always were a noodle in money matters, Archibald, and always will be. I wish I had the keeping of your purse!"

"What I have given will not hurt me, Cornelia. and Kane is badly off. Think of his troop of children.

“ Oh dear,” said Miss Corny, “ I imagine he should think of them ; I suppose it was his own fault they came. That’s always it : poor folks get a heap of children about them, and then ask for pity. I should say it would be more just if they asked for blame.”

“ Well, there the tickets are, bought and paid for, so they may as well be used. You will go with me, Cornelia.”

“ And stick ourselves there upon empty benches, like two geese, and sit staring and counting the candles ! A pleasant evening !”

“ You need not fear empty benches. The Mount Severns are going, and West Lynne is in a fever, racing after tickets. I suppose you have got a — a — cap,” looking at the nondescript article decorating his sister’s head, “ that will be suitable to go in, Cornelia : if not, you had better order one.”

This suggestion put up Miss Carlyle. “ Hadn’t you better have your hair curled, and your coat-tails lined with white satin, and buy a gold opera-glass, and a cocked-hat ?” retorted she. “ My gracious me ! a fine new cap to go to their mess of a concert in, after paying ten shillings for the tickets ! The world’s coming to something.

Mr. Carlyle left her and her grumbling to return to the office. Lord Mount Severn’s carriage was passing at the moment, and Isabel Vane was within it. She caused it to stop when she saw Mr. Carlyle, and he advanced to her.

“ I have been to Mr. Kane’s myself for the tickets,” said she, with a beaming look ; “ I came into West Lynne on purpose. I told the coachman to find out

where he lived, and he did. I thought if the people saw me and the carriage there, they would guess what I wanted. I do hope he will have a full concert."

"I am sure he will," replied Mr. Carlyle, as he released her hand. And Lady Isabel signed to the carriage to drive on.

As Mr. Carlyle turned away, he met Otway Bethel, a nephew of Colonel Bethel's, who was tolerated in the colonel's house because he had no other home, and appeared incapable of making himself one. Some persons persisted in calling him a gentleman — as he was by birth — others called him a *mauvais sujet*. The two are united some times. He was dressed in a velveteen suit, and had a gun in his hand; indeed, he was rarely seen without a gun, being inordinately fond of sport; but, if all tales whispered were true, he supplied himself with game in other ways than by shooting, which had the credit of going up to London dealers. For the last six months, or near upon it, he had been away from West Lynne.

"Why, where have you been hiding yourself?" exclaimed Mr. Carlyle. "The colonel has been inconsolable."

"Come, no gammon, Carlyle. I have been on the tramp through France and Germany. Man likes a change sometimes. As to the revered colonel, he would not be inconsolable if he saw me nailed up in a six-foot box, and carried out feet foremost."

"Bethel, I have a question to ask you," continued Mr. Carlyle, dropping his light manner and his voice together. "Take your thoughts back to the night of Hallijohn's murder."

“I wish you may get it!” cried Mr. Bethel. “The reminiscence is not attractive.”

“You’ll do it,” quietly said Mr. Carlyle. “It has been told to me, though it did not appear at the inquest, that Richard Hare held a conversation with you in the wood, a few minutes after the deed was done. Now —”

“Who told you that?” interrupted Bethel.

“That is not the question. My authority is indisputable.”

“It is true that he did. I said nothing about it, for I did not want to make the case worse against Dick Hare than it already was. He certainly did accost me, like a man flurried out of his life.”

“Asking if you had seen a certain lover of Afy’s fly from the cottage. One Thorn.”

“That was the purport. Thorn? Thorn? — I think Thorn was the name he mentioned. My opinion was, that Dick was either wild, or acting a part.”

“Now, Bethel, I want you to answer me truly. The question cannot affect you either way, but I must know whether you did see this Thorn leave the cottage.”

Bethel shook his head. “I know nothing whatever about any Thorn, and I saw nobody but Dick Hare. Not but what a dozen Thorns might have run from the cottage without my seeing them.”

“You heard this shot fired?”

“Yes; but I never gave a thought to mischief. I knew Locksley was in the wood, and supposed it came from him. I ran across the path, bearing towards the cottage, and struck into the wood on the other side. By-and-by, Dick Hare pitched upon

me, like one startled out of his senses, and asked if I had seen Thorn leave the cottage. Thorn — that *was* the name.”

“ And you had not ? ”

“ I had seen nobody but Dick, excepting Locksley. My impression was that nobody was about ; I think so still.”

“ But Richard—”

“ Now look you here, Carlyle, I won't do Dick Hare an injury, even by a single word, if I can help it. And it is of no use setting me on to it.”

“ I should be the last to set you on to injure any one, especially Richard Hare,” rejoined Mr. Carlyle, “ and my motive is to do Richard good, not harm. I hold a suspicion, no matter whence gathered, that it was not Richard Hare who committed the murder, but another. Can you throw any light upon the subject ? ”

“ No, I can't. I have always thought poor wavering Dick was nobody's enemy but his own : but, as to throwing any light upon that night's work, I can't do it. Cords should not have dragged me to the inquest to give evidence against Dick, and for that reason I was glad Locksley never let out that I was on the spot. How the deuce it got about afterwards that I was, I can't tell ; but that was no matter ; *my* evidence did not help on the verdict. And, talking of that, Carlyle, how has it come to your knowledge that Richard Hare accosted me ? I have not opened my lips upon it to mortal man.”

“ It is of no consequence how,” repeated Mr. Carlyle ; “ I do know it, and that is sufficient. I was in

hopes you had really seen this Thorn leave the cottage."

Otway Bethel shook his head. "I should not lay too much stress upon any 'Thorn's' having been there, were I you, Carlyle. Dick Hare was as one crazy that night, and might see shapes and forms where there were none."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATS AT THE WINDOW.

THE concert was to take place on a Thursday, and on the following Saturday Lord Mount Severn intended finally to quit East Lynne. The necessary preparations for departure were in progress, but when Thursday morning dawned, it appeared a question whether they would not once more be rendered nugatory. The house was roused betimes, and Mr. Wainwright, the surgeon from West Lynne, summoned to the earl's bedside: he had experienced another and a violent attack. The peer was exceedingly annoyed and vexed, and very irritable.

"I may be kept here a week — a fortnight — a month longer, now!" he uttered fretfully to Isabel.

"I am very sorry, papa. I dare say you do find East Lynne dull."

"Dull! that's not it: I have other reasons for wishing East Lynne to be quit of us. And now you can't go to this fine concert."

Isabel's face flushed. "Not go, papa?"

"Why, who is to take you? I can't get out of bed."

"Oh, papa, I must be there. Otherwise it would look almost as though—as though we had announced what we did not mean to perform. You know it was arranged that we should join the Ducies: the carriage

can still take me to the concert-room, and I can go in with them."

"Just as you please. I thought you would have jumped at any plea for staying away."

"Not at all," laughed Isabel. "I should like West Lynne to see that I don't despise Mr. Kane and his concert."

Later in the day, the earl grew alarmingly worse: his paroxysms of pain were awful. Isabel, who was kept from the room, knew nothing of the danger, and the earl's groans did not penetrate to her ears. She dressed herself in a gleeful mood, full of laughing wilfulness, Marvel, her maid, superintending in stiff displeasure, for the attire chosen did not meet her approbation. When ready, she went into the earl's room.

"Shall I do, papa?"

Lord Mount Severn raised his swollen eyelids and drew the clothes from his flushed face. A shining vision was standing before him, a beauteous queen, a gleaming fairy; he hardly knew what she looked like. She had put on a white lace dress and her diamonds; the dress was rich, and the jewels gleamed from her hair, from her pretty neck, from her delicate arms; and her cheeks were flushed and her curls were flowing.

The earl stared at her in amazement. "How could you dress yourself like that for a concert? You are out of your senses, Isabel."

"Marvel thinks so too," was the gay answer; "she has had a cross face since I told her what to put out. But I did it on purpose, papa; I thought I would show those West Lynne people that *I* think the

poor man's concert worth going to, and worth dressing for."

"You will have the whole room gaping at you."

"I don't mind. I'll bring you word all about it. Let them gape."

"You vain child! You have dressed yourself to please your vanity. "But, Isabel, you—oooooh!"

Isabel started as she stood: the earl's groan of pain was dreadful.

"An awful twinge, child. There, go along: talking makes me worse."

"Papa, shall I stay at home with you?" she gravely asked. "Every consideration should give way to illness. If you would like me to remain, or if I can do any good, pray let me."

"Quite the contrary; I had rather you were away. You can do no earthly good, for I could not have you in the room. Good-bye, darling. If you see Carlyle, tell him I shall hope to see him tomorrow."

Marvel threw a mantle over her shoulders, and she went down to the carriage, which waited.

The concert was held in the noted justice-room, over the market-place, called by courtesy the town-hall. It was large, commodious, and good for sound; many a town of far greater importance cannot boast so good a music-room. In the way of performers, Mr. Kane had done his poor best; a lady, quite fourth rate, was engaged from London, and the rest were local artistes.

Barbara Hare would not have missed the concert for the world, but Mrs. Hare had neither health nor spirits for it. It was arranged that the justice and

Barbara should accompany the Carlyles, and they proceeded to Miss Carlyle's in time for coffee. Something was said about a fly, but Miss Carlyle negatived it, asking what had come to their legs: it was a fine night, and the distance very short. Barbara had no objection to the walk with Mr. Carlyle.

"How is it that we see so little of you now?" she began, as they went along, Mr. Justice Hare and Miss Carlyle preceding them.

"I have been so much engaged at East Lynne: the earl finds his evenings dull. They go on Saturday, and my time will be my own again."

"You were expected at the parsonage last night; we were looking for you all the evening."

"Not expected by Mr. and Mrs. Little, I think. I told them I was engaged to dine at East Lynne."

"They were saying — some of them — that you might as well take up your abode at East Lynne, and wondered what your attraction could be. They said" — Barbara compelled her voice to calmness, — "that if Isabel Vane were not the Lady Isabel, they should think you went there courting."

"I am much obliged at their interesting themselves so much about me," equably returned Mr. Carlyle. "More so than Lady Isabel Vane would probably be. I am surprised that you should retail such nonsense, Barbara."

"They said it; I did not," answered Barbara, with a swelling heart. "Is it true that Lady Isabel sings so well? They were making out that her singing is divine."

"You had better not let Cornelia hear you say that, or you will get a reproof," laughed Mr. Car-

lyle. "Like I did, when I said she had an angel's face."

Barbara turned her own face full upon him: it looked pale in the gaslight. "Did you say she had an angel's face? Do you think it one?"

"I really believe I did say so, but I can't be quite sure, Cornelia snapped me up so quickly," he answered, laughing. "Barbara," he added, dropping his voice, "we have still not heard from Richard."

"No. You and mamma both think we shall hear; I say not, for I feel sure he will be afraid to write. I know he promised, but I have never thought he would perform."

"There would be no risk, sending the letters under cover to me, and it would be a relief and a comfort to Mrs. Hare."

"You know how timorous Richard is. Otway Bethel is home again," she continued. "You said you should question him when he returned, Archibald."

"I have done so, but he appears to know nothing. He seems well disposed to Richard, but casts doubt on the assertion that Thorn, or any stranger, was in the wood that night."

"It is very strange what Thorn it could have been."

"Very," assented Mr. Carlyle. I can make out nothing from Swainson. No person whatever, answering the description and named Thorn, was living there at the time, so far as I am able to ascertain. All we can do is to wait, and hope that time may bring elucidation with it."

They reached the town-hall as he spoke. A busy

crowd was gathered round the entrance; people going in to attend the concert, and the mob watching them. Drawn up at a short distance, so as not to obstruct other vehicles, was the aristocratic carriage of Lord Mount Severn; the coachman sat on his hammercloth, and two powdered footmen waited with it.

“Lady Isabel Vane is sitting there,” exclaimed Barbara as she passed.

Mr. Carlyle felt surprised. What could she be waiting there for? where could the earl be? A doubt came over him, he could not define why, that something was wrong.

“Will you pardon me if I quit you for one moment, Barbara, whilst I speak to Lady Isabel?”

He waited for neither acquiescence nor dissent, but left Barbara standing where she was, and accosted Isabel. The diamonds gleamed in her shining curls, as she bent towards him.

“I am waiting for Mrs. Ducie, Mr. Carlyle. I did not like to remain all alone in the ante-room, so I stayed here. When Mrs. Ducie’s carriage comes up, I shall get out. I am going in with her, you know.”

“And the earl?”

“Oh, have you not heard? Papa is ill again.”

“Ill again?” repeated Mr. Carlyle.

“Very ill indeed. Mr. Wainwright was sent for at five o’clock this morning, and has been with him a good deal of the day, Papa bade me say that he hoped to see you to-morrow.”

Mr. Carlyle rejoined Barbara: they entered the hall and began to ascend the stairs, just as another

aristocratic equipage dashed up, to scatter and gratify the mob. Barbara turned her head to look: it was that of the Honourable Mrs. Ducie.

The room was pretty full then, and Mrs. Ducie, her two daughters, and Isabel were conducted to seats by Mr. Kane — seats he had reserved for them at the upper end, near the orchestra. The same dazzling vision which had burst on the sight of Lord Mount Severn, fell on that of the audience, in Isabel, with her rich white dress, her glittering diamonds, her flowing curls, and her wondrous beauty. The Miss Ducies, plain girls, in brown silks, turned up their noses worse than ever nature had done it for them, and Mrs. Ducie heaved an audible sigh. “The poor motherless girl is to be pitied, my dears,” she whispered; “she has nobody to point out to her suitable attire: this ridiculous decking out must have been Marvel’s idea.”

But she looked like a lily amidst poppies and sunflowers, whether the “decking out” was ridiculous or not. Was Lord Mount Severn right, when he accused her of so dressing in self-gratification? Very likely: for, has not the great preacher said, that childhood and youth are vanity?

“Miss Carlyle, the justice, and Barbara also had seats near the orchestra, for Miss Carlyle in West Lynne was a person to be considered, and not hidden behind others. Mr. Carlyle, however, preferred to join the gentlemen who congregated and stood round about the door, inside and out. There was scarcely standing room in the place: Mr. Kane had, as was anticipated, a bumper, and the poor man could have worshipped Lady Isabel, for he knew he owed it to her.

It was very long: country concerts generally are: and was about three parts over when a powdered head, larger than any cauliflower ever grown, was discerned ascending the stairs behind the group of gentlemen; which head, when it brought its body in full view, was discovered to belong to one of the footmen of Lord Mount Severn. The calves alone, cased in their silk stockings, were a sight to be seen; and these calves betook themselves inside the concert-room, with a deprecatory bow for permission to the gentlemen they had to steer through, and there they came to a stand-still, the cauliflower extending forward, and turning itself about from right to left.

“Well, I’ll be jiffied!” cried an astonished old fox-hunter, who had been elbowed by the footman. “The cheek these fellows have!”

The fellow in question did not appear, however, to be enjoying any great amount of cheek just then, for he looked perplexed, humbled, and uneasy. Suddenly his eye fell on Mr. Carlyle, and it lightened up.

“Beg pardon, sir: could you happen to inform me whereabouts my young lady is sitting?”

“At the other end of the room, near the orchestra.”

“I’m sure I don’t know how ever I am to get to her, then,” returned the man, more in self-soliloquy, than to Mr. Carlyle. “The room’s choke full, and I don’t like crushing by. My lord is taken alarmingly worse, sir,” he explained, in an awe-struck tone: “it is feared he is dying.”

Mr. Carlyle was painfully startled.

“His screams of pain are awful, sir. Mr. Wainwright and another doctor from West Lynne are with

him, and an express has gone to Lynneborough for physicians. Mrs. Mason said we were to fetch my young lady home, and not lose a moment; and we brought the carriage, sir, Wells galloping his horses all the way."

"I will bring Lady Isabel," said Mr. Carlyle.

"I'm sure, sir, I should be under everlasting obligation if you would," returned the man.

Mr. Carlyle worked his way through the crowded room, he was tall and slender, many looking daggers at him, for a pathetic song was just then being given by the London lady. He disregarded all, and stood before Isabel.

"I thought you were not coming to speak to me to-night. Is it not a famous room! I am so pleased."

"More than famous, Lady Isabel. But," continued he gravely, "Lord Mount Severn does not find himself so well, and he has sent the carriage for you."

"Papa not so well!" she quickly exclaimed.

"Not quite. At any rate, he wishes you to go home. Will you allow me to pilot you through the room?"

"Oh, my dear, considerate papa!" she laughed. "He fears I shall be weary, and would emancipate me before the time. Thank you, Mr. Carlyle, but I will wait till the conclusion."

"No, no, Lady Isabel, it is not that. Lord Mount Severn is indeed worse."

Her countenance changed to seriousness; but she was not alarmed. "Very well. When this song is over: not to disturb the room."

"I think you had better lose no time," he urged. "Never mind the song and the room."

She rose instantly, and put her arm within Mr. Carlyle's. A hasty word of explanation to Mrs. Ducie, and he led her away, the room, in its surprise, making for them what space it might. Many an eye followed them, but none more curiously and eagerly than Barbara Hare's. "Where is he going to take her?" involuntarily uttered Barbara.

"How should I know?" retorted Miss Corny. "Barbara, you have done nothing but fidget all the night: what's the matter with you? Folks come to a concert to listen, not to talk and fidget."

Isabel's mantle was procured from the ante-room, where it had been left, and she descended the stairs with Mr. Carlyle. The carriage was drawn up close to the entrance, and the coachman had his reins gathered ready to start. The footman, not the one who had gone up-stairs, threw open the chariot door as soon as he saw her. He was new in the service; a simple country native, just engaged. She withdrew her arm from Mr. Carlyle's, and stood a moment before stepping in, looking at the man.

"Is papa much worse?"

"Oh yes, my lady: he was screaming shocking. But they think he'll live till morning."

With a sharp cry, she seized the arm of Mr. Carlyle, seized it for support in her shock of agony. Mr. Carlyle rudely thrust the man away: he could willingly have flung him at full length on the pavement.

"Oh, Mr. Carlyle, why did you not tell me?" she shivered.

"My dear Lady Isabella, I am grieved that you are told now. But, take comfort: you know how

ill he frequently is, and this may be but an ordinary attack. Step in. I trust we shall find it nothing more."

"Are you going home with me?"

"Certainly. I shall not leave you to go alone."

She moved to the other side of the chariot, making room for him.

"Thank you: I will sit outside."

"But the night is cold."

"Oh no." He closed the door, and took his seat by the coachman: the footmen got up behind, and the carriage sped away. Isabel gathered herself into her corner, and moaned aloud in her suspense and helplessness.

"Do not spare your horses," said Mr. Carlyle to Wells. "Lady Isabel will be ill with anxiety."

"She'll be worse before morning, poor child," returned the coachman. "I have lived in the service fifteen year, sir, and have watched her grow up from a little thing," he hastened to add, as if in apology for his familiarity.

"Is the earl really in danger?"

"Ay, sir, that he is. I have seen two cases in my life of gout in the stomach, and a few hours closed both. I heard a word dropped, as I came out, that Mr. Wainwright thought it was going on to the heart."

"The earl's former attacks have been alarming and painful," remarked Mr. Carlyle, clinging to hope.

"Yes, sir, I know; but this bout is different. Besides," resumed Wells, in a confidential tone, "them bats didn't come for nothing."

"Bats!" uttered Mr. Carlyle.

“ And it’s a sure sign, sir, that death is on its road to the house, safe and speedy.”

“ Wells, what are you talking about ? ”

“ The bats have been round the house this evening, sir. Nasty things ! I hate ’em at all times.”

“ Bats are fond of flying about at night-time,” remarked Mr. Carlyle, glancing aside at the steady old coachman with a half suspicion that he might not have been keeping himself quite so steady as usual. “ It is their nature.”

“ But they don’t come in shoals, sir, round about you, and in at the windows. To-night, when we got back, after leaving my young lady at the concert, I told Joe just to take out the horses and leave the carriage outside, as it would be required again. I went in-doors, and there they told me that Mrs. Mason wanted me, and I was to go up to the library to her. She was sitting there, sir, you see, to be close at hand, if anything was needed in my lord’s room. So I wiped my shoes, and up to the library I went, and knocked at the door. ‘ Come in,’ she called out, and in I walked, and there she was by herself, standing at the open window. ‘ You are airy to-night, ma’am,’ says I; ‘ it’s hardly weather for open windows : ’ for, as you see, sir, it’s quite a frost.”

Mr. Carlyle glanced down at the road and at the hedges.

“ ‘ Come in, Wells,’ Mrs. Mason called out, sharply, ‘ come and look here.’ I went and stood by her side, sir, and I never saw such a sight in my life. The bats were flying about in scores, in hundreds, a cloud of them, diving down at the window, and flapping

their wings. Right inside they came, and would have touched our faces, only we drew back. Where on earth they had come from, I can't think, for I had not been in-doors a minute, and there was not one about outside, that I had seen. 'What does all this mean, Wells?' cried Mrs. Mason, 'the bats must have turned wild to-night. I opened the window to look at them, for they quite startled me. Did you ever see them so thick?' 'No, ma'am, nor so near,' I answered her. 'And I don't like to see them, for it betokens no good: it's a sign.' Well, sir, with that she burst out laughing," continued Wells, "for she's one of those who ridicule signs and dreams, and the like. She's an educated woman, perhaps you know, sir, and, years ago, was nursery governess to Lady Isabel; and those educated people are mighty hard of belief."

Mr. Carlyle nodded.

"'What is it a sign of, Wells?' Mrs. Mason went on to me, in a jesting sort of way. 'Mrs. Mason, ma'am,' said I, 'I can't say that I ever saw the bats clanned together and making their visit, like this; but I have heard, times out of number, that they have been known to do it, and that it is a sure sign death is at the very door of the house.' 'I hope death is not at the door of this house,' sighed Mrs. Mason, thinking, no doubt, of my lord, and she closed the window as she spoke, and the nasty things beat against it with their wings. Mrs. Mason then spoke to me of the business she had wanted me upon; she was talking to me three minutes, perhaps, and when she had finished, I turned to look at the window again. But there was not a single bat there; they

had all gone, all disappeared in that little space of time. 'What has become of them?' cried Mrs. Mason; and I opened the window, and looked up and down, but they were clean gone, and the air and the sky were as clear as they are at this moment."

"Gone to flap at somebody else's window, perhaps," remarked Mr. Carlyle, with a very disbelieving smile.

"Not long after that, sir, the house was in commotion. My lord was in mortal agony, and Mr. Wainwright said (so the word ran in the servants'-hall) that the gout had reached the stomach, and might be rushing on to the heart. Denis went galloping off to Lynneborough for physicians, and we put to the horses and came tearing off for my young lady."

"Well," observed Mr. Carlyle, "I hope he will recover the attack, Wells, in spite of the gout and the bats."

The coachman shook his head, and turning his horses sharply round, whipped them up through the lodge gates.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Mason, waited at the hall door to receive Lady Isabel. Mr. Carlyle helped her out of the carriage, and gave her his arm up the steps. She scarcely dared to inquire.

"Is he better? May I go to his room?" she panted.

Yes, the earl was better; better, in so far as that he was quiet and senseless. She moved hastily towards his chamber. Mr. Carlyle drew the housekeeper aside.

"Is there any hope?"

"Not the slightest, sir. He is dying."

The earl knew no one: pain was gone for the pre-

sent, and he lay on his bed, calm; but his face, which had death in it all too plainly, startled Isabel. She did not scream or cry; she was perfectly quiet, save that she had a fit of shivering. "Will he soon be better?" she whispered to Mr. Wainwright, who stood there.

The surgeon coughed. "Well, he—he—we must hope it, my lady."

"But why does his face look like that? It is pale—grey: I never saw anybody else look so."

"He has been in great pain, my lady; and pain leaves its traces on the countenance."

Mr. Carlyle, who had come in and was standing by the surgeon, touched his arm to draw him from the room. He noticed the look on the earl's face, and did not like it; he wished to question the surgeon. Lady Isabel saw that Mr. Carlyle was about to quit the room, and beckoned to him.

"Do not leave the house, Mr. Carlyle. When he wakes up, it may cheer him to see you here; he liked you very much."

"I will not leave it, Lady Isabel. I did not think of doing so."

In time—it seemed an age—the medical men arrived from Lynneborough; three of them; the groom had thought he could not summons too many. It was a strange scene they entered upon: the ghastly peer, growing restless again now, battling with his departing spirit; and the gala robes, the sparkling gems adorning the young girl, watching at his side. They comprehended the case without difficulty: that she had been suddenly called from some scene of gaiety.

They stooped to look at the earl, and felt his pulse, and touched his heart, and exchanged a few murmured words with Mr. Wainwright. Isabel had stood back to give them place, but her anxious eyes followed their every movement. They did not seem to notice her, and she stepped forward.

“Can you do anything for him? Will he recover?”

They all turned at the address, and looked at her. One spoke: it was an evasive answer.

“Tell me the truth,” she implored, with feverish impatience; “you must not trifle with me. Do you not know me? I am his only child, and I am here alone.”

The first thing was to get her away from the room, for the great change was approaching, and the parting struggle between the body and the spirit might be one of warfare; no sight for her. But, in answer to their suggestions that she should go, she only leaned her head upon the pillow by her father, and moaned in despair.

“She must be got out of the room,” cried one of the physicians, almost angrily. “Ma’am”—turning suddenly upon Mrs. Mason—“are there no relatives in the house, no one, who can exert influence over the young lady?”

“She has scarcely any relatives in the world,” replied the housekeeper; “no near ones. And we happen to be, just now, quite alone.”

But Mr. Carlyle, seeing the urgency of the case, for the earl with every minute grew more excited, approached and whispered her. “You are as anxious as we can be for your father’s recovery.”

“*As anxious!*” she uttered, reproachfully.

“You know what I would imply. Of course our anxiety can be as nothing to yours.”

“As nothing; *as nothing*. I think my heart will break.”

“Then—forgive me—you should not oppose the wishes of his medical attendants. They wish to be alone with him; and time is being lost.”

She rose up; she placed her hands on her brow as if to collect the sense of the words; and then she addressed the doctors.

“Is it really necessary that I should leave the room; necessary *for him?*”

“It is necessary, my lady; absolutely essential.”

She quitted the room without another word, and turned into the library, an apartment in the same wing, where the bats had paid their visits earlier in the evening. A large fire burnt in the grate, and she walked up to it, and leaned her hand and forehead on the mantel-piece.

“Mr. Carlyle,” she said, without raising it.

“I am here,” he answered, for he had followed her in. “What can I do for you?”

“I have come away, you see. Until I may go in again will you bring me word how he is—continually?”

“Indeed I will.”

As he quitted the room, Marvel sailed into it, a very fine lady’s maid. “Would my lady change her dress?”

No, my lady would not. “They might be calling me to papa at the moment the dress was off.”

“But so very unsuitable, my lady—that rich dress for a night scene, such as this.”

“Unsuitable! What does it signify? Who thinks of my dress?”

But, by-and-bye, Mrs. Mason quietly took off the diamonds, and threw a warm shawl over her neck and arms, for she was shivering still.

Some of the medical men left; Mr. Wainwright remained. Nothing more could be done for Lord Mount Severn in this world, and the death scene was prolonged and terrible. He was awake to pain again of some sort; whether of mind or body they could not say. Pain! mortal, shrieking, writhing agony. Is it, or is it not the case, that a badly-spent life entails one of these awful death-beds?

Very rebellious, very excited grew Isabel towards morning. Mr. Carlyle had brought her perpetual tidings from the sick-room, softening down the actual facts. She could not understand that she need be kept away from it, and she nearly had a battle with Mr. Carlyle.

“It is cruel, so to treat me,” she exclaimed, pride alone enabling her to suppress her sobs. “Pent up here, the night has seemed to me as long as ten. When your father was dying, were you kept away from him?”

“My dear young lady—a hardy, callous man may go where you may not.”

“You are not hardy and callous.”

“I spoke of man’s general nature.”

“I shall act upon my own responsibility. I am obliged by all your kindness, Mr. Carlyle,” she hastily added, “but you really have no right to keep me from my father. And I shall go to him.”

Mr. Carlyle placed himself before her, his back

against the door. His grave, kind face looked into hers with the deepest sympathy and tenderness. "Forgive me, dear Lady Isabel; I cannot let you go."

She broke into a passion of tears and sobs as he led her back to the fire, and stood there with her.

"He is my dear father, I have but him in the wide world."

"I know; I know: I feel for you all that you are feeling. Twenty times this night I have wished, forgive me the thought, that you were my sister, so that I might express my sympathy more freely, and comfort you."

"Tell me the truth, then, why I am kept away. If you can show me a sufficient cause, I will be reasonable and obey; but do not say again I should be disturbing him, for it is not true."

"He is too ill for you to see him, his symptoms are too painful; were you to go in, in defiance of advice, you would regret it all your after life."

"Is he dying?"

Mr. Carlyle hesitated. Ought he to dissemble with her as the doctors had done? A strong feeling was upon him that he ought not.

"I trust to you not to deceive me," she simply said.

"I fear he is. I believe he is."

She rose up; she grasped his arm in the sudden fear that flashed over her. "You are deceiving me, and he is dead!"

"I am not deceiving you, Lady Isabel. He is not dead: but—it may be very near."

She laid her face down upon the sofa pillow.

“Going for ever from me! going for ever. Oh, Mr. Carlyle, let me see him for a minute! just one farewell! will you not try for me?”

He knew how hopeless it was, but he turned to leave the room. “I will go and see. But you will remain here quietly: you will not come.”

She bowed her head in acquiescence, and he closed the door. Had she indeed been his sister, he would probably have turned the key upon her. He entered the earl’s chamber, but not many seconds did he remain in it.

“It is over,” he whispered to Mrs. Mason, whom he met in the corridor. “And Mr. Wainwright is asking for you.”

“You are soon back,” cried Isabel, lifting her head. “May I go?”

He sat down and took her hand, shrinking from his task. “I wish I could comfort you!” he exclaimed, in a tone of deep emotion.

Her face turned of a ghastly whiteness, as white as another’s not far away. “Tell me the worst,” she breathed.

“I have nothing to tell you, but the worst. May God support you, dear Lady Isabel!”

She turned to hide her face and its misery from him, and a low wail of anguish broke from her, betraying its own tale of despair.

The grey dawn of morning was breaking over the world, advent of another bustling day in life’s history; but the spirit of William Vane, Earl of Mount Severn, had soared away from it for ever.

CHAPTER X.

THE KEEPERS OF THE DEAD.

EVENTS, between the death of Lord Mount Severn and his interment, occurred quickly; to one of them the reader may feel inclined to demur, as believing that it could have no foundation in fact, in the actions of real life. He would be wrong. The circumstance really occurred.

The earl died on Friday morning, at daylight. The news spread rapidly; it generally does, on the death of a peer, if he have been of note (whether good or bad) in the world. It was known in London before the day was over; the consequence of which was, that by Saturday morning early, a shoal of what the late earl would have called harpies, had arrived to surround East Lynne. There were creditors for small sums and for great, for five or ten pounds, up to five or ten thousand. Some were civil; some, impatient; some, loud and rough and angry; some came to put in executions on the effects, and some—to *arrest the body!*

This last act was accomplished cleverly. Two men, each with a remarkably hooked nose, stole away from the hubbub of the clamourers, and peering cunningly about, made their way to the side, or tradesman's entrance. A kitchen-maid answered their gentle appeal at the bell.

“Is the coffin come yet?” said they.

“Coffin? no!” was the girl’s reply. “The shell ain’t here yet. Mr. Jones didn’t promise that till nine o’clock, and it haven’t gone eight.”

“It won’t be long,” quoth they, “it’s on its road. We’ll go up to his lordship’s room, and be getting ready for it.”

The girl called the butler. “Two men from Jones’s, the undertaker’s, sir,” announced she. “The shell’s a coming on, and they want to go up and make ready for it.”

The butler marshalled them up-stairs himself, and introduced them to the room. “That will do,” said they, as he was about to enter with them, “we won’t trouble you to wait.” And, closing the door upon the unsuspecting butler, they took up their station on either side the dead, like a couple of ill-omened mutes. They had placed an arrest upon the corpse; it was theirs, until their claim was satisfied, and they sat down to thus watch and secure it. Pleasant occupation!

It may have been an hour later that Lady Isabel, leaving her own chamber, opened noiselessly that of the dead. She had been in it several times the previous day; at first with the housekeeper; afterwards, when the nameless dread was somewhat effaced, alone. But she felt nervous again this morning, and had gained the bed before she ventured to lift her eyes from the carpet and encounter the sight. Then she started, for there sat two strange-looking men—and not attractive men, either.

It darted through her mind that they must be people from the neighbourhood, come to gratify an

idle and unpardonable curiosity: her first impulse was to summon the butler; her second, to speak to them herself.

“Do you want anything here?” she quietly said.

“Much obleeged for the inquiry, miss. We are all right.”

The words and the tone struck her as being singular in the extreme: and they kept their seats, too, as though they had a right to be there.

“Why are you here?” she repeated. “What are you doing?”

“Well, miss, I don’t mind telling you, for I suppose you are his daughter”—pointing his left thumb over his shoulder at the late peer—“and we hear he have got no other relative anigh him. We have been obleeged, miss, to perform a unpleasant dooty, and secure him.”

The words were like Greek to her: and the men saw that they were.

“He unfort’nately owed a sight of money, miss—as you perhaps be aware on, and our employers is in, deep. So, as soon as they heard what had happened, they sent us down to arrest the dead corpse: and we have done it.”

Amazement, horror, fear, struggled together in the shocked mind of Lady Isabel. Arrest the dead! She had never heard of a like calamity: nor could she have believed in such. Arrest it for what purpose? What to do? To disfigure it?—to sell it? With a panting heart and ashy lips she turned from the room. Mrs. Mason happened to be passing near the stairs, and Isabel flew to her, laying hold of her with both hands in her terror, as she burst into a fit of nervous tears.

“Those men—in there!” she gasped.

“What men, my lady?” returned Mrs. Mason, in surprise.

“I don’t know; I don’t know. I think they are going to stop there: they say they have taken papa.”

After a pause of bewildered astonishment, the housekeeper left her standing where she was, and went to the earl’s chamber, to see if she could fathom the mystery of the words. Isabel leaned against the balustrades; partly for support, partly that she seemed afraid to stir from them; and the ominous disturbance, down-stairs, reached her ears. Strangers, interlopers, appeared to be in the hall, talking vehemently, and complaining in bitter tones. More and more terrified, she held her breath to listen.

“Where’s the good of your seeing the young lady?” cried the butler, in a tone of remonstrance. “She knows nothing about the earl’s affairs; she is in grief enough, just now, without any other worry.”

“I will see her,” retorted a dogged voice. “If she’s too start-up and mighty to come down and answer a question or two, why, I’ll find my way on to her. Here we are, a shameful crowd of us, swindled out of our own, told there’s nobody we can speak to; nobody here but the young lady, and she must not be troubled! She didn’t find it trouble to help to spend our money! She has got no honour and no feelings of a lady, if she don’t come and speak to us.”

Repressing her rebellious emotion, Lady Isabel glided partly down the staircase, and softly called to the butler.

“What is all this?” she asked. “I must know.”

“Oh, my lady, don’t go amongst those rough men!

You cannot do any good; pray go back before they see you. I have sent for Mr. Carlyle, and expect him here every moment."

"Did papa owe them *all* money?" she shivered.

"I'm afraid he did, my lady."

She went swiftly on; and, passing through the few stragglers in the hall, entered the dining-room, where the chief mass had congregated, and the hubbub was loudest. All anger, at least all external anger, was hushed at her sight. She looked so young, so innocent, so childlike in her pretty morning dress of peach-coloured muslin, her fair face shaded by its falling curls, so little fit to combat with, or understand *their* business, that instead of pouring forth complaints, they hushed them into silence.

"I heard some one calling out that I ought to see you," she began, her agitation causing the words to come forth in a jerking manner. "What did you want with me?"

Then they poured out their complaints, but not angrily, and she listened till she grew sick. There were many and formidable claims; promissory notes and I O U's, overdue bills and underdue bills; heavy outstanding debts of all sorts, and trifles (comparatively speaking) for housekeeping, servants' liveries, out-door servants' wages, bread and meat.

What was Isabel Vane to answer? what excuse to offer? what hope or promise to give? She stood in bewilderment, unable to speak, turning from one to the other, her sweet eyes full of pity and contrition.

"The fact is, young lady," said one who bore the exterior of a gentleman, "we should not have come down to trouble you—at least, I can answer for my-

self—but his lordship's men of business, Warburton and Ware, to whom many of us hastened last evening, told us there would not be a shilling for anybody, unless it could be got from the furniture. When it comes to that, it is, 'first come, first served,' and I got down by morning light, and levied an execution."

"Which was levied before you came," put in a man, who might be brother to the two up-stairs, to judge by his nose. "But what's such furniture as this, to our claims—if you come to combine 'em? no more than a bucket of water is to the Thames."

"What can I do?" shivered Lady Isabel. "What is it you wish me to do? I have no money to give you. I —"

"No, miss," broke in a quiet, pale man; "if report tells true, you are worse wronged than we are, for you won't have a roof to put your head under, or a guinea to call your own."

"He has been a scoundrel to everybody," interrupted an intemperate voice; "he has ruined thousands."

The speech was hissed down: even they were not men gratuitously to insult a delicate young lady.

"Perhaps you'll just answer us a question, miss," persisted the voice, in spite of the hisses. "Is there any ready money that can —"

But another person had entered the room — Mr. Carlyle. He caught sight of the white face and trembling hands of Isabel, and interrupted the last speaker with scant ceremony.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, in a tone of authority. "What do you want?"

"If you are a friend of the late peer's, you ought

to know what we want," was the response. "We want our debts paid."

"But this is not the place to come to," returned Mr. Carlyle: "your flocking here, in this extraordinary manner, will do no good. You must go to Warburton and Ware."

"We have been to them — and received their answer. A cool assurance that there'll be nothing for anybody."

"At any rate, you will get nothing here," observed Mr. Carlyle, to the assembly collectively. "Allow me to request you to leave the house at once."

It was little likely that they would go for his bidding. And they said it.

"Then I warn you of the consequences of a refusal," quietly said Mr. Carlyle: "you are trespassing upon a stranger's property. This house was not Lord Mount Severn's: he sold it some time back."

They knew better. Some laughed, and said these tricks were stale.

"Listen, gentlemen," rejoined Mr. Carlyle, in the plain, straightforward manner that carried its own truth. "To make an assertion that could be disproved when the earl's affairs came to be investigated, would be simply foolish. I give you my word of honour as a man — that this estate, with the house and all that it contains, passed legally, months ago, from the hands of Lord Mount Severn: and, during his recent sojourn here, he was but a visitor in it. Go and ask his men of business."

"Who purchased it?" was the inquiry.

"Mr. Carlyle, of West Lynne. Some of you may possibly know him by reputation."

Some of them did. "A cute young lawyer," observed a voice; "as his father was before him."

"I am he," proceeded Mr. Carlyle. "And being a 'cute lawyer,' as you do me the honour to decide, you cannot suppose I should risk my money upon any sale, not perfectly safe and legal. I was not an agent in the affair; I employed agents: for it was my own money that I invested, and East Lynne is mine."

"Is the purchase-money paid over?" inquired more than one."

"It was paid over at the time: last June."

"What did Lord Mount Severn do with the money?"

"I do not know," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I am not cognisant of Lord Mount Severn's private affairs."

Significant murmurs arose: "Strange that the earl should stop two or three months at a place that wasn't his!"

"It may appear so to you, but allow me to explain," returned Mr. Carlyle. "The earl expressed a wish to pay East Lynne a few days' visit, by way of farewell, and I acceded. Before the few days were over, he was taken ill, and remained, from that time, too ill to quit it. This very day, this day, gentlemen, was at length fixed for his departure."

"And you tell us you bought the furniture!"

"Everything as it stands. You need not doubt my word, for the proofs will be forthcoming. East Lynne was in the market for sale: I heard of it, and became the purchaser—just as I might have bought an estate from any of you. And now, as this is my house, and you have no claim upon me, I shall be obliged to you to withdraw."

“Perhaps you will claim the horses and carriages next, sir,” cried the man with the hooked nose.

Mr. Carlyle lifted his head haughtily. “What is mine, is mine; legally purchased and paid for; a fair, just price. The carriages and horses I have nothing to do with: Lord Mount Severn brought them down with him.”

“And I have got a safe watcher over them in the out premises, to see as they don’t run away,” nodded the man, complacently: “and, if I don’t mistake, there’s a safe watcher over something else up-stairs.”

“What a cursed scoundrel Mount Severn was!”

“Whatever he may have been, it does not give you the right to outrage the feelings of his daughter,” warmly interrupted Mr. Carlyle: “and I should have thought that men, calling themselves Englishmen, would have disdained the shame. Allow me, Lady Isabel,” he added, imperatively taking her hand to lead her from the room. “I will remain and deal with this business.”

But she hesitated, and stopped. The injury her father had done these men was telling painfully on her sense of right, and she essayed to speak a word of apology, of sorrow: she thought she ought to do so; she did not like them to deem her quite heartless. But it was a painful task, and the colour went and came in her pale face, and her breath was laboured with the excess of her tribulation.

“I am very sorry,” she stammered; and, with the effort of speaking, emotion quite got the better of her, and she burst into tears. “I did not know anything of all this: my father’s affairs were not spoken of before me. I believe I have not anything: if I had,

I would divide it amongst you as equally as I could. But, should the means ever be in my power, should money ever be mine, I will thankfully pay all your claims."

All your claims! Lady Isabel little thought what that "all" would comprise. However, such promises, made at such a moment, fall heedlessly on the ear. Scarcely one present but felt sympathy and sorrow for her, and Mr. Carlyle drew her from the room. He closed the door upon the noisy crew, and then her sobs came forth hysterically.

"I am so grieved, Lady Isabel! Had I foreseen this annoyance, you should have been spared it. Can you go up-stairs alone? — or shall I call Mrs. Mason?"

"Oh, yes, I can go alone: I am not ill, only frightened and sick. This is not the worst," she shivered. "There are two men up—up—with—papa."

Up with papa! Mr. Carlyle was puzzled. He saw that she was shaking from head to foot as she stood before him.

"I cannot understand it, and it terrifies me," she continued, attempting an explanation. "They are sitting in the room, close to him; they have taken him, they say."

A blank, thunderstruck pause. Mr. Carlyle looked at her, he did not speak; and then he turned and looked at the butler, who was standing near. But the man only responded by giving his head a half-shake, and Mr. Carlyle saw that it was an ominous one.

"I will clear the house of these," he said to Lady Isabel, pointing back to the dining-room, "and then join you up-stairs."

“Two ruffians, sir, and they have got possession of the body,” whispered the butler into Mr. Carlyle’s ear, as Lady Isabel departed. “They obtained entrance to the chamber by a sly, deceitful trick, saying they were the undertaker’s men, and that he can’t be buried, unless their claims are paid, if it’s for a month to come. It has upset all our stomachs, sir; Mrs. Mason, while telling me—for she was the first to know it—was as sick as she could be.”

At present Mr. Carlyle returned to the dining-room, and bore the brunt of the anger of those savage, and—it may be said—ill-used men. Not that it was vented upon him; quite the contrary; but on the memory of the unhappy peer, who lay overhead. A few had taken the precaution to ensure the earl’s life, and they were the best off. They left the house after a short space of time, for Mr. Carlyle’s statement was indisputable, and they knew the law better than to remain, trespassers, on his property.

But the custodians of the dead could not be so got rid of. Mr. Carlyle proceeded to the death-chamber, and examined their authority. A similar case had never occurred under his own observation: though it had under his father’s, and Mr. Carlyle remembered hearing of it. The body of a church dignitary, who had died deeply in debt, was arrested as it was being carried through the cloisters to its grave in the cathedral. These men, sitting over Lord Mount Severn, enforced heavy claims, and there they must sit, until the arrival of Mr. Vane from Castle Marling—now the Earl of Mount Severn.

On the following morning, Sunday, Mr. Carlyle proceeded again to East Lynne, and found, to his

surprise, that there was no arrival. Isabel was in the breakfast-room alone, the meal on the table untouched, and she shivering—on a low ottoman before the fire. She looked so ill, that Mr. Carlyle could not forbear remarking upon it.

“I have not slept, and I am very cold,” she answered. “I did not close my eyes all night; I was too terrified.”

“Terrified at what?” he asked.

“At those men,” she whispered. “It is strange that Mr. Vane is not come.”

“Is the post in?”

“I don’t know,” she apathetically replied. “I have received nothing.”

She had scarcely spoken when the butler entered with his salver full of letters; most of them bearing condolence to Lady Isabel. She singled out one, and hastened to open it, for it bore the Castle Marling postmark. “It is Mrs. Vane’s handwriting,” she remarked to Mr. Carlyle.

“Castle Marling, Saturday.

“My dear Isabel, — I am dreadfully grieved and shocked at the news conveyed in Mr. Carlyle’s letter to my husband, for he is gone cruising in his yacht, and I opened it. Goodness knows where he may be, round the coast somewhere; but he said he should be home by Sunday, and as he is pretty punctual generally in keeping his word, I expect him. Be assured he will not lose a moment in hastening to East Lynne.

“I cannot express what I feel for you, and am too bouleversée to write more. Try and keep up your

spirits, and believe me, dear Isabel, with sincere sympathy and regret, faithfully yours,

“EMMA MOUNT SEVERN.”

The colour came into Isabel's pale cheek when she read the signature. She thought, had she been the writer, she should, in that first, early letter, have still signed herself Emma Vane. Isabel handed the note to Mr. Carlyle. “It is very unfortunate,” she sighed.

Mr. Carlyle glanced over it, as quickly as Mrs. Vane's illegible writing allowed him, and drew in his lips in a peculiar manner when he came to the signature. Perhaps at the same thought which had struck Isabel.

“Had Mrs. Vane been worth a rush, she would have come herself, knowing your lonely situation,” he uttered, impulsively.

Isabel leaned her head upon her hand. All the difficulties and embarrassments of her position came crowding upon her mind. No orders had been given in preparation for the funeral, and she felt that she had no right to give any. The Earls of Mount Severn were buried at Mount Severn, but to take her father thither would involve great expense: would the present earl sanction that? Since the previous morning, she seemed to have grown old in the world's experiences; her ideas were changed, the bent of her thoughts had been violently turned from its course. Instead of being a young lady of high position, of wealth and rank, she appeared to herself more in the light of an unfortunate pauper; an interloper in the house she was inhabiting. It has

been the custom in romance to represent young ladies, especially if they be handsome and interesting, as being entirely oblivious of matter-of-fact cares and necessities, supremely indifferent to future prospects of poverty — poverty that brings hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness ; but, be assured, this apathy never exists in real life. Isabel Vane's grief for her father — whom, whatever may have been the aspect he wore for others, *she* had deeply loved and revered — was sharply poignant : but in the midst of that grief, and of the singular troubles his death had brought forth, she could not shut her eyes to her own future. Its uncertainty, its shadowed-forth embarrassments did obtrude themselves, and the words of that plain-speaking creditor kept ringing in her ears — “ You won't have a roof to put your head under, or a guinea to call your own.” Where was she to go ? — with whom to live ? she was in Mr. Carlyle's house now. And how was she to pay the servants ? Money was owing to them all.

“ Mr. Carlyle, how long has this house been yours ? ” she asked, breaking the silence.

“ It was in June that the purchase was completed. Did Lord Mount Severn never tell you he had sold it to me ? ”

“ No ; never. All these things are yours ? ” glancing round the room.

“ The furniture was sold with the house. Not these sort of things,” he added, his eye falling on the silver on the breakfast-table, “ not the plate and linen.”

“ Not the plate and linen ! Then those poor men, who were here yesterday, have a right to them,” she quickly cried.

“ I scarcely know. I believe the plate goes with the entail — and the jewels go also. The linen cannot be of much consequence, either way.”

“ Are my clothes my own ? ”

He smiled at her simplicity ; and assured her that they were nobody else’s.

“ I did not know,” she sighed ; “ I did not understand. So many strange things have happened in the last day or two, that I seem to understand nothing.”

Indeed she could not understand. She had no definite ideas on the subject of this transfer of East Lynne to Mr. Carlyle : plenty of indefinite ones, and they were haunting her. Fears of debt to him, and of the house and its contents being handed over to him in liquidation, perhaps only partial, were working in her brain.

“ Does my father owe you any money ? ” she breathed in a timid tone.

“ Not any,” he replied. “ Lord Mount Severn was never indebted to me in his life.”

“ Yet you purchased East Lynne ! ”

“ As any one else might have done,” he answered, discerning the drift of her thoughts. “ I was in search of an eligible estate to invest money in, and East Lynne suited me.”

“ I feel my position, Mr. Carlyle,” she resumed, the rebellious tears forcing themselves to her eyes, “ thus to be intruding upon you for a shelter. And I cannot help myself.”

“ You can help grieving me,” he gently answered, “ which you do when you talk of obligation. The obligation is on my side, Lady Isabel ; and when I express a hope that you will continue at East Lynne

while it can be of service, however prolonged that period may be, I assure you I say it in all sincerity."

"You are truly kind," she faltered, "and for a few days; until I can think; until——Oh, Mr. Carlyle, are papa's affairs really so bad as they said yesterday?" she broke off, her perplexities recurring to her with vehement force. "Is there nothing left?"

Now Mr. Carlyle might have given the evasive assurance that there would be plenty left, just to tranquillise her. But to use deceit with her would have pricked against every feeling of his nature; and he saw how implicitly she relied upon his truth.

"I fear things are not very bright," he answered. "That is, so far as we can see at present. But there may be some settlement effected for you that you do not know of. Warburton and Ware——"

"No," she interrupted; "I never heard of a settlement, and I am sure there is none. I see the worst plainly: I have no home; no home, and no money. This house is yours; the town-house and Mount Severn go to Mr. Vane. And I have nothing."

"But surely Mr. Vane will be delighted to welcome you to your old home. The houses pass to him—it almost seems as though you had the greater right in them, than he or Mrs. Vane."

"My home with them!" she retorted, as if the words had stung her. "What are you saying, Mr. Carlyle?"

"I beg your pardon, Lady Isabel. I should not have presumed to touch upon these points myself, but——"

"Nay, I think I ought to beg yours," she interrupted, more calmly. "I am only grateful for the

interest you take in them ; the kindness you have shown. But I could never make my home with Mrs. Vane."

Mr. Carlyle rose. He could do no good by remaining, and did not think well to intrude longer. He suggested that it might be more pleasant if Isabel had a friend with her: Mrs. Ducie would, no doubt, be willing to come, and she was a kind and motherly woman.

Isabel shook her head, with a passing shudder. "Have strangers here, with — all — that — in papa's chamber!" she uttered. "Mrs. Ducie drove over yesterday; perhaps to remain; I don't know; but I was afraid of questions, and would not see her. When I think of — that — I feel thankful that I am alone."

The housekeeper stopped Mr. Carlyle as he was going out. "Sir, what is the news from Castle Marling? Pound said there was a letter. Is Mr. Vane coming?"

"He was out yachting. Mrs. Vane expected him home yesterday, so it is to be hoped he will be here to-day."

"Whatever will be done, if he does not come?" she breathed. "The leaden coffin ought to be soldered down — for you know, sir, the state he was in when he died."

"It can be soldered down without Mr. Vane."

"Of course — without Mr. Vane. It's not that, sir. Will those men allow it to be done? The undertakers were here this morning at day-break, and those men intimated that they were not going to *lose sight* of the dead. The words sounded significant

to us, but we asked them no questions. Have they a right to prevent it, sir?"

"Upon my word I cannot tell," replied Mr. Carlyle. "The proceeding is so rare a one that I know little what right of law they have, or have not. Do not mention this fear to Lady Isabel. And when Mr. Va—— when Lord Mount Severn arrives, send down to apprise me of it."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW PEER. AND THE BANK-NOTE.

A POST-CHAISE was driven furiously up the avenue that Sunday afternoon. It contained the new peer, Lord Mount Severn. The more direct line of rail from Castle Marling brought him within five miles of West Lynne, and thence he had travelled in a hired chaise. Mr. Carlyle soon joined him, and almost at the same time Mr. Warburton arrived from London. Absence from town, at the period of the earl's death, had prevented Mr. Warburton's earlier attendance. Business was entered upon immediately.

The present earl knew that his predecessor had been an embarrassed man, but he had no conception of the extent of the evil: they had not been intimate, and rarely came in contact. As the various items of news were now detailed to him—the wasteful expenditure, the disastrous ruin, the total absence of provision for Isabel, he stood petrified and aghast. He was a tall, stout man of three-and-forty years, his nature honourable, his manners cold, and his countenance severe.

“It is the most iniquitous piece of business I ever heard of,” he exclaimed to the two lawyers. “Of all reckless fools, Mount Severn must have been the worst!”

“Unpardonably improvident, as regards his daughter,” was the assenting remark.

“Improvident! it must have been rank madness,” retorted the earl. “No man in his senses could leave a child to the mercy of the world, as he has left her. She has not a shilling; literally not a shilling in her possession. I put the question to her—what money there was in the house when the earl died. Twenty or twenty-five pounds, she answered, which she had since given to Mason, who required it for house-keeping purposes. If the girl wants a yard of ribbon for herself, she has not the pence to pay for it! Can you realise such a case to the mind?” continued the excited peer. “I will stake my veracity that such a one never occurred yet.”

“No money for her own personal wants!” exclaimed Mr. Carlyle.

“Not a halfpenny in the world. And there are no funds, and will be none, that I can see, for her to draw upon.”

“Quite correct, my lord,” nodded Mr. Warburton. “The entailed estates go to you, and what trifling matters of personal property may be left, the creditors will take care of.”

“I understand East Lynne is yours,” cried the earl, turning sharply upon Mr. Carlyle. “Isabel has just said so.”

“It is,” was the reply. “It became mine last June. I believe his lordship kept the fact a close secret.”

“He was obliged to keep it secret,” interposed Mr. Warburton, addressing Lord Mount Severn, “for not a stiver of the purchase-money could he

have fingered, had it got wind. Except ourselves and Mr. Carlyle's agents, the fact was made known to none."

"It is strange, sir, that you could not urge the claims of his child upon the earl," rejoined the new peer to Mr. Warburton, his tone one of harsh reproof. "You were in his confidence, you knew the state of his affairs; it was in your line of duty to do it."

"And, knowing the state of his affairs, my lord, we knew how useless the urging it would be," returned Mr. Warburton. "He had let the time slip by, when he could have made a provision for her: the power, to do so, was past, years ago. Once or twice, I have called it to his notice, but it was a sore point with him, and he would not pursue it. I do not think he was uneasy about her: he depended upon her making a good marriage during his lifetime; not expecting to die so young."

"Out of his power!" repeated the earl, stopping in his impatient paces of the room and facing Mr. Warburton. "Don't tell me, sir! he should have done something. He might have insured his life for a few thousands, if nothing else. The child is without anything; without even pocket-money! Do you understand?"

"Unfortunately I understand, only too well," returned the lawyer. "But your lordship has but a faint idea of the burdens Lord Mount Severn had upon him. The interest alone on his debts was frightful—and the deuce's own work there used to be to get it. Not to speak of the kites he let loose: he would fly them, and nothing could stop him; and they had to be provided for."

“Oh, I know,” replied the earl, with a gesture of contempt. “Drawing one bill to cover another: that was his system.”

“Draw!” echoed Mr. Warburton, “he would have drawn a bill upon Aldgate pump. It was a downright mania with him.”

“Urged to it by his necessities, I conclude,” put in Mr. Carlyle.

“He had no business to have such necessities, sir,” cried the earl, wrathfully. “But let us proceed to business. What money is there, lying at his bankers, Mr. Warburton? Do you know?”

“None,” was the blank reply. “We overdrew the account ourselves, a fortnight ago, to meet one of his pressing liabilities. We hold a little; and, had he lived a week or two longer, the autumn rents would have been paid in — though they must have been as quickly paid out again.”

“I’m glad there’s something. What is the amount?”

“My lord,” answered Mr. Warburton, shaking his head in a self-condoling manner, “I am sorry to tell you that what we hold will not half satisfy our own claims: money actually paid out of our pockets.”

“Then where on earth is the money to come from, sir? For the funeral; for the servants’ wages; for everything, in short?”

“There is none to come from anywhere,” was the reply of Mr. Warburton.

Lord Mount Severn strode the carpet more fiercely. “Wicked improvidence! shameful profligacy! callous-hearted man! To live a rogue, and die a beggar, leaving his daughter to the charity of strangers!”

“Her case presents the worst feature of the whole,” remarked Mr. Carlyle. “What will she do for a home?”

“She must, of course, find it with me,” replied his lordship. “And, I should hope, a better one than this. With all these debts and duns at his elbow, Mount Severn’s house could not have been a bower of roses.”

“I fancy she knew nothing of the state of affairs; had seen little, if anything, of the embarrassments,” returned Mr. Carlyle.

“Nonsense!” said the peer.

“Mr. Carlyle is right, my lord,” observed Mr. Warburton, looking over his spectacles. “Lady Isabel was in safety at Mount Severn till the spring, and the purchase-money from East Lynne was a stop-gap for many things, and made matters easy for the moment. However, his imprudences are at an end now.”

“No, they are not at an end,” returned Lord Mount Severn: “they leave their effects behind them. I hear there was a fine scene yesterday morning: some of the unfortunate wretches he has taken in, made their appearance here, all the way from town.”

“Oh, they are Jews, half of them,” slightlyly spoke Mr. Warburton. “If they do lose a little, it will be an agreeable novelty to them.”

“Jews have as much right to their own as we have, Mr. Warburton,” was the peer’s angry reprimand. “And if they were Turks and infidels, it would not excuse Mount Severn’s practices. Isabel says it was you, Mr. Carlyle, who contrived to get rid of them.”

“By convincing them that East Lynne and its furniture belonged to me. But there are those two men up-stairs, in possession of—of him: I could not get rid of them.”

The earl looked at him. “I do not understand you.”

“Did you not know that they have seized the corpse?” asked Mr. Carlyle, dropping his voice. “Two men have been posted over it, like sentinels, since yesterday morning. And there’s a third in the house, I hear, who relieves each by turn, that they may go down in the hall and take their meals.”

The earl had halted in his walk and drawn near to Mr. Carlyle, his mouth open, his face a marvel of consternation. “By George!” was all Mr. Warburton uttered, and snatched off his glasses.

“Mr. Carlyle, do I understand you aright—that the body of the late earl has been seized for debt?” demanded the peer, solemnly. “Seize a dead body! Am I awake, or dreaming?”

“It is what they have done. They got into the room by stratagem.”

“Is it possible that transactions so infamous are permitted by our law?” ejaculated the earl. “Arrest a dead man! I never heard of such a thing: I am shocked beyond expression. Isabel said something about two men, I remember: but she was so full of grief and agitation altogether, that I but half comprehended what she said upon any subject. Why, what will be done? Cannot we bury him?”

“I fancy not. The housekeeper told me this morning, she feared they would not even suffer the coffins to be closed down. And that ought to be done with all convenient speed.”

“It is perfectly horrible,” uttered the earl.

“Who has done it? do you know?” inquired Mr. Warburton.

“Somebody of the name of Anstey,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “In the absence of any member of the family, I took upon myself to pay the chamber a visit, and examine into the men’s authority. The claim is about three thousand pounds.”

“If it’s Anstey who has done it, it is a personal debt of the earl’s, really owing, every pound of it,” observed Mr. Warburton. “A sharp man, though, that Anstey, to hit upon such a scheme.”

“And a shameless and a scandalous man,” added Lord Mount Severn. “Well, this is a pretty thing! What’s to be done?”

While they consult, let us look for a moment at Lady Isabel. She sat alone, in great perplexity, indulging the deepest grief. Lord Mount Severn had intimated to her, kindly and affectionately, that henceforth she must find her home with him and his wife. Isabel returned a faint thank you, and as soon as he left her, burst into a paroxysm of rebellious tears. “Have her home with Mrs. Vane!” she uttered to her own heart. “No, never: rather would she die, rather would she work for her living, rather would she eat a crust and drink water!” And so on, and so on. Young demoiselles are somewhat prone to indulge in these flights of fancy: but they are in most cases impracticable and foolish, exceedingly so were they in that of Lady Isabel Vane. Work for their living! It may appear very feasible in theory; but theory and practice are as opposite as light and dark. The plain fact was,

that Isabel had no alternative whatever: she must accept a home with Lady Mount Severn: and the conviction, that it must be so, stole over her spirit, even while her hasty lips were protesting that she would not. Lord Mount Severn wished to despatch her to Castle Marling at once, but this she successfully resisted, and it was decided that she should travel the day subsequent to the funeral.

Mr. Warburton, authorised by the earl, relieved the death-chamber of its two intruders: though—very much to the surprise of the household—the obnoxious men still remained in the house. Mr. Warburton no doubt had his reasons; he was a cautious practitioner: and the men continued, ostensibly, in charge, until the earl was buried. Some said that if the lawyer released them, another arrest might be expected.

On Friday morning the interment took place—in St. Jude's churchyard, at West Lynne. Isabel's heart again rebelled bitterly: she thought it would have been at Mount Severn. The earl remarked, but not in her hearing, that he should have too much expense upon him, to go to unnecessary outlay over the funeral. Certainly he performed honourably all that could be required from him. He paid all tradesmen's debts, and those owing to the servants, gave them each a month's wages and a month's board wages, in lieu of the customary warning of dismissal, and paid for their mourning. Pound, the butler, he retained in his own service. With regard to Isabel's mourning, he had desired her to have everything suited to her degree. The carriages and horses, on which a detainer had been placed, he

bought in for his own use: they were in excellent condition.

Two mourners only attended the funeral, the earl and Mr. Carlyle: the latter was no relative of the deceased, and but a recent friend: but the earl had invited him, probably not liking to parade alone his trappings of woe. Some of the county aristocracy were pall-bearers, and many private carriages followed.

All was bustle on the following morning. The earl was to depart, and Isabel was to depart; but not together. In the course of the day, the domestics would disperse. The earl was speeding to London, and the chaise, to convey him to the railway station at West Lynne, was already at the door, when Mr. Carlyle arrived.

“I was beginning to fear you would not be here, I have barely five minutes to spare,” observed the earl, as he shook hands. “You are sure you fully understood about the tombstone?”

“Perfectly,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “How is Lady Isabel?”

“Very down-hearted, I fear, poor child, for she did not breakfast with me,” returned the earl. “Mason told me that she was in a convulsion of grief. A bad man, a *bad* man was Mount Severn,” he emphatically added, as he rose and rang the bell.

“Let Lady Isabel be informed that I am ready to depart, and that I wait to see her,” he said to the servant who answered it. “And while she is coming, Mr. Carlyle,” he added, “allow me to express my obligations to you. How I should have got through this worrying business without you, I can-

not divine. You have promised, mind, to pay me a visit, and I shall expect it speedily."

"Promised conditionally—that I find myself in your neighbourhood," smiled Mr. Carlyle. "Should—"

Isabel entered, dressed also, and ready, for she was to depart immediately after the earl. Her crape veil was over her face, but she threw it back.

"My time is up, Isabel, and I must go. Is there anything you wish to say to me?"

She opened her lips to speak, but glanced at Mr. Carlyle, and hesitated. He was standing at the window, with his back towards them.

"I suppose not," said the earl, answering himself, for he was in a hurry to be off, like many others are when starting on a journey. "You will have no trouble whatever, my dear; Pound will see to everything, only mind you get some refreshment in the middle of the day, for you won't be at Castle Marling before dinner-time. Tell Mrs. Va——tell Lady Mount Severn that I had no time to write, but will do so from town."

But Isabel stood before him in an attitude of uncertainty—of expectancy, it may be said, her colour varying.

"What is it? You wish to say something."

She certainly did wish to say something, but she did not know how. It was a moment of embarrassment to her, intensely painful; and the presence of Mr. Carlyle did not tend to lessen it. The latter had no idea his absence was wished for.

"I—I—do not like to ask you, but I—have—no money," she stammered, her delicate features flushing crimson.

“Bless me, Isabel! I declare I forgot all about it,” cried the earl, in a tone of vexation. “Not being accustomed to—this aspect of affairs is so new——” He broke off his disjointed sentences, and unbuttoned his coat, drew out his purse, and paused over its contents.

“Isabel, I have run myself very short, and have but little beyond what will take me to town. You must make three pounds do for the present my dear. Pound has the funds for the journey. Once at Castle Marling, Lady Mount Severn will supply you: but you must tell her, or she will not know.”

He shot some gold out of his purse as he spoke, and left two sovereigns, and two half-sovereigns on the table. “Farewell, my dear; make yourself happy at Castle Marling; I shall be home soon.”

Passing from the room with Mr. Carlyle, he stood talking with that gentleman a minute, his foot on the step of the chaise; and, the next, was being whirled away. Mr. Carlyle returned to the breakfast-room, where Isabel, an ashy whiteness having replaced the crimson on her cheeks, was picking up the gold.

“Will you do me a favour, Mr. Carlyle?”

“I will do anything I can for you.”

She pushed a sovereign and a half towards him. “It is for Mr. Kane. I told Marvel to send and pay him, but it seems she forgot it, or put it off, and he is not paid. The tickets were a sovereign: the rest is for tuning the piano. Will you kindly give it to him? If I trust one of the servants, it may be forgotten again in the hurry of their departure.”

“Kane’s charge for tuning a piano is five shillings,” remarked Mr. Carlyle.

“But he was a long time occupied with it, and he did something to the leathers. It is not too much: besides, I never ordered him anything to eat. He wants money even worse than I do,” she added, with a poor attempt at a smile. “But for thinking of him, I should not have mustered the courage to beg of Lord Mount Severn — as you have just heard me do. In that case, do you know what I should have done?”

“What should you have done?” he smiled.

“I should have asked you to pay him for me, and I would have repaid you as soon as I had any money. I had a great mind to ask you, do you know; it would have seemed less painful than the being obliged to beg of Lord Mount Severn.”

“I hope it would,” he answered, in a low, earnest tone. “What else can I do for you?”

She was about to answer “Nothing; that he had done enough:” but at that moment their attention was attracted by a bustle outside, and they moved to the window.

It was the carriage coming round for Lady Isabel. The late earl’s chariot, which was to convey her to the railway station six or seven miles off. It had four post-horses to it, the number having been designated by Lord Mount Severn, who appeared to wish Isabel to leave the neighbourhood in as much state as she had entered it. The carriage was packed, and Marvel was perched outside.

“All is ready,” she said, “and the time is come for me to go. Mr. Carlyle, I am going to leave you a legacy — those pretty gold and silver fish, that I bought a few weeks back.”

“But why do you not take them?”

“Take them to Lady Mount Severn’s! No, I would rather leave them with you. Throw a few crumbs into the globe now and then.”

Her face was wet with tears, and he knew she was talking hurriedly to cover her emotion.

“Sit down a few minutes,” he said.

“No—no. I had better go at once.”

He took her hand to conduct her to the carriage. The servants were gathered in the hall, waiting for her; some had grown grey in her father’s service. She put out her hand, she strove to say a word of thanks and of farewell, and she thought she should choke at the effort of keeping down the sobs. At length it was over; a kind look around, a yearning wave of the hand, and she passed on with Mr. Carlyle.

Pound had ascended to his place by Marvel, and the post-boys were waiting the signal to start, but Mr. Carlyle had the carriage-door open again, and was bending in, holding her hand.

“I have not said a word of thanks to you for all your kindness, Mr. Carlyle,” she cried, her breath very laboured. “I am sure you have seen that I could not.”

“I wish I could have done more; I wish I could have shielded you from the annoyances you have been obliged to endure!” he answered. “Should we never meet again——”

“Oh, but we shall meet again,” she interrupted. “You promised Lord Mount Severn.”

“True: we may so meet; casually; once in a way: but our ordinary paths in life lie far and wide apart. God for ever bless you, dear Lady Isabel!”

The post-boys touched their horses, and the carriage sped on. She drew down the blinds, and leaned back in an agony of tears: tears for the home she was leaving, for the father she had lost. Her last thoughts had been of gratitude to Mr. Carlyle; but she had more cause to be grateful to him than she yet knew of. Emotion soon spends itself, and as her eyes cleared, she saw a bit of crumpled paper lying on her lap, which appeared to have fallen from her hand. Mechanically she took it up and opened it: it was a bank-note for one hundred pounds.

Ah! reader, you will say this is a romance of fiction, and a far-fetched one, but it is verily and indeed true. Mr. Carlyle had taken it with him to East Lynne, that morning, with its destined purpose.

Lady Isabel strained her eyes and gazed at the note: gazed, and gazed again. Where could it come from? What brought it there? Suddenly the undoubted truth flashed upon her: Mr. Carlyle had left it in her hand.

Her cheeks burnt, her fingers trembled, her angry spirit was up in arms. In that first moment of discovery, she was ready to resent it as an insult; but when she came to remember the sober facts of the last few days, her anger subsided into admiration of his wondrous kindness. Did he not know that she was without a home to call her own, without money—absolutely without money, save what would be given her in charity?

Well now, what should she do? Of course she could not use the note, that was out of the question; and to re-enclose it to him would pain him; she felt

that a nature, capable of generosity so delicate, would be deeply wounded at having its generosity thrown back upon itself. Should she so pain him? Did he deserve it at her hands? No. She would keep the note until she had an opportunity of personally returning it to him.

Leaning over the entrance-gate of their house, between the grove of dark trees, was Barbara Hare. She had heard the hour of Lady Isabel's departure named; and, woman-like, *rival*-like — for in that light had Barbara's fanciful and jealous heart grown to regard Lady Isabel — posted herself there, to watch for it. Little saw she. Nothing but the carriage, the horses, and the attendants; for the blinds were down.

She stood there long, long after the carriage had passed; and presently her father came up from the direction of West Lynne.

“Barbara, have you seen Carlyle?”

“No, papa.”

“I have been to his office, but they thought he had gone up to East Lynne. Perhaps he will be coming by. I want to catch him if I can.”

Mr. Hare stood outside, and rested his elbow on the gate: Barbara stood inside. It is probable the one was quite as anxious as the other to meet Mr. Carlyle.

“What do you think the report is?” suddenly exclaimed the justice. “The place is full of it. That Carlyle—”

Justice Hare took a step into the road, to obtain a better view of the way from East Lynne. Barbara's face flushed, in the suspense created by his unfinished words.

“That Mr. Carlyle, what, papa?” she asked, as he stepped back again.

“It is Carlyle coming,” observed the justice; “I thought they were his long legs. That he has bought East Lynne, Barbara.”

“Oh, papa! Can it be true? Mr. Carlyle bought East Lynne!”

“As likely as not. He and Miss Corny have got a pretty nest of golden eggs laid by, between them. I put the question to Dill just now; but he was as close as he always is, and said neither one way nor the other. Good morning!” called out the justice, as Mr. Carlyle approached. “We are impatient on the bench to know if you have news from the Ipsley Union, because our Union vows the paupers shan’t stop over to-day.”

“Yes,” answered Mr. Carlyle; “they admit the claim, so you may despatch them at once. How are you, Barbara?”

“That’s all right, then,” returned Mr. Hare. “Carlyle, people are saying that you have purchased East Lynne.”

“Are they? Well, they are not far wrong. East Lynne is mine, I believe.”

“Let you lawyers alone for speed, when you have yourselves for clients. Here is the earl, dead scarcely a week, and East Lynne already transferred to you.”

“Not so, justice. East Lynne was mine, months before the earl died.”

“What, when he was stopping there? To think of that! A pretty rent you charged him, I’ll be bound.”

“No rent at all,” responded Mr. Carlyle, with a

smile. "He was an honorary tenant for the time being."

"Then you were a great fool," observed the justice. "Beg pardon, Carlyle—you are a young man, and I am an old one; or soon shall be. The earl was another fool to get himself so awfully embarrassed."

"Sadly embarrassed," chimed in Barbara. "I heard, last night, that there was nothing left for Lady Isabel; that she had actually no money to pay for her mourning. The Smiths told the Herberts, and the Herberts told me. Do you fancy it is true, Archibald?"

Mr. Carlyle appeared much amused. "I wonder they did not say Lady Isabel had no mourning, as well as no money: it would have been but a little stretch further. What would East Lynne do without its marvels?"

"Ah, what indeed?" cried Justice Hare. "I met her carriage, spanking along with four horses, her maid and man outside. A young lady, travelling in that state, would not be at a loss for mourning money, Miss Barbara."

"People must gossip, you know, sir," said Mr. Carlyle. "My East Lynne purchase will be magnified into the purchase of West Lynne also, before the day is over. Good morning; good morning, Barbara."

When Lord Mount Severn reached London, and the hotel which the Vanes were in the habit of using, the first object his eyes lighted on was his own wife, whom he had believed to be safe at Castle Marling. He inquired the cause.

Lady Mount Severn gave herself little trouble to explain. She had been up a day or two—could

order her mourning so much better in person — and William did not seem well, so she brought him up for a change.

“I am sorry you came to town, Emma,” remarked the earl, after listening. “Isabel is gone to-day to Castle Marling.”

Lady Mount Severn quickly lifted her head. “What’s she gone there for?”

“It is the most disgraceful piece of business altogether,” returned the earl, without replying to the immediate question. “Mount Severn has died worse than a beggar, and there’s not a shilling for Isabel.”

“It was not expected there would be much.”

“But there’s nothing; not a penny; nothing for her own personal expenses. I gave her a pound or two to-day, for she was completely without.”

The countess opened her eyes. “Where will she live? What will become of her?”

“She must live with us. She—”

“With us!” interrupted Lady Mount Severn, her voice almost reaching a scream. “That she never shall.”

“She must, Emma. There is nowhere else for her to live. I have been obliged to decide it so; and she is gone, as I tell you, to Castle Marling to-day.”

Lady Mount Severn grew pale with anger. She rose from her seat, and confronted her husband, the table being between them. “Listen, Raymond: I *will not* have Isabel Vane under my roof. I hate her. How could you be cajoled into sanctioning such a thing?”

“I was not cajoled, and my sanction was not asked,” he coldly replied: “I proposed it. Where else is she to be?”

“ I don't care where,” was the obstinate retort.
“ Never with us.”

“ Consider the thing dispassionately,” returned his lordship. “ She has no other relatives, no claim on any one. I, the succeeding peer (who might not have come into the estates for twenty years hence, had Mount Severn's been a good life), am bound in courtesy, in good feeling, to afford her a home. Do you not see it?”

“ No, I do not,” returned the countess. “ And I will not have her.”

“ She is at Castle Marling now, gone to it as her home,” resumed the earl; “ and even you, when you return, will scarcely venture to turn her out again, into the road, or send her to the workhouse, or solicit her Majesty's ministers for a grant for her from the pension fund, and draw down upon yourself the censure of the world. I think you might show better feeling, Emma.”

Lady Mount Severn did not retort openly. She possessed her share of common sense, and the argument of the earl was certainly difficult to answer — “ Where was Isabel to go, if not to them?” But she muttered angry words, and her face looked ready to spit fire.

“ She will not trouble you long,” carelessly remarked the earl. “ One, so lovely as Isabel, will be sure to marry early; and she appears as gentle and sweet-tempered a girl as I ever saw, so whence can arise your dislike to her, I don't pretend to guess. Many a man will be too ready to forget her want of fortune for the sake of her face.”

“ She shall marry the first who asks her,” snapped the angry lady. “ I'll take care of that.”

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE AT CASTLE MARLING.

ISABEL had been in her new home about ten days when Lord and Lady Mount Severn arrived at Castle Marling. Which was not a castle, you may as well be told, but only the name of a town, nearly contiguous to which was their residence, a small estate. Lord Mount Severn welcomed Isabel: Lady Mount Severn, also, after a fashion; but her manner was so repellant, so insolently patronising, that it brought the indignant crimson to the cheeks of Isabel. And, if this was the case at the first meeting, what do you suppose it must have been as time went on? Galling slights, petty vexations, chilling annoyances were put upon her, trying her powers of endurance to the very length of their tether: she would wring her hands when alone, and passionately wish that she could find another refuge.

Lady Mount Severn lived but in admiration, and she gathered around her those who would offer its incense. She carried her flirtations to the very verge of propriety: no further: there existed not a woman less likely to forget herself, or peril her fair fame, than Emma, Countess of Mount Severn; and no woman was more scornfully unforgiving to those who did forget themselves. She was the very essence of envy, of selfishness: she had never been known to

invite a young and attractive woman to her house; she would as soon have invited a leper: and now you can understand her wrath, when she heard that Isabel Vane was to be her permanent inmate; Isabel, with her many charms, her youth, and her unusual beauty. At Christmas some visitors were down; mostly young men, and they were not wary enough to dissemble the fact, that the young beauty was a far greater attraction than the exacting countess. Then broke forth, beyond bounds, her passion, and in a certain private scene, when she forgot all but passion, and lost sight of the proprieties of life, Isabel was *told* that she was a hated intruder, her presence only suffered because there was no help for it.

The earl and countess had two children, both boys, and in February, the younger one, always a delicate child, died. This somewhat altered their plans. Instead of proceeding to London after Easter, as had been decided upon, they would not go until May. The earl had passed part of the winter at Mount Severn, looking after the repairs and renovations that were being made there. In March he went to Paris, full of grief for the loss of his boy; far greater grief than was experienced by Lady Mount Severn.

April approached; and, with it, Easter. To the unconcealed dismay of Lady Mount Severn, her grandmother, Mrs. Levison, wrote her word that she required change, and should pass Easter with her at Castle Marling. Lady Mount Severn would have given her diamonds to have got out of it, but there was no escape: diamonds that were once Isabel's; at least, what Isabel had worn. On the Monday in Passion Week the old lady arrived: and, with her, Francis Levison. They had no other guests.

Things went on pretty smoothly till Good Friday, but it was a deceitful calm : my lady's jealousy was kindling, for Captain Levison's attentions to Isabel were driving her wild. At Christmas, his admiration had been open enough, but it was more so now. Better from any one else could Lady Mount Severn have borne this, than from Francis Levison : she had suffered the young Guardsman, cousin though he was, to grow rather dear ; dangerously dear it might have become had she been a less cautious woman. More welcome to her than all the world, rather than he, had given admiration to Isabel. Why did she have him there, throwing him into Isabel's companionship, as she had done the previous year in London ? asks the reader. It is more than I can tell ; why do people do foolish things ?

On Good Friday afternoon, Isabel strolled out with little William Vane : Captain Levison joined them, and they never came in till nearly dinner-time, when the three entered together. Lady Mount Severn doing penance all the time, and nursing her rage against Isabel, for Mrs. Levison kept her indoors. There was barely time to dress for dinner, and Isabel went straight to her room. Her dress was off, her dressing-gown on, Marvel was busy with her hair, and William chattering at her knee, when the door was flung open, and my lady entered.

"Where have you been ?" demanded she, shaking with passion. Isabel knew the signs.

"Strolling about in the shrubberies and grounds," answered Isabel.

"How dare you so disgrace yourself ?"

"I do not understand you," said Isabel, her heart

beginning to beat unpleasantly. "Marvel, you are pulling my hair."

When women, liable to intemperate fits of passion, give the reins to them, they neither know nor care what they say. Lady Mount Severn broke into a torrent of reproach and abuse, most degrading and unjustifiable.

"Is it not sufficient that you are allowed an asylum in my house, but you must also disgrace it? Three hours have you been hiding yourself with Francis Levison! You have done nothing but flirt with him from the moment he came; you did nothing else at Christmas."

The attack was longer and broader, but that was the substance of it, and Isabel was goaded to resistance, to anger little less great than that of the countess. This!—and before her attendant! She, an earl's daughter, so much better born than Emma Mount Severn, to be thus insultingly accused in the other's mad jealousy. Isabel tossed her hair from the hands of Marvel, rose up, and confronted the countess, constraining her voice to calmness.

"I do not flirt," she said; "I have never flirted. I leave that"—and she could not wholly suppress in tone the scorn she felt—"to married women: though it seems to me that it is a fault less venial in them, than in single ones. There is but one inmate of this house who flirts, so far as I have seen since I have lived in it: it is you, not I, Lady Mount Severn."

The home truth told on her ladyship. She turned white with rage, forgot her manners, and, raising her right hand, struck Isabel a stinging blow upon the left cheek. Confused and terrified, Isabel stood in

pain, and before she could speak or act, my lady's left hand was raised to the other cheek, and a blow left on that. Lady Isabel shivered as with a sudden chill, and cried out, a sharp, quick cry; covered her outraged face and sank down upon the dressing-chair. Marvel threw up her hands in dismay, and William Vane could not have burst into a louder roar had he been beaten himself. The boy was of a sensitive nature — and he was frightened.

Lady Mount Severn finished up the scene by boxing William for his noise, jerked him out of the room, and told him he was a monkey.

Isabel Vane lay through the livelong night, weeping tears of anguish and indignation. She could not remain at Castle Marling: who would, after so great an outrage?—Yet, where was she to go? Fifty times in the course of the night, did she wish that she was laid beside her father; for her feelings obtained the mastery of her reason: in her calm moments she would have shrunk from the idea of death, as the young and healthy must do. Various schemes crossed her brain: that she would take flight to France, and lay her case before Mount Severn; that she would beg an asylum with old Mrs. Levison; that she would find out Mason, and live with her. Daylight rejected them all. She had not flirted with Captain Levison, but she had received his attention, and suffered his admiration: a woman never flirts where she loves; and it had come to love, or something very near it, in Isabel's heart.

She rose on the Saturday morning, weak and languid, the effects of the night of grief, and Marvel brought her breakfast up. William Vane stole into

her room afterwards: he was attached to her in a remarkable degree.

“Mamma’s going out,” he exclaimed in the course of the morning. “Look, Isabel.”

Isabel went to the window. Lady Mount Severn was in the pony carriage, Francis Levison driving.

“We can go down now, Isabel. Nobody will be there.”

She assented, and went down with William. But scarcely were they in the drawing-room when a servant entered with a card on a salver.

“A gentleman, my lady, wishes to see you.”

“To see me?” returned Isabel, in surprise. “Or Lady Mount Severn?”

“He asked for you, my lady.”

She took up the card. “Mr. Carlyle.” “Oh!” she uttered, in a tone of joyful surprise, “show him in.”

It is curious, nay, appalling, to trace the thread in a human life; how the most trivial occurrences lead to the great events of existence, bringing forth happiness or misery, weal or woe. A client of Mr. Carlyle’s, travelling from one part of England to the other, was arrested by illness at Castle Marling: grave illness it appeared to be, inducing fears of death. He had not as the phrase goes, settled his affairs, and Mr. Carlyle was telegraphed for in haste, to make his will, and for other private matters. This journey appeared to Mr. Carlyle a very simple occurrence, and yet it was destined to lead to events that would end only with his own life.

Mr. Carlyle entered, unaffected and gentlemanly as ever, with his noble form, his attractive face, and his drooping eyelids. She advanced to meet him, holding out her hand, her countenance betraying her

pleasure. "This is indeed unexpected," she exclaimed. "How very glad I am to see you."

"Business brought me yesterday to Castle Marling. I could not leave it again without calling on you. I hear that Lord Mount Severn is absent."

"He is in France," she rejoined. "I said we should be sure to meet again: do you remember, Mr. Carlyle? You—"

Isabel suddenly stopped, for with the word "remember," she also remembered something—the hundred-pound note; and what she was saying faltered on her tongue. She grew confused indeed, for alas! she had changed and partly spent it. *How* was it possible to ask Lady Mount Severn for money? and the earl was nearly always away. Mr. Carlyle saw her embarrassment: though he did not detect its cause.

"What a fine boy!" exclaimed he, looking at the child.

"It is Lord Vane," said Isabel.

"A truthful, earnest spirit, I am sure," he continued, gazing at his open countenance. "How old are you, my little man?"

"I am six, sir; and my brother was four."

Isabel bent over the child; an excuse to cover her embarrassment. "You do not know this gentleman, William. It is Mr. Carlyle, and he has been very kind to me."

The little lord turned his thoughtful eyes on Mr. Carlyle, apparently studying his countenance. "I shall like you, sir, if you are kind to Isabel. Are you kind to her?"

"Very, very kind," murmured Isabel, leaving William and turning to Mr. Carlyle, but not looking at him. "I don't know what to say; I ought to

thank you: I did not intend to use the—to use it—but I—I—”

“Hush!” he interrupted, laughing at her confusion; “I do not know what you are talking of. I have a great misfortune to break to you, Lady Isabel.”

She lifted her eyes and her glowing cheeks, somewhat aroused from her own thoughts.

“Two of your fish are dead. The gold ones.”

“Are they?”

“I believe it was the frost killed them: I don’t know what else it could have been. You may remember those bitter days we had in January: they died then.”

“You are very good to take care of them, all this while. How is East Lynne looking? Dear East Lynne! Is it occupied?”

“Not yet. I have spent some money upon it, and it repays the outlay.”

The excitement of his arrival had worn off, and she was looking herself again, pale and sad: he could not help observing that she was changed.

“I cannot expect to look so well at Castle Marling as I did at East Lynne,” she answered.

“I trust it is a happy home to you?” said Mr. Carlyle, speaking upon impulse.

She glanced up at him, a look that he would never forget: it certainly told of despair. “No,” she said, shaking her head, “it is a miserable home, and I cannot remain in it. I have been awake all night, thinking where I can go, but I cannot tell. I have not a friend in the wide world.”

Never let people talk secrets before children, for be assured that they comprehend a vast deal more

than is expedient: the saying that "Little pitchers have great ears" is wonderfully true. Lord Vane held up his head to Mr. Carlyle:

"Isabel told me this morning that she should go away from us. Shall I tell you why? Mamma beat her yesterday when she was angry."

"Be quiet, William!" interrupted Lady Isabel, her face in a flame.

"Two great slaps upon her cheeks," continued the young viscount; "and Isabel cried so, and I screamed, and then mamma hit me. But boys are made to be hit; nurse says they are. Marvel came into the nursery when we were at tea, and told nurse about it. She says Isabel's too good-looking, and that's why mamma—"

Isabel stopped the child's tongue, rang a peal on the bell, and marshalled him to the door; despatching him to the nursery by the servant who answered it.

Mr. Carlyle's eyes were full of indignant sympathy. "Can this be true?" he asked, in a low tone, when she returned to him. "You do, indeed, want a friend."

"I must bear my lot," she replied, obeying the impulse which prompted her to confide in Mr. Carlyle. "At least till Lord Mount Severn returns."

"And then?"

"I really do not know," she said, the rebellious tears rising faster than she could choke them down. "He has no other home to offer me; but with Lady Mount Severn I cannot and will not remain. She would break my heart, as she has already well-nigh broken my spirit. I have not deserved it of her, Mr. Carlyle."

"No, I am sure you have not," he warmly answered. "I wish I could help you! What can I do?"

“You can do nothing,” she said. “What can any one do?”

“I wish, I wish I could help you!” he repeated. “East Lynne was not, take it for all in all, a pleasant home to you, but it seems you changed for the worse when you left it.”

“Not a pleasant home!” she echoed, its reminiscences appearing delightful in that moment, for it must be remembered that all things are estimated by comparison. “Indeed it was; I may never have so pleasant a one again. Oh, Mr. Carlyle, do not disparage East Lynne to me! Would I could awake, and find the last few months but a hideous dream!—that I could find my dear father alive again!—that we were still living peacefully at East Lynne! It would be a very Eden to me now.”

What was Mr. Carlyle about to say? What emotion was it that agitated his countenance, impeded his breath, and dyed his face blood-red? His better genius was surely not watching over him, or those words had never been spoken.

“There is but one way,” he began, taking her hand and nervously playing with it, probably unconscious that he did so; “only one way in which you could return to East Lynne. And that way—I may not presume, perhaps, to point it out.”

She looked at him, and waited for an explanation.

“If my words offend you, Lady Isabel, check them, as their presumption deserves, and pardon me. May I—dare I—offer you to return to East Lynne as its mistress?”

She did not comprehend him in the slightest degree; the drift of his meaning never dawned upon

her. "Return to East Lynne as its mistress?" she repeated, in bewilderment.

"And as my wife."

No possibility of misunderstanding him now, and the shock and surprise were great. She had stood there by Mr. Carlyle's side, conversing confidentially with him, esteeming him greatly, feeling as if he were her truest friend on earth, clinging to him in her heart as to a powerful haven of refuge, loving him almost as she would love a brother, suffering her hand to remain in his. *But, to be his wife!* — the idea had never presented itself to her in any shape until this moment, and her first emotion was one of entire opposition, her first movement to express it, as she essayed to withdraw herself and her hand away from him.

But Mr. Carlyle did not suffer it. He not only retained that hand, but took the other also, and spoke, now the ice was broken, eloquent words of love. Not unmeaning phrases of rhapsody, about hearts and darts and dying for her, like somebody else might have spoken, but earnest-hearted words of deep tenderness, calculated to win upon the mind's good sense, as well as upon the ear and heart: and, it may be, that had her imagination not been filled up with that "somebody else," she would have said Yes there and then.

They were suddenly interrupted. Lady Mount Severn entered, and took in the scene at a glance: Mr. Carlyle's bent attitude of devotion, his imprisonment of the hands, and Isabel's perplexed and blushing countenance. She threw up her head and her little inquisitive nose, and stopped short on the carpet; her freezing looks demanding an explanation,

as plainly as looks can do it. Mr. Carlyle turned to her, and, by way of sparing Isabel, proceeded to introduce himself. Isabel had just presence of mind left to name her: "Lady Mount Severn."

"I am sorry that Lord Mount Severn should be absent, to whom I have the honour of being known," he said. "I am Mr. Carlyle."

"I have heard of you," replied her ladyship, scanning his good looks, and feeling cross that his homage should be given where she saw it was given, "but I had *not* heard that you and Lady Isabel Vane were on the extraordinary terms of intimacy that — that —"

"Madam," he interrupted, as he handed a chair to her ladyship and took another himself, "we have never yet been on terms of extraordinary intimacy. I was begging the Lady Isabel to grant that we might be: I was asking her to become my wife."

The avowal was as a shower of incense to the countess, and her ill-humour melted into sunshine. It was a solution to her great difficulty, a loophole by which she might get rid of her *bête noire*, the hated Isabel. A flush of gratification lighted her face, and she became full of graciousness to Mr. Carlyle.

"How very grateful Isabel must feel to you," quoth she. "I speak openly, Mr. Carlyle, because I know that you were cognisant of the unprotected state in which she was left by the earl's improvidence, putting marriage for her; at any rate, a high marriage; nearly out of the question. East Lynne is a beautiful place, I have heard."

"For its size: it is not large," replied Mr. Carlyle, as he rose: for Isabel had also risen and was coming forward.

“And pray what is Lady Isabel’s answer?” quickly asked the countess, turning to her.

Not to her did Isabel condescend to give an answer, but she approached Mr. Carlyle, and spoke in a low tone.

“Will you give me a few hours for consideration?”

“I am only too happy that you should accord it consideration, for it speaks to me of hope,” was his reply, as he opened the door for her to pass out. “I will be here again this afternoon.”

It was a perplexing debate that Lady Isabel held with herself in the solitude of her chamber, whilst Mr. Carlyle touched upon ways and means to Lady Mount Severn. Isabel was little more than a child, and as a child she reasoned, looking neither far nor deep: the shallow, palpable aspect of affairs alone presenting itself to her view. That Mr. Carlyle was not of rank equal to her own, she scarcely remembered: East Lynne seemed a very fair settlement in life, and in point of size, beauty, and importance, it was superior to the home she was now in. She forgot that her position at East Lynne as Mr. Carlyle’s wife, would not be what it had been as Lord Mount Severn’s daughter; she forgot that she would be tied to a quiet home, shut out from the great world, from the pomps and vanities to which she was born. She liked Mr. Carlyle much, she liked to be with him, she experienced pleasure in conversing with him; in short, but for that other ill-omened fancy which had crept over her, there would have been a danger of her falling in love with Mr. Carlyle. And oh! to be removed for ever from the bitter dependence on Lady Mount Severn—East Lynne would, after that, seem what she had called it, Eden.

“So far it looks favourable,” mentally exclaimed poor Isabel, “but there is the other side of the question. It is not only that I do not love Mr. Carlyle, but I fear I do love, or very nearly love, Francis Levison. I wish *he* would ask me to be his wife!—or that I had never seen him.”

Isabel’s soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Levison and the countess. What the latter had said to the old lady to win her to the cause, was best known to herself, but she was eloquent in it. They both used every possible argument to induce her to accept Mr. Carlyle: the old lady declaring that he was worth a dozen empty-headed men of the great world.

Isabel listened, now swayed one way, now the other, and when the afternoon came, her head was aching with perplexity. The stumbling-block that she could not get over was Francis Levison. She saw Mr. Carlyle’s approach from her window, and went down to the drawing-room, not in the least knowing what her answer was to be, a shadowy idea was presenting itself that she would ask him for longer time, and write her answer.

In the drawing-room was Francis Levison, and her heart beat wildly: which said beating might have convinced her that she ought not to marry another.

“Where have you been hiding yourself?” cried he. “Did you hear of our mishap with the pony carriage?”

“No,” was her answer.

“I was driving Emma into town. The pony took fright, kicked, plunged, and went down upon his knees; she took fright in her turn, got out, and walked back. I gave the brute some chastisement and a race, and brought him to the stables, getting

home in time to be introduced to Mr. Carlyle. He seems an out-and-out good fellow, Isabel, and I congratulate you."

She looked up at him.

"Don't start. We are all in the family, and my lady told me: I won't betray it abroad. She says East Lynne is a place to be coveted. I wish you happiness, Isabel."

"Thank you," she returned, in a sarcastic tone, though her throat beat and her lips quivered. "You are premature in your congratulations, Captain Levison."

"Am I? Keep my good wishes, then, till the right man comes. I am beyond the pale myself, and dare not think of entering the happy state," he added, in a pointed tone. "I have indulged dreams of it, like others, but I cannot afford to indulge them seriously: a poor man, with uncertain prospects, can only play the butterfly, perhaps to his life's end."

He quitted the room as he spoke. It was impossible for Isabel to misunderstand him, but a feeling shot across her mind, for the first time, that he was false and heartless. One of the servants appeared, showing in Mr. Carlyle: nothing false or heartless about *him*. He closed the door, and approached her. She did not speak, and her lips were white and trembling. Mr. Carlyle waited.

"Well?" he said, at length, in a gentle tone. "Have you decided to grant my prayer?"

"Yes. But—" She could not go on. What with one agitation and another, she had difficulty in conquering her emotion. "But—I was going to tell you—"

"Presently," he whispered, leading her to a sofa;

“we can both afford to wait now. Isabel, you have made me very happy!”

“I ought to tell you, I must tell you,” she began again, in the midst of hysterical tears. “Though I have said Yes to your proposal, I do not — yet — It has come upon me by surprise,” she stammered. “I like you very much; I esteem and respect you: but I do not yet love you.”

“I should wonder if you did. But you will let me earn your love, Isabel.”

“Oh yes,” she earnestly answered. “I hope so.”

He drew her closer to him, bent his face, and took from her lips his first kiss. Isabel was passive; she supposed he had gained the right. “My dearest! it is all I ask.”

Mr. Carlyle stayed over the following day, and before he departed in the evening, arrangements had been discussed. The marriage was to take place immediately: all concerned had a motive for hurrying it on. Mr. Carlyle was anxious that the fair flower should be his; Isabel was sick of Castle Marling, sick of some of the people in it; my lady was sick of Isabel. In less than a month it was to be, and Francis Levison sneered over the “indecent haste.” Mr. Carlyle wrote to the earl. Lady Mount Severn announced that she should present Isabel with the trousseau, and wrote to London to order it. It is a positive fact that when he was taking leave of Isabel she clung to him.

“I wish I could take you now, my darling!” he uttered. “I cannot bear to leave you here.”

“I wish you could!” she sighed. “You have seen only the sunny side of Lady Mount Severn.”

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. DILL'S SHAKING.

THE sensations of Mr. Carlyle when he returned to West Lynne were very much like those of an Eton boy, who knows he has been in mischief, and dreads detection. Always open as to his own affairs, for he had nothing to conceal, he yet deemed it expedient to dissemble now. He felt that his sister would be bitter at the prospect of his marrying; instinct had taught him that, years past; and he believed that, of all women, the most objectionable to her, would be Lady Isabel, for Miss Carlyle looked to the useful, and had neither sympathy nor admiration for the beautiful. He was not sure but she might be capable of endeavouring to frustrate the marriage, should news of it reach her ears, and her indomitable will had carried many strange things in her life: therefore you will not blame Mr. Carlyle for observing entire reticence as to his future plans.

A family of the name of Carew had been about taking East Lynne: they wished to rent it, furnished, for three years. Upon some of the minor arrangements they and Mr. Carlyle were opposed, but the latter declined to give way. During his absence at Castle Marling, news had arrived from them — that they acceded to all his terms, and would enter upon East Lynne as soon as was convenient. Miss

Carlyle was full of congratulation; it was off their hands, she said: but the first letter Mr. Carlyle wrote was — to decline them. He did not tell this to Miss Carlyle. The final touches of the house were given, preparatory to the reception of its inhabitants, three maid and two men-servants hired and sent there, upon board wages, until the family should arrive.

One evening, three weeks subsequent to Mr. Carlyle's visit to Castle Marling, Barbara Hare called at Miss Carlyle's, and found them going to tea, much earlier than usual.

"We dined earlier," said Miss Corny, "and I ordered tea in as soon as the dinner went away. Otherwise Archibald would have taken none."

"I am as well without tea," said he. "I have a mass of business to get through yet."

"You are not so well without it," cried Miss Corny, "and I don't choose that you should go without it. Take off your bonnet, Barbara. He does things like nobody else: he is off to Castle Marling to-morrow, and never could open his lips till just now that he was going."

"Is that invalid — Brewster, or whatever his name is — laid up at Castle Marling still?" asked Barbara.

"He is there still," said Mr. Carlyle.

Barbara sat down to the tea-table, though protesting that she ought not to remain, for she had told her mamma she should be home to make tea. Miss Carlyle interrupted what she was saying, by telling her brother she should go presently and pack his things.

“Oh no,” returned he, with alarming quickness, “I will pack them myself, thank you. Peter, you can put the portmanteau in my room. The large one.”

“The large one!” echoed Miss Corny, who never could let anything pass without her interference, “why, it’s as big as a house. What in the world can you want, dragging that with you?”

“I have papers and things to take, besides clothes.”

“I am sure I could pack all your things in the small one,” persisted Miss Corny. “I’ll try. You only tell me what you want put in. Take the small portmanteau to your master’s room, Peter.”

Mr. Carlyle glanced at Peter, and Peter glanced back again with an imperceptible nod. “I prefer to pack my things myself, Cornelia. What have you done now?”

“A stupid trick,” she answered — for, in fidgeting with a knife, Miss Corny had cut her finger. “Have you any sticking-plaster, Archibald?”

He opened his pocket-book, and laid it on the table while he took from it some black plaster. Miss Carlyle’s inquisitive eyes caught sight of a letter lying there; *sans cérémonie*, she stretched out her hand, caught it up, and opened it.

“Who is this from? It is a lady’s writing.”

Mr. Carlyle laid his hand flat upon it, as if to hide it from her view. “Excuse me, Cornelia; that is a private letter.”

“Private nonsense!” retorted Miss Corny. “I am sure you get no letters that I may not read. It bears yesterday’s postmark.”

“Oblige me with the letter,” he returned; and Miss Carlyle, in her astonishment at the calmly authoritative tone, yielded it to him.

“Archibald, what is the matter with you?”

“Nothing,” answered he, shutting the letter in the pocket-book, and returning it to his pocket, leaving out the sticking-plaster for Miss Corny’s benefit. “It’s not fair to look into a man’s private letters, is it, Barbara?”

He laughed good-humouredly as he looked at Barbara. But she had seen with surprise that a deep flush of emotion had risen to his face—he, so calm a man! Miss Carlyle was not one to be put down easily, and she returned to the charge.

“Archibald, if ever I saw the Vane crest, it is on the seal of that letter.”

“Whether the Vane crest is on the letter, or not, the contents of it were written for my eye alone,” he rejoined. And, somehow, Miss Carlyle did not like the firm tone. Barbara broke the silence.

“Shall you call on the Mount Severns this time?”

“Yes,” he answered.

“Do they talk yet of Lady Isabel’s marrying?” pursued Barbara. “Did you hear anything of it?”

“I cannot charge my memory with all I heard or did not hear, Barbara. Your tea wants more sugar, does it not?”

“A little,” she answered, and Mr. Carlyle drew the sugar-basin towards her cup, and dropped four or five large lumps in, before anybody could stop him.

“What’s that for?” asked Miss Corny.

He burst out laughing. “I forgot what I was doing. Really, Barbara, I beg your tea’s pardon. Cornelia will give you another cup.”

“But it’s a cup of tea and so much good sugar wasted,” tartly responded Miss Corny.

Barbara sprang up the moment tea was over. "I don't know what mamma will say to me. And it is beginning to grow dusk! She will think it is late for me to be out alone."

"Archibald can walk with you," said Miss Carlyle.

"I don't know that," cried he, in his plain, open way. "Dill is waiting for me in the office, and I have some hours' work before me. However—I suppose you won't care to put up with Peter's attendance; so make haste with your bonnet, Barbara."

No need to tell Barbara that, when the choice between him and Peter depended on the speed she should make. She wished good evening to Miss Carlyle, and went out with him, he taking her parasol from her hand. It was a calm, lovely night, very light yet, and they took the field way.

Barbara could not forget Isabel Vane. She never had forgotten her, or the jealous feeling that arose in her heart at Mr. Carlyle's constant visits to East Lynne when she inhabited it. She returned to the subject now.

"I asked you, Archibald, whether you had heard that Lady Isabel was likely to marry."

"And I answered you, Barbara: that my memory could not carry all I may have heard."

"But did you?" persisted Barbara.

"You are persevering," he smiled. "I believe Lady Isabel is likely to marry."

Barbara drew a relieved sigh. "To whom?"

The same amused smile played on his lips. "Do you suppose I could put premature questions? I may be able to tell you more about it after my next return from Castle Marling."

“Do try and find out,” said she. “Perhaps it is to Lord Vane. Who is it says that more marriages arise from habitual association than—”

She stopped, for Mr. Carlyle had turned his eyes upon her, and was laughing.

“You are a clever guesser, Barbara. Lord Vane is a little fellow, five or six years old.

“Oh,” returned Barbara, considerably discomfited.

“And the nicest child,” he warmly continued: “open tempered, generous hearted, earnest spirited. Should I have children of my own,” he added, switching the hedge with the parasol, and speaking in an abstracted manner, as if forgetful of his companion, “I could wish them to be like William Vane.”

“A very important confession,” gaily returned Barbara. “After contriving to impress West Lynne with the conviction that you would be an old bachelor.”

“I don’t know that I ever promised West Lynne anything of the sort,” cried Mr. Carlyle.

Barbara laughed now. “I suppose West Lynne judges by appearances. When a man owns to thirty years—”

“Which I don’t do,” interrupted Mr. Carlyle, considerably damaging the hedge and the parasol. “I may be an old married man before I count thirty: the chances are, that I shall be.”

“Then you must have fixed upon your wife,” she quickly cried.

“I do not say I have not, Barbara. All in good time to proclaim it, though.”

Barbara withdrew her arm from Mr. Carlyle’s, under pretence of repinning her shawl. Her heart

was beating, her whole frame trembling, and she feared he might detect her emotion. She never thought he could allude to any one but herself. Poor Barbara!

“How flushed you look, Barbara!” he exclaimed. “Have I walked too fast?”

She seemed not to hear, intent upon her shawl. Then she took his arm again, and they walked on, Mr. Carlyle striking the hedge and the grass more industriously than ever. Another minute, and—the handle was in two.

“I thought you would do it,” said Barbara, while he was regarding the parasol with ludicrous dismay. “Never mind; it is an old one.”

“I will bring you another to replace it. What is the colour? Brown. I won’t forget. Hold the relics a minute, Barbara.”

He put the pieces in her hand, and taking out a note-case, made a note in pencil.

“What’s that for?” she inquired.

He held it close to her eyes that she might discern what he had written; “Brown parasol. B. H.” “A reminder for me, Barbara, in case I forget.”

Barbara’s eye detected another item or two, already entered in the note-case. “Piano.” “Plate.” “I jot down the things, as they occur to me, that I must get in London,” he explained. “Otherwise I should forget half.”

“In London! I thought you were going in an opposite direction: to Castle Marling.”

It was a slip of the tongue, but Mr. Carlyle repaired it. “I may probably have to visit London as well as Castle Marling. How bright the moon looks, rising there, Barbara!”

“So bright — that, or the sky — that I saw your secrets,” answered she. “Piano! Plate! What can you want with either, Archibald?”

“They are for East Lynne,” he quietly replied.

“Oh, for the Carews.” And Barbara’s interest in the items was gone.

They turned into the road just below the Grove, and reached it. Mr. Carlyle held the gate open for Barbara.

“You will come in and say good night to mamma. She was saying to-day what a stranger you have made of yourself lately.”

“I have been busy. And I really have not the time to-night. You must remember me to her instead.”

He closed the gate again. But Barbara leaned over it, unwilling to let him go.

“Shall you be away a week?”

“I dare say I may. Here, take the wreck of the parasol, Barbara: I was about to carry it off with me. I can buy you a new one without stealing the old one.”

“Archibald, I have long wished to ask you something,” said she, in a tone of suppressed agitation, as she took the pieces and flung them on the path by the thick trees. “You will not deem me foolish?”

“What is it?”

“When you gave me the gold chain and locket a year ago—you remember?”

“Yes. Well?”

“I put some of that hair of Richard’s in it, and a bit of Anne’s, and of mamma’s: a tiny little bit of each. And there is room for more, you see.”

She held it to him as she spoke, for she always wore it round her neck, attached to the chain.

“I cannot see well by this light, Barbara. If there is room for more, what of that?”

“I like to think that I possess a memento of my best friends, or of those who were dear to me. I wish you to give me a bit of your hair to put with the rest—as it was you who gave me the locket.”

“My hair!” returned Mr. Carlyle, in a tone of as much astonishment as if she had asked for his head. “What good would that do you, Barbara, or the locket either?”

Her face flushed painfully: her heart beat. “I like to have a remembrance of the friends I—I care for,” she stammered. “Nothing more, Archibald.”

He detected neither the emotion nor the depth of feeling, the *sort* of feeling that had prompted the request, and he met it with good-natured ridicule.

“What a pity you did not tell me yesterday, Barbara! I had my hair cut and might have sent you the snippings. Don’t be a goose, child, and exalt me into a Wellington, to bestow hair and autographs. I can’t stop a minute longer. Good night.”

He hastened away with quick strides, and Barbara covered her face with her hands. “What have I done? what have I done?” she reiterated aloud. “Is it in his nature to be thus indifferent—matter of fact? Has he no sentiment? But it will come. Oh, the bliss this night has brought forth! there was truth in his tone beneath its vein of mockery, when he spoke of his chosen wife. I need not go far to guess who it is—he has told no one else, and he pays attention to none but me. Archibald,

when once I am your wife you shall know how fondly I love you ; you cannot know till then."

She lifted her fair young face, beautiful in its radiance, and gazed at the deepening moonlight ; then turned away and pursued her path up the garden-walk, unconscious that something, wearing a bonnet, pushed its head beyond the trees to steal a look after her. Barbara would have said less, had she divined there was a third party to the interview.

It was three mornings after the departure of Mr. Carlyle that Mr. Dill appeared before Miss Carlyle, bearing a letter. She was busy regarding the effect of some new muslin curtains, just put up, and did not pay attention to him.

"Will you please take the letter, Miss Cornelia. The postman left it in the office with ours. It is from Mr. Archibald."

"Why, what has he got to write to me about?" retorted Miss Corny. "Does he say when he is coming home?"

"You had better see, Miss Cornelia. He does not say anything about his return in mine."

She opened the letter, glanced at it, and sank down on a chair : more overcome, more stupefied than she had felt in her whole life.

"Castle Marling, May 1st.

"My dear Cornelia,—I was married this morning to Lady Isabel Vane, and hasten briefly to acquaint you with the fact. I will write you more fully to-morrow or the next day, and explain all things.

"Ever your affectionate brother,

"ARCHIBALD CARLYLE."

“It is a hoax,” were the first guttural sounds that escaped from Miss Carlyle’s throat, when speech came to her.

Mr. Dill only stood like a stone image.

“It is a hoax, I say,” raved Miss Carlyle. “What are you standing there for, like a gander, on one leg?” she reiterated, venting her anger upon the unoffending man. “*Is* it a hoax, or not?”

“I am overdone with amazement, Miss Corny. It is not a hoax: I have had a letter too.”

“It can’t be true; it *can’t* be true. He had no more thought of being married when he left here, three days ago, than I have.”

“How can we tell that, Miss Corny? How are we to know he did not go to be married? I fancy he did.”

“Go to be married!” shrieked Miss Corny, in a passion, “he would not be such a fool. And to that fine lady-child! No; no.”

“He has sent this to be put in the county journals,” said Mr. Dill, holding forth a scrap of paper. “They are married, sure enough.”

Miss Carlyle took it and held it before her; her hand was cold as ice, and shook as if with palsy.

“Married.—On the 1st inst., at Castle Marling, by the chaplain to the Earl of Mount Severn, Archibald Carlyle, Esquire, of East Lynne, to the Lady Isabel Mary Vane, only child of William, late Earl of Mount Severn.”

Miss Carlyle tore the paper to atoms and scattered it. Mr. Dill afterwards made copies from memory, and sent them to the journal offices. But let that pass.

“I will never forgive him,” she deliberately uttered, “and I will never forgive or tolerate her. The senseless idiot! to go and marry Mount Severn’s expensive daughter! a thing who goes to court in feathers and a train—streaming out three yards behind her!”

“He is not an idiot, Miss Cornelia.”

“He is worse; he is a wicked madman,” she retorted, in a midway state between rage and tears. “He must have been stark staring mad to go and do it; and had I gathered an inkling of the project I would have taken out a commission of lunacy against him. Ay, you may stare, old Dill, but I would, as truly as I hope to have my sins forgiven. Where are they to live?”

“I expect they will live at East Lynne.”

“What?” screamed Miss Corny. “Live at East Lynne with the Carews! You are going mad too, I think.”

“The negotiation with the Carews is off, Miss Cornelia. When Mr. Archibald returned from Castle Marling at Easter, he wrote to decline them. I saw the copy of the letter in the copying-book. I expect he had settled matters then with Lady Isabel, and had decided to keep East Lynne for himself.”

Miss Carlyle’s mouth had opened with consternation. Recovering partially, she rose from her seat, and drawing herself to her full and majestic height, she advanced behind the astounded gentleman, seized the collar of his coat with both hands, and shook him for several minutes. Poor old Dill, short and slight, was as a puppet in her hands, and thought his breath had gone for ever.

“I would have had out a lunacy commission for you also, you sly villain! You are in the plot; you have been aiding and abetting him: you knew as much of it as he did.”

“I declare solemnly, to the Goodness that made me, I did not,” gasped the ill-treated man, when he could gather speech. “I am as innocent as a baby, Miss Corny. When I got the letter just now in the office, you might have knocked me down with a feather.”

“What has he gone and done it for? an expensive girl without a shilling! And how dared you be privy to the refusing of East Lynne to the Carews? You *have* abetted him. But he never can be fool enough to think of living there!”

“I was not privy to it Miss Corny, before it was done. And, had I been—I am only Mr. Archibald’s servant. Had he not intended to take East Lynne for his residence, he would not announce himself as Archibald Carlyle, of *East Lynne*. And he can well afford it, Miss Corny; you know he can; and he only takes up his suitable position in going to it,” added the faithful clerk, soothingly, “and she is a sweet, pretty, lovable creature, though she is a noble lady.”

“I hope his folly will come home to him!” was the wrathful rejoinder.

“Heaven forbid!” cried old Dill.

“Idiot! idiot! WHAT possessed him?” cried the exasperated Miss Corny.

“Well, Miss Corny, I must hasten back to the office,” concluded Mr. Dill, by way of terminating the conference. “And I am truly vexed, ma’am,

that you should have fancied there was cause to fall out upon me."

"I shall do it again before the day's over, if you come in my way," hotly responded Miss Corny.

She sat down as soon as she was alone, and her face assumed a stony, rigid look. Her hands fell upon her knees, and Mr. Carlyle's letter dropped to the ground. After a while her features began to work, and she nodded her head, and lifted, now one hand, now the other, apparently debating various points in her own mind. By-and-by she rose, attired herself in her bonnet and shawl, and took the way to Justice Hare's. She felt that the news which would be poured out to West Lynne before the day was over, did reflect a slight upon herself: her much-loved brother had forsaken her, to take to himself one, nearer and dearer, and had done it in dissimulation: therefore she herself would be the first to proclaim it, far and wide.

Barbara was at the window in the usual sitting-room, as Miss Corny entered the Grove. A grim smile, in spite of her outraged feelings, crossed that lady's lips, when she thought of the blow about to be dealt out to Barbara. Very clearly had she penetrated to the love of that young lady for Archibald; to her hopes of becoming his wife.

"What brings Cornelia here?" thought Barbara, who was looking very pretty in her summer attire, for the weather was unusually warm, and she had assumed it. "How are you?" she said, leaning from the window. "Would you believe it? the warm day has actually tempted mamma forth; papa is driving her to Lynneborough. Come in; the hall door is open."

Miss Carlyle came in, without answering; and seating herself upon a chair, emitted a few dismal groans, by way of preliminary.

Barbara turned to her quickly. "Are you ill? Has anything upset you?"

"Upset me! you may say that," ejaculated Miss Corny, in wrath. "It has turned my heart and my feelings inside out. What do you say? A glass of wine? Nonsense! don't talk of wine to me. A heavy misfortune has befallen us, Barbara. Archibald—"

"Upon Archibald!" interrupted Barbara, in her quick alarm. "Oh! some accident has happened to him—to the railway train! Perhaps he—he—has got his legs broken!"

"I wish to my heart he had!" warmly returned Miss Corny. "He and his legs are all right, more's the pity! It is worse than that, Barbara."

Barbara ran over various disasters in her mind; and, knowing the bent of Miss Carlyle's disposition, began to refer to some pecuniary loss. "Perhaps it is about East Lynne," hazarded she. "The Carews may not be coming to it."

"No, they are not coming to it," was the tart retort. "Somebody else is, though: my wise brother. Archibald has gone and made a fool of himself, Barbara, and now he is coming home to live at East Lynne."

Though there was much that was unintelligible to Barbara in this, she could not suppress the flush of gratification that rose to her cheek and dyed it with blushes. "You are going to be taken down a notch or two, my lady," thought the clear-sighted Miss Carlyle. "The news fell upon me this morning like

a thunderbolt," she said, aloud. "Old Dill brought it to me. I shook him for his pains."

"Shook old Dill!" reiterated the wondering Barbara.

"I shook him till my arms ached: he won't forget it in a hurry. He has been abetting Archibald in his wickedness; concealing things from me that he ought to have come and declared; and I am not sure that I can't have the two indicted for conspiracy."

Barbara sat, all amazement; without the faintest idea of what Miss Corny could be driving at.

"You remember that child, Mount Severn's daughter? I think I see her now, coming into the concert-room, in her white robes, and her jewels, and her flowing hair, looking like a young princess in a fairy-tale — all very well for her, for what she is, but not for us."

"What of her?" uttered Barbara.

"Archibald has married her."

In spite of Barbara's full consciousness that she was before the penetrating eyes of Miss Corny, and in spite of her own efforts for calmness, every feature in her face turned of a ghastly whiteness. But, like Miss Carlyle, she at first took refuge in disbelief.

"It is not true, Cornelia."

"It is quite true. They were married yesterday at Castle Marling, by Lord Mount Severn's chaplain. Had I known it then, and could I have got there, I might have contrived to part them, though the Church ceremony had passed: I should have tried. But," added the plain-speaking Miss Corny, "yesterday was one thing, and to day's another; and of course nothing can be done now."

"Excuse me an instant," gasped Barbara, in a low

tone, "I forgot to give an order mamma left for the servants."

An order for the servants! She swiftly passed upstairs to her own room, and flung herself down on its floor in utter anguish. The past had cleared itself of its mists; the scales that were before Barbara's eyes had fallen from them. She saw now that while she had cherished false and delusive hopes, in her almost idolatrous passion for Archibald Carlyle, she had never been cared for by him. Even the previous night she had lain awake some of its hours, indulging dreams of the sweetest phantasy — and that was the night of his wedding day! With a sharp wail of despair, Barbara flung her arms up and closed her aching eyes: she knew that from that hour her life's sunshine had departed.

The cry had been louder than she heeded, and one of the maids, who was outside the door, opened it gently and looked in. There lay Barbara, and there was no mistaking that she lay in dire anguish; not of body, but of mind. The servant judged it an inopportune moment to intrude, and quickly reclosed the door.

Barbara heard the click of the latch, and it recalled her to herself; recalled her to reality; to the necessity of outwardly surmounting the distress at the present moment. She rose up, drank a glass of water, mechanically smoothed her hair and her brow, so contracted with pain, and forced her manner to calmness.

"Married to another! married to another!" she moaned, as she went down the stairs, "and, that other, *her!* Oh, fortitude! oh, dissimulation! at least come to my aid before his sister!"

There was actually a smile on her face as she entered the room. Miss Carlyle broke open her grievance again without delay, as if to compensate for the few minutes' imposed silence.

“As sure as we are living here, I would have tried for a commission of lunacy against him, had I known this, and so I told Dill. Better have confined him as a harmless lunatic for a couple of years, than suffer him to go free and obtain his fling in this mad manner. I never thought he would marry: I have warned him against it ever since he was in leading-strings.”

“It is an unsuitable match,” said Barbara.

“It is just as suitable as Beauty and the Beast in the children's story. She, a high-born beauty, brought up to revel in expense, in jewels, in feasts, in show; and he, a — a — a — dull bear of a lawyer, like the beast in the tale.”

Had Barbara been less miserable, she would have laughed outright. Miss Carlyle continued:

“I have taken my resolution. I go to East Lynne to-morrow, and discharge those five dandies of servants. I was up there on Saturday, and there were all three of my damsels cocketed up in fine mousseline-de-laine gowns, with peach bows in their caps, and the men in striped jackets, playing at footmen. Had I known then that they were Archibald's servants, and not hired for the Carews!”

Barbara said nothing.

“I shall go up and dismiss the lot, and remove myself and servants to East Lynne, and let my own house furnished. Expenses will be high enough with *her* extravagant habits, too high to keep on two households. And a fine sort of household Archibald

would have of it at East Lynne, with that ignorant baby, befrilled, and bejewelled, and becurled, to direct it."

"But will she like that?"

"If she does not like it, she can lump it," replied Miss Carlyle. "And, now that I have told you the news, Barbara, I am going back: and I had almost as soon have had to tell you that he was put into his coffin."

"Are you sure you are not jealous?" asked Barbara, some uncontrollable impulse prompting her to say it.

"Perhaps I am," returned Miss Carlyle, with asperity. "Perhaps, had you brought up a lad as I have brought up Archibald, and loved nothing else in the world, far or near, you would be jealous, when you found him discarding you with contemptuous indifference, and taking a young wife to his bosom, to be more to him than you had been."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EARL'S ASTONISHMENT.

THE announcement of the marriage in the newspapers was the first intimation of it Lord Mount Severn received. He was little less thunderstruck than Miss Corny, and came steaming to England the same day, thereby missing his wife's letter, which gave *her* version of the affair. He met Mr. Carlyle and Lady Isabel in London, where they were staying, at one of the West-end hotels, for a day or two; they were going farther. Isabel was alone when the earl was announced.

"What is the meaning of this, Isabel?" began he, without circumlocution of greeting. "You are married!"

"Yes," she answered, with her pretty, innocent blush. "Some days ago."

"And to Carlyle the lawyer! How did it come about?"

Isabel began to think how it had come about, sufficiently to give a clear answer. "He asked me," she said, "and I accepted him. He came to Castle Marling at Easter, and asked me then. I was very much surprised."

The earl looked at her attentively. "Why was I kept in ignorance of this, Isabel?"

"I did not know you were kept in ignorance of it.

Mr. Carlyle wrote to you, as did Lady Mount Severn."

Lord Mount Severn was as a man in the dark, and looked like it. "I suppose this comes," soliloquised he aloud, "of your father's having allowed the gentleman to dance daily attendance at East Lynne. And so you fell in love with him."

"Indeed no," answered she, in an amused tone. "I never thought of such a thing as falling in love with Mr. Carlyle."

"Then don't you love him?" abruptly asked the earl.

"No!" she whispered, timidly. "But I like him much—oh, very much. And he is so good to me!"

The earl stroked his chin, and mused. Isabel had destroyed the only conclusion he had been able to come to, as to the motives for the hasty marriage. "If you do not love Mr. Carlyle, how comes it that you are so wise in the distinction between 'liking' and 'love?' It cannot be that you love anybody else!"

The question told home, and Isabel turned crimson. "I shall love my husband in time," was all she answered, as she bent her head, and played nervously with her watch-chain.

"My poor child!" involuntarily exclaimed the earl. But he was one who liked to fathom the depth of everything. "Who has been staying at Castle Marling since I left?" he asked sharply.

"Mrs. Levison came down."

"I alluded to gentlemen—young men."

"Only Francis Levison," she replied.

"Francis Levison! You have never been so foolish as to fall in love with *him*!"

The question was so pointed, so abrupt, and Isabel's self-consciousness moreover so great, that she betrayed lamentable confusion; and the earl had no further need to ask. Pity stole into his hard eyes as they fixed themselves on her downcast, glowing face.

"Isabel," he gravely began, "Captain Levison is not a good man: if ever you were inclined to think him one, dispossess your mind of the idea, and hold him at arm's distance. Drop his acquaintance; encourage no intimacy with him."

"I have already dropped it," said Isabel, "and I shall not take it up again. But Lady Mount Severn must think well of him, or she would not have him there."

"She thinks none too well of him; none can, of Francis Levison," returned the earl, significantly. "He is her cousin, and is one of those idle, vain, empty-headed flatterers whom it is her pleasure to group about her. Do you be wiser, Isabel. But this does not solve the enigma of your marriage with Carlyle; on the contrary, it renders it the more unaccountable. He must have cajoled you into it."

Before Isabel could reply, Mr. Carlyle entered. He held out his hand to the earl: the earl did not appear to see it.

"Isabel," said he, "I am sorry to turn you out, I suppose you have only this one sitting-room. I wish to say a few words to Mr. Carlyle."

She quitted them, and the earl wheeled round and faced Mr. Carlyle, speaking in a stern, haughty tone.

"How came this marriage about, sir? Do you possess so little honour, that, taking advantage of my absence, you must intrude yourself into my family, and clandestinely espouse Lady Isabel Vane?"

Mr. Carlyle stood confounded, *not* confused. He drew himself up to his full height, looking every whit as fearless, and far more noble than the peer. "My lord, I do not understand you."

"Yet I speak plainly. What is it but a clandestine procedure, to take advantage of a guardian's absence, and beguile a young girl into a marriage beneath her?"

"There has been nothing clandestine in my conduct towards Lady Isabel Vane; there shall be nothing but honour in my conduct towards Lady Isabel Carlyle. Your lordship has been misinformed."

"I have not been informed at all," retorted the earl. "I was allowed to learn this from the public papers; I, the only relative of Lady Isabel."

"When I proposed for Lady Isabel —"

"But a month ago," sarcastically interrupted the earl.

"But a month ago," calmly repeated Mr. Carlyle, "my first action, after Isabel accepted me, was to write to you. But, that I imagine you may not have received the letter, by stating you first heard of our marriage through the papers, I should say the want of courtesy lay on your lordship's side, for having vouchsafed me no reply to it."

"What were the contents of the letter?"

"I stated what had occurred, mentioning what I was able to do in the way of settlements, also that both Isabel and myself wished that the ceremony might take place as soon as might be."

"And pray where did you address the letter?"

"Lady Mount Severn could not give me the address. She said, if I would entrust the letter to her

she would forward it, for she expected daily to hear from you. I did give her the letter, and I heard no more of the matter, except that her ladyship sent me a message, when Isabel was writing to me, that as you had returned no reply, you of course approved."

"Is this the fact?" cried the earl.

"My lord!" coldly replied Mr. Carlyle. "Whatever may be my defects in your eyes, I am at least a man of truth. Until this moment, the suspicion that you were in ignorance of the contemplated marriage never occurred to me."

"So far, then, I beg your pardon, Mr. Carlyle. But how came the marriage about at all?—how came it to be hurried over in this unseemly fashion? You made the offer at Easter, Isabel tells me, and you married her three weeks after it."

"And I would have married her and brought her away the day I did make it, had it been practicable," returned Mr. Carlyle. "I have acted throughout for her comfort and happiness."

"Oh, indeed!" returned the earl, returning to his disagreeable tone. "Perhaps you will put me in possession of the facts, and of your motives."

"I warn you that the facts, to you, will not bear a pleasant sound, Lord Mount Severn."

"Allow me to be the judge of that," said the earl.

"Business took me to Castle Marling on Good Friday. On the following day I called at your house: after your own and Isabel's invitation, it was natural I should call: in fact, it would have been a breach of good feeling not to do so. I found Isabel ill-treated and miserable: far from enjoying a happy home in your house —"

“What, sir?” interrupted the earl. “Ill-treated and miserable!”

“Ill-treated, even to blows, my lord.”

The earl stood as one petrified, staring at Mr. Carlyle.

“I learnt it, I must premise, through the chattering revelations of your little son; Isabel of course would not have mentioned it to me: but when the child had spoken, she did not deny it. In short, she was too broken-hearted, too completely bowed in spirit, to deny it. It aroused all my feelings of indignation: it excited in me an irresistible desire to emancipate her from this cruel life, and take her where she would find affection and—I hope—happiness. There was only one way in which I could do this, and I risked it. I asked her to become my wife, and to return to her home at East Lynne.”

The earl was slowly recovering from his petrification. “Then—am I to understand, that when you called that day at my house, you carried no intention with you of proposing to Isabel?”

“Not any. It was a sudden step, the circumstances under which I found her calling it forth.”

The earl paced the room, perplexed still, and evidently disturbed. “May I inquire if you love her?” he abruptly said.

Mr. Carlyle paused ere he spoke, and a red flush dyed his face. “Those are feelings man rarely acknowledges to man, Lord Mount Severn, but I will answer you. I do love her, passionately and sincerely. I learnt to love her at East Lynne; but I could have carried my love silently within me to the end of my life, and never betrayed it; but for

that unexpected visit to Castle Marling. If the idea of making her my wife had not previously occurred to me as practicable, it was that I deemed her rank incompatible with my own."

"As it was," said the earl.

"Country solicitors have married peers' daughters before now," remarked Mr. Carlyle. "I only add another to the list."

"But you cannot keep her as a peer's daughter, I presume?"

"East Lynne will be her home. Our establishment will be small and quiet, as compared with her father's. I explained to Isabel how quiet at the first, and she might have retracted, had she wished: I explained also in full to Lady Mount Severn. East Lynne will descend to our eldest son, should we have children. My profession is most lucrative, my income good: were I to die to-morrow, Isabel would enjoy East Lynne, and about three thousand pounds per annum. I gave these details in the letter which appears to have miscarried."

The earl made no immediate reply: he was absorbed in thought.

"Your lordship perceives, I hope, that there has been nothing 'clandestine' in my conduct to Lady Isabel."

Lord Mount Severn held out his hand. "I refused your hand when I came in, Mr. Carlyle, as you may have observed: perhaps you will refuse yours now, though I should be proud to shake it. When I find myself in the wrong, I am not above acknowledging the fact: and I must state my opinion that you have behaved most kindly and honourably."

Mr. Carlyle smiled and put his hand into the earl's. The latter retained it, while he spoke in a whisper.

“Of course I cannot be ignorant that, in speaking of Isabel's ill-treatment, you alluded to my wife. Has it transpired beyond yourselves?”

“You may be sure that neither Isabel nor myself would mention it: we shall dismiss it from amongst our reminiscences. Let it be as though you had never heard it: it is past and done with.”

“Isabel,” said the earl, as he was departing that evening, for he remained to spend the day with them, “I came here this morning almost prepared to strike your husband, and I go away honouring him. Be a good and faithful wife to him, for he deserves it.”

“Of course I shall,” she answered, in surprise.

Lord Mount Severn went on to Castle Marling, and there he had a stormy interview with his wife: so stormy that the sounds penetrated to the ears of the domestics. He left again the same day, in anger, and proceeded to Mount Severn.

“He will have time to cool down before we meet in London,” was the comment of my lady.

CHAPTER XV.

COMING HOME.

MISS CARLYLE was as good as her word. She quitted her own house, and removed to East Lynne with Peter and two of her handmaidens. In spite of Mr. Dill's grieved remonstrances, she discharged the servants whom Mr. Carlyle had engaged, all save one man: she might have retained one of the maids also, but for the episode of the mousseline-de-laine dresses and the caps with peach bows: for she had the sense to remember, in spite of her prejudices, that East Lynne would require more hands in its service than her own home.

On a Friday night, about a month after the wedding, Mr. Carlyle and his wife came home. They were expected, and Miss Carlyle went through the hall to receive them, and stood on the upper steps, between the pillars of the portico. An elegant chariot with four post horses was drawing up: Miss Carlyle compressed her lips as she scanned it. She was attired in a handsome dark silk dress and a new cap: her anger had had time to cool down in the last month, and her strong common sense told her that the wiser plan would be to make the best of it. Mr. Carlyle came up the steps with Isabel.

"You here, Cornelia! that was kind. How are you? Isabel, this is my sister."

Lady Isabel put forth her hand, and Miss Carlyle condescended to touch the tips of her fingers. "I hope you are well, ma'am," she jerked out.

Mr. Carlyle left them together, and went back to search for some trifles which had been left in the carriage. Miss Carlyle led the way to a sitting-room, where the supper-tray was laid. "You would like to go up-stairs and take your things off before supper, ma'am?" she said, in the same jerking tone to Lady Isabel.

"Thank you. I will go to my rooms, but I do not require supper. We have dined."

"Then what would you like to take?" asked Miss Corny.

"Some tea, if you please. I am very thirsty."

"Tea!" ejaculated Miss Corny. "So late as this! I don't know that they have boiling water. You'd never sleep a wink all night, ma'am, if you took tea at eleven o'clock."

"Oh—then never mind," replied Lady Isabel. "It is of no consequence. Do not let me give trouble."

Miss Carlyle whisked out of the room; upon what errand was best known to herself; and in the hall she and Marvel came to an encounter. No words passed, but each eyed the other grimly. Marvel was very stylish, with five flounces to her dress, a veil and a parasol. Meanwhile, Lady Isabel sat down and burst into tears and sobs. A chill had come over her: it did not seem like coming home to East Lynne. Mr. Carlyle entered and witnessed the grief.

"Isabel!" he uttered in amazement, as he hastened up to her. "My darling, what ails you?"

“I am tired, I think,” she gently answered; “and coming into the house again made me think of papa. I should like to go to my rooms, Archibald, but I don’t know which they are.”

Neither did Mr. Carlyle know, but Miss Carlyle came whisking in again, and said, “The best rooms; those next the library. Should she go up with my lady?”

Mr. Carlyle preferred to go himself, and he held out his arm to Isabel. She drew her veil over her face as she passed Miss Carlyle.

The branches were not lighted, and the room looked cold and comfortless. “Things seem all at sixes and sevens in the house,” remarked Mr. Carlyle. “I fancy the servants must have misunderstood my letter, and not have expected us until to-morrow night.”

“Archibald,” she said, taking off her bonnet, “I do feel very tired, and—and—low-spirited: may I undress at once, and not go down again to-night?”

He looked at her and smiled. “*May* you not go down again! Have you forgotten that you are at last in your own home? A happy home, I trust, it will be to you, my darling: I will strive to render it so.”

She leaned upon him and sobbed aloud. He tenderly bore with her mood, soothing her to composure, gently kissing the face she held to him, now and then. Oh, his was a true heart; he fervently intended to cherish this fair flower he had won: but, alas! it was just possible he might miss the way, unless he could emancipate himself from his sister’s thralldom. Isabel did not love him: of that she was conscious; but her deep and earnest hope by night

and by day was, that she might learn to love him, for she knew that he deserved it.

They heard Marvel's voice, and Isabel turned, poured out some water, and began dashing it over her face and eyes. She did not care that Marvel, who was haughtily giving orders about some particular trunk, should see her grief.

"What will you take, Isabel?" asked Mr. Carlyle. "Some tea?"

"No, thank you," replied she, remembering Miss Carlyle's answer.

"But you must take something. You complained of thirst in the carriage."

"Water will do—will be the best for me, I mean. Marvel can get it for me."

Mr. Carlyle quitted the room, and the lady's-maid undressed her mistress in swelling silence, her tongue quivering with its own rage and wrongs. Marvel deemed herself worse used than any lady's-maid ever had been yet. From the very hour of the wedding her anger had been gathering, for there had been no gentleman-valet to take care of *her* during the wedding-journey. Bad enough! but she had come home to find that there was no staff of upper servants at all: no housekeeper; no steward; no, as she expressed it, nobody. Moreover, she and Miss Carlyle had just come to a clash. Marvel was loftily calling about her in the hall for somebody to carry up a small parcel, which contained, in fact, her lady's dressing-case, and Miss Carlyle had desired her to carry it up herself. But that she had learnt who the lady was, Marvel in her indignation might have felt inclined to throw the dressing-case at her head.

“Anything else, my lady?”

“No,” replied Lady Isabel. “You may go.”

Isabel, wrapped in her dressing-gown, her warm slippers on, sat with a book; and Marvel, wishing her good night, retired. Mr. Carlyle, meanwhile, had sought his sister, who, finding she was to be the only one to take supper, was then helping herself to the wing of a fowl. She had chosen, that day, to dine early.

“Cornelia,” he began, “I do not understand all this. I don’t see my servants, and I see yours. “Where are mine?”

“Gone away,” said Miss Carlyle, in her decisive, off-hand manner.

“Gone away!” responded Mr. Carlyle. “What for? I believe they were excellent servants.”

“Very excellent! Decking themselves out in buff mousseline-de-laine dresses on a Saturday morning, and fine caps garnished with peach. Never attempt to dabble in domestic matters again, Archibald, for you only get taken in. Cut me a slice of that tongue.”

“But in what did they do wrong?” he repeated, as he obeyed her.

“Archibald Carlyle, how could you go and make a fool of yourself? If you must have married, were there not plenty of young ladies in your own sphere of society—”

“Stay,” he interrupted. “I wrote you a full statement of my motives and actions, Cornelia; I concealed nothing that it was necessary you should know: I am not disposed to enter upon a further discussion of the subject, and you must pardon my

saying so. Let us return to the topic of the servants. Where are they?"

"I sent them away. Because they were superfluous encumbrances," she hastily added, as he would have interrupted her. "We have four in the house, and my lady has brought a fine maid, I see, making five. I have come up here to live."

Mr. Carlyle felt checkmated. He had always bowed to the will of Miss Corny, but he had an idea that he and his wife would be better without her. "And your own house?" he exclaimed.

"I have let it furnished: the people entered to-day. You cannot turn me out of East Lynne, into the road, or to furnished lodgings, Archibald. There will be enough expense, without our keeping on two houses: and most people, in your place, would jump at the prospect of my living here. Your wife will be mistress: I do not intend to take her honours from her; but I shall save her a world of trouble in management, and be as useful to her as a house-keeper. She will be glad of that, inexperienced as she is: I dare say she never gave a domestic order in her life."

This was a view of the case to Mr. Carlyle, so plausibly put, that he began to think it might be all for the best. He had great reverence for his sister's judgment: force of habit is strong upon all of us. Still — he did not know.

"There is certainly room for you at East Lynne, Cornelia, but —"

"A little too much," put in Miss Corny. "I think a house half its size might content us all, and still have been grand enough for Lady Isabel."

“East Lynne is mine,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“So is your folly,” rejoined Miss Cornelia.

“And with regard to servants,” proceeded Mr. Carlyle, passing over the remark, “I shall certainly keep as many as I deem necessary. I cannot give my wife splendour, but I will give her comfort. The horses and carriages will take one man’s —”

Miss Corny turned faint all over. “What on earth are you talking of?”

“I bought a pretty open carriage in town, and a pair of ponies for it. The carriage we came home in was Lord Mount Severn’s present. Post-horses will do for that at present, but —”

“Oh, Archibald! the sins that you are committing!”

“Sins!” echoed Mr. Carlyle.

“Wilful waste makes woful want. I taught that to you as a child. To be thrifty is a virtue; to squander is a sin.”

“It may be a sin where you cannot afford it. To spend wisely is neither a squander nor a sin. Never you fear, Cornelia, that I shall run beyond my income.”

“Say at once an empty pocket is better than a full one,” angrily returned Miss Carlyle. “Did you buy that fine piano which has arrived?”

“It was my present to Isabel.”

Miss Corny groaned. “What did it cost?”

“The cost is of no consequence. The old piano here was a bad one, and I bought a better.”

“What did it cost?” repeated Miss Carlyle.

“A hundred and twenty guineas,” he answered. Obedience to her will was yet powerful within him.

Miss Corny threw up her hands and eyes. At that

moment Peter entered with some hot water which his master had rung for. Mr. Carlyle rose, and looked on the sideboard.

“Where’s the wine, Peter?”

The servant put it out, port and sherry. Mr. Carlyle drank a glass, and then proceeded to mix some wine and water. “Shall I mix some for you, Cornelia?” he asked.

“I’ll mix for myself if I want any. Who is that for?”

“Isabel.”

He quitted the room, carrying the wine-and-water, and entered his wife’s. She was sitting half buried it seemed in the arm-chair, her face muffled up. As she raised it he saw that it was flushed and agitated, that her eyes were bright and her frame was trembling.

“What is the matter?” he hastily asked.

“I got nervous after Marvel went,” she whispered, laying hold of him, as if for protection from terror. “I could not find the bell, and that made me worse; so I came back to the chair and covered my head over, hoping somebody would come up.”

“I have been talking to Cornelia. But what made you nervous?”

“Oh! I was very foolish. I kept thinking of frightful things; they would come into my mind. Do not blame me, Archibald. This is the room papa died in.”

“Blame you, my darling!” he uttered, with deep feeling.

“I thought of a dreadful story about the bats, that the servants told — I dare say you never heard it; and I kept thinking, ‘Suppose they were at the windows now, behind the blinds.’ And then I was

afraid to look at the bed: I fancied I might see — You are laughing!”

Yes, he was smiling; for he knew that these moments of nervous fear are best met jestingly. He made her drink the wine-and-water, and then he showed her where the bell was, ringing it as he did so. Its position had been moved in some late alterations to the house.

“Your rooms shall be changed to-morrow, Isabel.”

“No, let us remain in these. I shall like to feel that papa was once their occupant. I won't get nervous again.”

But, even as she spoke, her actions belied her words. Mr. Carlyle had gone to the door and opened it, and she flew close up to him, cowering behind him.

“Shall you be very long, Archibald?” she whispered.

“Not more than an hour,” he answered. But he hastily put back one of his hands, and held her tightly in his protecting grasp. Marvel was coming along the corridor in answer to the bell.

“Have the goodness to let Miss Carlyle know that I am not coming down again to-night,” he said.

“Yes, sir.”

Mr. Carlyle shut the door, and then looked at his wife and laughed. “He is very kind to me,” thought Isabel.

With the morning began the perplexities of Lady Isabel Carlyle. But first of all, just fancy the group at breakfast. Miss Carlyle descended in the startling costume the reader has seen; took her seat at the breakfast-table, and there sat bolt upright. Mr. Carlyle came down next; and then Lady Isabel en-

tered, in an elegant half-mourning dress with flowing black ribbons.

“Good morning, ma’am. I hope you slept well?” was Miss Carlyle’s salutation.

“Quite well, thank you,” she answered, as she took her seat opposite Miss Carlyle. Miss Carlyle pointed to the top of the table.

“That is your place, ma’am. But I will pour out the coffee, and save you the trouble, if you wish it.”

“I should be glad if you would,” answered Lady Isabel.

So Miss Carlyle proceeded to her duties, very stern and grim. The meal was nearly over, when Peter came in, and said the butcher had come up for orders. Miss Carlyle looked at Lady Isabel, waiting, of course, for her to give them. Isabel was silent with perplexity: she had never given such an order in her life. Totally ignorant was she of the requirements of a household; and did not know whether to suggest a few pounds of meat, or a whole cow. It was the presence of that grim Miss Corny which put her out: alone with her husband, she would have said, “What ought I to order, Archibald? Tell me.” Peter waited.

“A — Something to roast and boil, if you please,” stammered Lady Isabel.

She spoke in a low tone; embarrassment makes cowards of the best of us; and Mr. Carlyle repeated it after her. He knew no more about housekeeping than she did.

“Something to roast and boil, tell the man, Peter.”

Up started Miss Corny: she could not stand that. “Are you aware, Lady Isabel, that an order, such as that, would only puzzle the butcher? Shall I give

the necessary orders for to-day? The fishmonger will be up presently."

"Oh! I wish you would!" cried the relieved Lady Isabel. "I have not been accustomed to it; but I must learn. I don't think I know anything about housekeeping."

Miss Corny's answer was to stalk from the room. Isabel rose from her chair, like a bird released from its cage, and stood by her husband's side. "Have you finished, Archibald?"

"I think I have, dear. Oh! here's my coffee. There; I have finished now."

"Let us go round the grounds."

He rose, laid his hands playfully on her slender waist, and looked at her. "You may as well ask me to take a journey to the moon. It is past nine, and I have not been to the office for a month."

The tears rose in her eyes. "I wish you could stay with me! I wish you could be always with me! East Lynne will not be East Lynne without you."

"I will be with you as much as ever I can, my dearest," he whispered. "Come and walk with me through the park."

She ran for her bonnet, gloves, and parasol. Mr. Carlyle waited for her in the hall, and they went out together.

He thought it a good opportunity to speak about his sister. "She wishes to remain with us," he said. "I do not know what to decide. On the one hand, I think she might save you the worry of household management: on the other, I fancy we shall be happier by ourselves."

Isabel's heart sank within her at the idea of that stern Miss Corny, mounted over her as resident

guard; but, refined and sensitive, almost painfully considerate of the feelings of others, she raised no word of objection. As he and Miss Carlyle pleased, she answered.

“Isabel,” he said, with grave earnestness, “I wish it to be as you please: that is, I wish matters to be arranged as may best please you; and I will have them so arranged. My chief object in life now, is your happiness.”

He spoke in all the sincerity of truth, and Isabel knew it; and the thought came across her that with him by her side, her loving protector, Miss Carlyle could not mar her life's peace. “Let her stay, Archibald: she will not incommode us.”

“At any rate, it can be tried for a month or two, and we shall see how it works,” he musingly observed.

They reached the park gates. “I wish I could go with you and be your clerk,” she cried, unwilling to release his hand. “I should not have all that long way to go back by myself.”

He laughed and shook his head, telling her that she wanted to bribe him into taking her back, but it could not be. And away he went, after saying farewell.

Isabel wandered back: and then wandered through the rooms: they looked lonely, not as they had seemed to look in her father's time. In her dressing-room knelt Marvel, unpacking. She rose when Lady Isabel entered.

“Can I speak to you a moment, if you please, my lady?”

“What is it?”

Then Marvel poured forth her tale. That she feared so small an establishment would not suit her, and if my

lady pleased she would like to leave at once : that day. Anticipating it, she had not unpacked her things.

“ There has been some mistake about the servants, Marvel, but it will be remedied as soon as possible. And I told you, before I married, that Mr. Carlyle’s establishment would be a limited one.”

“ My lady, perhaps I could put up with that ; but I never could stop in the house with”—that female Guy, had been on the tip of Marvel’s tongue ; but she remembered in time of whom she was speaking—“ with Miss Carlyle. I fear, my lady, we have both got tempers that would clash, and might be flying at each other : I could not stop, my lady, for untold gold. And if you please to make me forfeit my running quarter’s salary, why I must do it. So when I have set your ladyship’s things to rights, I hope you’ll allow me to go.”

Lady Isabel would not condescend to ask her to remain, but she wondered how she should manage without a maid. She drew her desk towards her. “ What is the amount due to you ? ” she inquired, as she unlocked it.

“ Up to the end of the quarter, my lady ? ” cried Marvel, in a brisk tone.

“ No,” coldly replied Lady Isabel. “ Up to to-day.”

“ I have not had time to reckon, my lady.”

Lady Isabel took a pencil and paper, made out the account, and laid it down in gold and silver on the table. “ It is more than you deserve, Marvel,” she remarked, “ and more than you would get in most places. You ought to have given me proper notice.”

Marvel melted into tears, and began a string of excuses. “ She should never have wished to leave so kind a lady, but for attendant ill-conveniences, and

she hoped my lady would not object to testify to her character." Lady Isabel quitted the room in the midst of it: and in the course of the day Marvel took her departure, Joyce telling her that she ought to be ashamed of herself.

"I couldn't help myself," retorted Marvel, "and I'm sorry to leave her, for she's a pleasant young lady to serve."

"Well, I know I'd have helped myself," was Joyce's remark. "I would not go off in this unhandsome way from a good mistress."

"Perhaps you wouldn't," loftily returned Marvel, "but my inside feelings are delicate, and can't bear to be trampled upon. The same house is not going to hold me and that tall female image, who's more fit to be carried about at a foreign carnival than some that they do carry."

So Marvel left. And when Lady Isabel went to her room to dress for dinner, Joyce entered it.

"I am not much accustomed to a lady's-maid's duties," said she, "but Miss Carlyle has sent me, my lady, to do what I can for you, if you will allow me."

Isabel thought it was kind of Miss Carlyle.

"And if you please to trust me with the keys of your things, I will take charge of them for you, my lady, until you are suited with a maid," Joyce resumed.

"I don't know anything about the keys," answered Isabel. "I never keep them."

Joyce did her best, and Lady Isabel went down. It was nearly six o'clock, the dinner hour, and she strolled to the park gates, hoping to meet Mr. Carlyle. Taking a few steps out, she looked down the road, but could not see him coming; so she turned in again, and sat down under a shady tree and out of view of

the road. It was remarkably warm weather for the closing days of May.

Half an hour, and then Mr. Carlyle came pelting up, passed the gates, and turned on to the grass. There was his wife. She had fallen asleep, her head leaning against the trunk of the tree. Her bonnet and parasol lay at her feet, her scarf had dropped, and she looked like a lovely child, her lips partly open, her cheeks flushed, and her beautiful hair falling around. It was an exquisite picture, and his heart beat quicker within him as he felt it was his own. A smile stole over his lips as he stood looking at her. She opened her eyes, and for a moment could not remember where she was. Then she started up.

“ Oh, Archibald! have I been asleep?”

“ Ay; and might have been stolen and carried off. I could not afford that, Isabel.”

“ I don't know how I came to fall asleep. I was listening for you.”

“ What have you been doing all day?” he asked, as he drew her arm within his, and they walked on.

“ Oh, I hardly know,” she sighed. “ Trying the new piano, and looking at my watch, wishing the time would go quicker, that you might come home. The ponies and carriage have arrived, Archibald.”

“ I know they have, my dear. Have you been out of doors much?”

“ No, I waited for you.” And then she told him about Marvel. He felt vexed, saying she must replace her with all speed. Isabel said she knew of one, a young woman who had left Lady Mount Severn while she, Isabel, was at Castle Marling: her health was delicate, and Lady Mount Severn's place too hard for her.

“Write to her,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“You have kept dinner waiting more than half an hour,” began Miss Corny, in a loud tone of complaint, to her brother, meeting them in the hall. “And I thought you must be lost, ma’am,” she added, to Isabel.

Why in the world did she tack on that objectionable “ma’am,” to every sentence? It was out of place in all respects to Isabel: more especially considering her own age and Isabel’s youth. Mr. Carlyle knitted his brow whenever it came out, and Joyce felt sure that Miss Corny did it “in her temper.” He hastily answered her that he could not get away from the office earlier, and went up to his dressing-room. Isabel hurried after him, probably dreading some outbreak of Miss Carlyle’s displeasure, but the door was shut, and, scarcely at home yet as a wife, she did not like to open it. When he appeared, there she was, leaning against the door-post.

“Isabel? Are you there?”

“I am waiting for you. Are you ready?”

“Nearly.” He drew her inside, caught her to him, and held her against his heart.

There was an explosion on the following morning. Mr. Carlyle ordered the pony-carriage for church, but his sister interrupted him.

“Archibald! what are you thinking of? I will not permit it.”

“Permit what?” asked Mr. Carlyle.

“The cattle to be taken out on a Sunday. I am a religious woman, ma’am,” she added, turning sharply to Isabel, “and I cannot countenance Sunday travelling. I was taught my catechism, Lady Isabel.”

Isabel did not feel comfortable. She knew that a walk to St. Jude's church and back in the present heat would knock her up for the day, but she shrank from offending Miss Carlyle's prejudices. She was standing at the window with her husband; Miss Carlyle being seated at a distant table, with the Bible before her.

"Archibald, perhaps if we walk very slowly, it will not hurt me," she softly whispered.

He smiled and nodded, and whispered in return. "Be quite ready by half-past ten."

"Well—is she going to walk?" snapped Miss Corny, as Isabel left the room.

"No. She could not bear the walk in this heat, and I shall certainly not allow her to attempt it. We shall go early. John will put up the ponies, and be at church before the service begins."

"Is she made of glass, that she'd melt?" retorted Miss Corny.

"She is a gentle, tender plant; one that I have taken to my bosom and vowed before my Maker to love and to cherish: and, by His help, I will do so."

He spoke in a firm tone, almost as sharp as Miss Corny's, and quitted the room. Miss Carlyle raised her hand and pressed it upon her temples: as if something pained her there.

The carriage came round, a beautiful little equipage, and Isabel was ready. As Mr. Carlyle drove slowly down the dusty road they came upon Miss Corny striding along in the sun, with a great umbrella over her head. She would not turn to look at them.

Once more, as in the year gone by, St. Jude's church was in a flutter of expectation. It expected to see a whole paraphernalia of bridal finery, and again it was

doomed to disappointment, for Isabel had not put off the mourning for her father. She was in black, a thin gauze dress, and her white bonnet had small black flowers inside and out. For the first time in his life Mr. Carlyle took possession of the pew belonging to East Lynne, filling the place where the poor earl used to sit. Not so Miss Corny : she sat in her own.

Barbara was there with the justice and Mrs. Hare. Her face wore a grey, dusky hue, of which she was only too conscious, but could not subdue. Her covetous eyes would wander to that other face with its singular loveliness and its sweetly earnest eyes, sheltered under the protection of him, for whose sheltering protection she had so long yearned. Poor Barbara did not benefit much by the services that day.

Afterwards, they went across the churchyard to the west corner, where stood the tomb of Lord Mount Severn. Isabel looked at the inscription, her veil shading her face.

“ Not here, and now, my darling,” he whispered, pressing her arm to his side, for he felt her silent sobs. “ Strive for calmness.”

“ It seems but the other day he was at church with me, and now — here !”

Mr. Carlyle suddenly changed their places, so that they stood with their backs to the hedge, and to any staring stragglers who might be lingering in the road.

“ There ought to be railings round the tomb,” she presently said, after a successful battle with her emotion.

“ I thought so, and I suggested it to Lord Mount Severn, but he appeared to think differently. I will have it done.”

“ I put you to great expense,” she said.

Mr. Carlyle glanced quickly at her, a dim fear penetrating his mind that his sister might have been *talking* in her hearing. “ An expense I would not be without for the whole world. You know it, Isabel.”

“ And I have nothing to repay you with,” she sighed.

He looked excessively amused ; and, gazing into her face, the expression of his eyes made her smile. “ Here is John with the carriage,” she exclaimed. “ Let us go, Archibald.”

Standing outside the gates, talking to the rector’s family, were several ladies, one of them Barbara Hare. She watched Mr. Carlyle place his wife in the carriage, she watched him drive away. Barbara’s very lips were white as she bowed in return to his greeting.

“ The heat is so great,” murmured Barbara, when those around noticed her paleness.

“ Ah ! you ought to have gone home in the phaeton with Mr. and Mrs. Hare — as they desired you.”

“ I wished to walk,” returned the unhappy Barbara.

“ What a pretty girl !” said Lady Isabel to her husband. “ What is her name ?”

“ Barbara Hare.”

CHAPTER XVI.

BARBARA HARE'S REVELATION.

THE county carriages began to arrive at East Lynne, to pay the wedding visit to Mr. and Lady Isabel Carlyle. Some appeared with all the pomp of coronets and hammercloths, and bedizened footmen with calves and wigs and gold-headed canes; some came with four horses, and some even with outriders. It is the custom still in certain localities to be preceded by outriders when paying visits of ceremony, and there are people who like the dash. Mr. Carlyle might have taken up his abode at East Lynne without any such honours being paid him, but his marriage with Lady Isabel had sent him up in county estimation. Amongst the rest, went Justice and Mrs. Hare and Barbara. The old-fashioned, large yellow chariot was brought out, and the fat, sleek, long-tailed coach-horses: only on state occasions was that chariot awakened out of its repose.

Isabel happened to be in her dressing-room talking to Joyce. She had grown to like Joyce very much, and was asking her whether she would continue to wait upon her — as the maid, for whom she had written, was not well enough to come.

Joyce's face lighted up with pleasure at the proposal. "Oh, my lady, you are very kind! I should so like it. I would serve you faithfully to the best

of my ability : and I know I could do your hair well, if you allowed me to try : I have been practising upon my own, night and morning."

Isabel laughed. "But Miss Carlyle may not be inclined to transfer you."

"I think she would be, my lady. She said, a day or two ago, that I appeared to suit you, and you might have me altogether if you wished, provided I could still make her gowns. Which I could very well do, for yours is an easy service. I make them to please her, you see, my lady."

"Do you make her caps also?" demurely asked Lady Isabel.

Joyce smiled. "Yes, my lady : but I am allowed to make them only according to her own pattern."

"Joyce, if you become my maid, you must wear smarter caps yourself."

"I know that, my lady—at least, different ones. But Miss Carlyle is very particular, and only allows muslin caps to her servants. I would wear plain white net ones, if you don't object, my lady: neat and close, with a little quilled white ribbon."

"They are the best that you can wear. I do not wish you to be fine, like Marvel."

"Oh, my Lady! I shall never be fine," shuddered Joyce. And Joyce believed she had cause to shudder at finery. She was about to speak further, when a knock came to the dressing-room door. Joyce went to open it, and saw one of the housemaids, a girl who had recently been engaged, a native of West Lynne. Isabel heard the colloquy :

"Is my lady there?"

"Yes."

"Some visitors. Peter ordered me to come and

tell you. I say, Joyce, it's the Hares. And *she's* with them. Her bonnet's got blue convolvulums inside, and a white feather on the out, as long as Martha's back'us hearth-broom. I watched her get out of the carriage."

"Who?" sharply returned Joyce.

"Why, Miss Barbara. Only fancy her coming to pay the wedding visit *here*. My lady had better take care that she don't get a bowl of poison mixed for her. Master's out, or else I'd have given a shilling to see the interview between the three."

Joyce sent the girl away, shut the door, and turned to her mistress, quite unconscious that the half-whispered conversation had been audible.

"Some visitors in the drawing-room, my lady, Susan says. Mr. Justice Hare and Mrs. Hare, and Miss Barbara."

Isabel descended, her mind full of the mysterious words spoken by Susan. The justice was in a new flaxen wig, obstinate-looking and pompous; Mrs. Hare pale, delicate, and lady-like; Barbara, beautiful: such was the impression they made upon Isabel.

They paid rather a long visit. Isabel quite fell in love with the gentle and suffering Mrs. Hare, who had risen to leave when Miss Carlyle entered. Miss Carlyle wished them to remain longer, had something, she said, to show Barbara. The justice declined: he had a brother justice coming to dine him at five; it was then half-past four: Barbara might stay if she liked.

Barbara's face turned crimson: but nevertheless she accepted the invitation, proffered her by Miss Carlyle, to remain at East Lynne for the rest of the day.

Dinner-time approached, and Isabel went up to dress for it. Joyce was waiting, and entered upon the subject of the service.

“My lady, I have spoken to Miss Carlyle, and she is willing that I should be transferred to you, but she says I ought first of all to acquaint you with certain unpleasant facts in my history, and the same thought had occurred to me. Miss Carlyle is not over pleasant in manner, my lady, but she is very upright and just.”

“What facts?” asked Lady Isabel, sitting down to have her hair brushed.

“My lady, I’ll tell you as shortly as I can. My father was a clerk in Mr. Carlyle’s office—of course I mean the late Mr. Carlyle. My mother died when I was eight years old, and my father afterwards married again, a sister of Mr. Kane’s wife—”

“Mr. Kane the music-master?”

“Yes, my lady. She was a governess; she and Mrs. Kane had both been governesses, they were quite ladies, so far as education and manners went, and West Lynne said that in stooping to marry my father she lowered herself dreadfully. But he was a very handsome man, and a clever man also, though self-taught. Well, they married, and at the end of a year Afy was born—”

“Who?” interrupted Lady Isabel.

“My half-sister, Afy. In another year her mother died, and an aunt of her mother sent for the child, and said she should bring her up. I remained at home with my father, going to school by day, and when I grew up, I went by day to learn millinery and dress-making. We lived in the prettiest cottage, my lady, it was in the wood, and it was my father’s own.

After I was out of my time, I used to go round to different ladies' houses to work, seeing to my father's comforts night and morning, for the woman who did the housework only came in for a few hours in the day. That went on for years, and then Afy came home. Her aunt had died, and her money died with her, so that though she had brought up Afy well, she could leave her nothing. Afy quite frightened us. Her notions were fine, and her dress was fine; she was gay and giddy and very pretty, and would do nothing all day but read books, which she used to get at the West Lynne library. My father did not like it: we were only plain working people, and she wanted to set up for a lady—the effect of bringing her up above her station. Many a breeze had she and I together, chiefly about her dress. The next thing, she got acquainted with young Richard Hare.”

Lady Isabel looked up quickly.

“Mr. Justice Hare's only son; own brother to Miss Barbara,” proceeded Joyce, dropping her voice, as though Barbara could hear her in the drawing-room. “Oh, she was very flighty; she encouraged Mr. Richard, and he soon grew to love her with quite a wild sort of love; he was rather simple, and Afy used to laugh at him behind his back. She encouraged others too, and would have them there in an evening, when the house was free. My father was secretary to the literary institution, and had to be there two evenings in the week, after office hours at Mr. Carlyle's; he was fond of shooting, too, and, if home in time, would go out with his gun; and as I scarcely ever got home before nine o'clock, Afy was often alone, and she took the opportunity to have one or other of her admirers there.”

“Had she many admirers?” asked Lady Isabel, who seemed inclined to treat the tale in a joking spirit.

“The chief one, my lady, was Richard Hare. She got acquainted with somebody else, a stranger, who used to ride over from a distance to see her; but I fancy there was nothing in it; Mr. Richard was the one. And it went on, and on, till—till—he killed her father.”

“Who?” uttered the startled Lady Isabel.

“Richard Hare, my lady. My father had told Afy that Mr. Richard should not come there any longer, for when gentlemen go in secret after poor girls, it is well known they have not marriage in their thoughts: my father would have interfered more than he did, but that he judged well of Mr. Richard, and did not think he was one to do Afy real harm—but he did not know how flighty she was. However, one day he heard people talking about it in West Lynne, coupling her name and Mr. Richard’s offensively together, and at night he told Afy, before me, that it should not go on any longer, and she must not encourage him. My lady, the next night Richard Hare shot my father.”

“How very dreadful!”

“Whether it was done on purpose, or whether the gun went off in a scuffle, I can’t tell: people think it was wilful murder. I never shall forget the scene, my lady, when I got home that night: it was at Justice Hare’s that I had been working. My father was lying on the floor, dead; and the house was full of people. Afy could give no particulars: she had gone out to the wood path at the back, and never heard or saw anything amiss; but when she went in

again, there lay father. Mr. Locksley was leaning over him; he told Afy that he had heard the shot, and came up in time to see Richard Hare fling the gun away, and fly from the house with his shoes stained with blood."

"Oh Joyce! I do not like to hear this. What was done to Richard Hare?"

"He escaped, my lady. He went off that same night and has never been heard of since. There's a judgment of murder out against him, and his own father would be the first to deliver him up to justice. It is a dreadful thing to have befallen the Hare family, who are most high and respectable people: it is killing Mrs. Hare by inches. Afy—"

"What is it, that name, Joyce?"

"My lady, she was christened by a very fine name—Aphrodite: so I and my father never called her anything but Afy. But I have got the worst to tell you yet, my lady—the worst as regards her. As soon as the inquest was over she went off, after Richard Hare."

Lady Isabel uttered an exclamation.

"She did indeed, my lady," returned Joyce, turning away her moist eyelashes and her shamed cheeks from the gaze of her mistress. "Nothing has been heard of either of them: and it is hardly likely but what they went out of England—perhaps to Australia; perhaps to America; nobody knows. What with the shame of that, and the shock of my poor father's murder, I had an attack of illness. It was a nervous fever, and it lasted long: Miss Carlyle had me at her house, and she and her servants nursed me through it. She's good at heart, my lady, is Miss Carlyle, only her manners are against her, and

she will think herself better than other people. After that illness, I stayed with her as upper maid, and never went out to work again."

"How long is it since this happened?"

"It will be four years next September, my lady. The cottage has stood empty ever since, for nobody will live in it; they say it smells of murder. And I can't sell it, because Afy has a right in it as well as I. I go to it sometimes, and open the windows, and air it. And this was what I had to tell you, my lady, before you decide to take me into your service: it is not every lady would like to engage one whose sister has turned out so badly."

Lady Isabel did not see that it ought to make any difference. She said so; and then leaned back in her chair, and mused.

"Which dress, my lady?"

"Joyce, what was that I heard you and Susan gossiping over at the door?" Lady Isabel suddenly asked. "About Miss Hare giving me a bowl of poison. You should tell Susan not to make her whispers so loud."

Joyce smiled; though she was rather confused. "It was only a bit of nonsense, of course, my lady. The fact is, that people think Miss Barbara was much attached to Mr. Carlyle, regularly in love with him, and many thought it would be a match. But I don't fancy she would have been the one to make him happy, with all her love."

A hot flush passed over the brow of Lady Isabel; a sensation very like jealousy flew to her heart. No woman likes to hear that another woman either is or has been attached to her husband: a doubt always

arises whether the feeling may not have been reciprocated.

Lady Isabel descended. She wore a costly black lace dress its low body and sleeves trimmed with white lace as costly: and ornaments of jet. She looked inexpressibly beautiful, and Barbara turned from her with a feeling of sickening jealousy; from her beauty, from her attire, even from the fine, soft handkerchief, which displayed the badge of her rank—the coronet of an earl's daughter. Barbara looked well too: she was in a light blue silk robe, and her pretty cheeks were damask with her mind's excitement. On her neck she wore the gold chain given to her by Mr. Carlyle—she had not discarded that.

They stood together at the window, looking at Mr. Carlyle as he came up the avenue. He saw them, and nodded. Lady Isabel watched the damask cheeks turn to crimson at sight of him.

“How do you do, Barbara?” he cried, as he shook hands. “Come to pay us a visit at last! you have been tardy over it. And how are you, my darling?” he whispered, bending over his wife: but she missed his kiss of greeting. Well; would she have had him give it her in public? No: but she was in the mood to notice the omission.

Dinner over, Miss Carlyle beguiled Barbara out of doors. To exhibit the beauties of the East Lynne pleasure-grounds, the rarities of the conservatory, thinks the reader. Not at all: she was anxious to show off the stock of vegetables, the asparagus and cucumber beds; worth a hundred acres of flowers in Miss Carlyle's estimation. Barbara went unwillingly: she would rather be in *his* presence than away from it; and she could not help feeling this,

although he was the husband of another. Isabel remained in-doors: Barbara was Miss Carlyle's guest.

"How do you like her?" abruptly asked Barbara, alluding to Lady Isabel.

"Better than I thought I should," acknowledged Miss Carlyle. "I had expected airs and graces and pretence, and I must say she is free from them. She seems quite wrapped up in Archibald, and watches for his coming home like a cat watches for a mouse. She is dull without him."

Barbara plucked a rose as they passed a bush, and began pulling it to pieces, leaf by leaf. "Dull! how does she employ her time?"

"In doing nothing," snappishly retorted Miss Carlyle. "Sings a bit, and plays a bit, and reads a bit, and receives her visitors, and idles away her days in that manner. She coaxes Archibald out here after breakfast, and he ought not to let himself be coaxed, making him late at his office; and then she dances down to the park gates with him, hindering him still further, for he would go alone in half the time. One morning it poured with rain; she actually went all the same. I told her she would spoil her dress: oh, that was nothing, she said: and Archibald wrapped a shawl round her and took her. Of course the spoiling of dresses is nothing to her! And in an evening she goes down to meet him again; she would have gone to-day if you had not been here. Oh, she is first with him now; business is second."

Barbara compelled her manner to indifference. "I suppose it is natural."

"I suppose it is absurd," was the retort of Miss Carlyle. "I give them very little of my company, especially in an evening. They go strolling out to-

gether, or she sings to him, he hanging over her as if she were gold; to judge by appearances, she is more precious to him than any gold that ever was coined into money. I'll tell you what I saw last night. They had post-horses to the close carriage yesterday, and went to return some visits, never getting home till past seven, and keeping me and dinner waiting. Archibald had what he is not often subject to, a severe headache, and he went in the next room after dinner, and lay on the sofa. She carried a cup of tea to him, and never came back, leaving her own on the table till it was perfectly cold. I pushed open the door to tell her so. There was my lady's cambric handkerchief, soaked in eau-de-Cologne lying on his forehead; and there was my lady herself, kneeling down and looking at him, he with his arm thrown round her to hold her there. Now I just ask you, Barbara, whether there's any sense in fadding with a man like that? If ever he had the headache before he was married, I used to mix him up a good dose of salts and senna, and tell him to go to bed early and sleep the pain off."

Barbara made no reply: but she turned her face from Miss Carlyle.

They came upon the gardener, and Miss Carlyle got into a discussion with him, a somewhat warm one; she insisted upon having certain work done in a certain way; he standing to it that Mr. Carlyle had ordered it done another. Barbara grew tired, and returned to the house.

Isabel and her husband were in the adjoining room, at the piano, and Barbara had an opportunity of hearing that sweet voice. She did as Miss Carlyle confessed to have done, pushed open the door be-

tween the two rooms, and looked in. It was the twilight hour, almost too dusk to see; but she could distinguish Isabel seated at the piano, and Mr. Carlyle standing behind her. She was singing one of the ballads from the opera of the "Bohemian Girl," "When other lips."

"Why do you like the song so much, Archibald?" she asked when she had finished it.

"I don't know. I never liked it so much until I heard it from you."

"I wonder if they are come in. Shall we go into the next room?"

"Just this one first, this translation from the German, 'Twere vain to tell thee all I feel.' There's real music in that song."

"Yes there is. Do you know, Archibald, your taste is just like papa's. He liked all these quiet, imaginative songs, and so do you. And so do I," she laughingly added, "if I must speak the truth. Mrs. Vane used to stop her ears and make a face, when papa made me sing them. Papa returned the compliment; for he would walk out of the room if she began her loud Italian songs. I speak of the time when she was with us in London."

She ceased, and began the song, singing it exquisitely, in a low, sweet, earnest tone, the chords of the accompaniment, at its conclusion, dying off gradually into silence.

"There, Archibald! I am sure I have sung you ten songs at least," she said, leaning her head back against him and looking at him from her upturned face. "You ought to pay me."

He did pay her; holding the dear face to him, and taking from it some impassioned kisses. Barbara

turned to the window, a low moan of pain escaping her, as she pressed her forehead on one of its panes, and looked forth at the dusky night. Isabel came in on her husband's arm.

"Are you here alone, Miss Hare? I really beg your pardon. I supposed you were with Miss Carlyle?"

"Where is Cornelia, Barbara?"

"I have but just come in," was Barbara's reply. "I dare say she is following me."

So she was, for she came upon them as they were speaking, her voice raised to tones of anger.

"Archibald, what have you been telling Blair about that geranium bed? He says you have been ordering him to make it oval. We decided that it should be square."

"Isabel would prefer it oval," was his reply.

"But it will be best square," repeated Miss Carlyle.

"It is all right, Cornelia; Blair has his orders. I wish it to be oval."

"He is a regular muff, is that Blair, and as obstinate as a mule," cried Miss Carlyle.

"Indeed then, Cornelia, I think him a very civil, good servant."

"Oh, of course," snapped Miss Carlyle. "You never can see faults in anybody. You always were a simpleton in some things, Archibald."

Mr. Carlyle laughed good-humouredly; he was of an even, calm temper: and he had, all his life, been subjected to the left-handed compliments of his sister. Isabel resented these speeches in her heart; she was growing more attached to her husband day by day. "It is well everybody does not think so," cried he,

with a glance at his wife and Barbara, as they drew round the tea-table.

The evening went on to ten, and as the time-piece struck the hour, Barbara rose from her chair in amazement. "I did not think it was so late. Surely some one must have come for me."

"I will inquire," was Lady Isabel's answer; and Mr. Carlyle rang the bell. No one had come for Miss Hare.

"Then I fear I must trouble Peter," cried Barbara. "Mamma may be gone to rest, tired, and papa must have forgotten me. It would never do for me to get locked out," she gaily added.

"Like you were one night before," said Mr. Carlyle, significantly.

He alluded to the night when Barbara was in the grove of trees with her unfortunate brother, and Mr. Hare was on the point, unconsciously, of locking her out. She had given Mr. Carlyle the history; but its recollection now called up a smart pain, and a change passed over her face.

"Oh! don't, Archibald!" she uttered, in the impulse of the moment; "don't recall it." Isabel wondered.

"Can Peter take me?" continued Barbara.

"I had better take you," said Mr. Carlyle. "It is late."

Barbara's heart beat at the words; it beat as she put her things on; as she said good night to Lady Isabel and Miss Carlyle; it beat to throbbing as she went out with him and took his arm. All just as it used to be — only that he was now the husband of another. Only!

It was a warm lovely June night, not moonlight,

but bright with its summer's twilight. They went down the park into the road, which they crossed, and soon came to a stile. From that stile led a path through the fields which would pass the back of Justice Hare's. Barbara stopped at it.

"Would you choose the field way, to-night, Barbara? The grass will be damp. And this is the longest way."

"But we shall escape the dust of the road."

"Oh! very well, if you prefer it. It will not make three minutes' difference."

"He is very anxious to get home to *her!*" mentally exclaimed Barbara. "I shall fly out upon him presently, or my heart will burst."

Mr. Carlyle crossed the stile, helped over Barbara, and then gave her his arm again. He had taken her parasol, he had taken it the last night they had walked together; an elegant little parasol, this was, of blue silk and white lace, and he did not switch the hedges with it. That night was present to Barbara now, with all its words and its delusive hopes; terribly present to her was their bitter ending.

There are moments in a woman's life when she is betrayed into forgetting the ordinary rules of conduct and propriety; when she is betrayed into making a scene. It may not often occur; perhaps never to a cold, secretive nature, where impulse, feeling, and above all, temper, are under strict control. Barbara Hare's temper was not under strict control. Her love, her jealousy, the never-dying pain always preying on her heart-strings since the marriage took place, her keen sense of the humiliation which had come home to her, were all rising fiercely, bubbling up with fiery

heat. The evening she had just passed in their company, their evident happiness, the endearments she had seen him lavish upon his wife, were working her up to that state of nervous excitement when temper, tongue, and imagination fly off at a mad tangent. She felt like one isolated for ever, shut out from all that could make life dear; *they* were the world, she was out of it: what was her existence to him? A little self-control and Barbara would not have uttered words that must remain on her mind hereafter like an incubus, dyeing her cheeks red whenever she recalled them. It must be remembered too (if anything in the shape of excuse can be allowed) that she was upon terms of close intimacy with Mr. Carlyle. Independent of her own sentiments for him, they had been reared in free intercourse, the one with the other, almost as brother and sister. Mr. Carlyle walked on, utterly unconscious of the storm that was raging within her; more than that, he was unconscious of having given cause for one; and dashed into topics, indifferent and common-place, in the most provoking manner.

“When does the justice begin haymaking, Barbara?”

There was no reply; Barbara was trying to keep down her emotion. Mr. Carlyle tried again:

“Barbara, I asked you which day your papa cuts his hay?”

Still no reply. Barbara was literally incapable of making one. Her throat was working, the muscles of her mouth began to twitch, and a convulsive sob, or what sounded like it, broke from her. Mr. Carlyle turned his head hastily.

“Barbara! are you ill? What is it?”

On it came, passion, temper, wrongs, and nervousness, all boiling over together. She was in strong hysterics. Mr. Carlyle half carried, half dragged her to the second stile, and placed her against it, his arm supporting her; and an old cow and two calves, wondering what the disturbance could mean at that sober time of night, walked up and stared at them.

Barbara struggled with her emotion, struggled bravely, and the sobs and the hysterical symptoms subsided; not the excitement or the passion. She put away his arm, and stood with her back to the stile, leaning against it. Mr. Carlyle felt inclined to fly to the pond for water, only he had nothing but his hat to get it in.

“Are you better, Barbara? What can have caused all this?”

“What can have caused it!” she burst forth in passionate uncontroul. “*You* can ask me that?”

Mr. Carlyle was struck dumb: but by some inexplicable laws of sympathy, a dim and very unpleasant consciousness of the truth began to steal over him.

“I don’t understand you, Barbara. If I have offended you in any way I am truly sorry.”

“Truly sorry, no doubt! What do you care for me? If I go under the sod to-morrow,” stamping it with her foot, “you have your wife to care for: what am I?”

“Hush!” he interposed, glancing round, more mindful for her than she was for herself.

“Hush, yes! what is my misery to you? I would rather be in my grave, Archibald Carlyle, than endure the life I lead. My pain is greater than I know how to bear.”

“I cannot affect to misunderstand you,” he said, feeling extremely annoyed and vexed. “But, my dear Barbara, I never gave you cause to think that I—that I—cared for you more than I did care.”

“Never gave me cause!” she gasped. “When you have been coming to our house constantly, almost like my shadow; when you gave me this”—dashing open her mantle, and holding up the locket to his view; “when you have been more intimate with me than a brother!”

“Stay, Barbara. There it is—a brother. I have been nothing else: it never occurred to me to be anything else,” he added, in his straightforward truth.

“Ay, as a brother, nothing else!” and her voice rose once more with her excitement; it seemed that she would not long control it. “What cared you for my feelings? what recked you that you gained my love?”

“Barbara, hush!” he implored; “do be calm and reasonable. If I ever gave you cause to think I regarded you with deeper feeling, I can only express to you my deep regret, and assure you it was done unconsciously.”

She was growing calmer. The passion was fading, leaving her face still and white. She lifted it towards Mr. Carlyle.

“If *she* had not come between us, should you have loved me?”

“I don’t know. How can I know? Do I not say to you, Barbara, that I only thought of you as a friend, as a sister? I cannot tell what might have been.”

“I could bear it better, but that it was known,” she murmured. “All West Lynne had coupled us together in their prying gossip, and they have only

pity to cast to me now. I would far rather you had killed me, Archibald."

"I can but express to you my deep regret," he repeated. "I can only hope you will soon forget it all. Let the remembrance of this conversation pass away with to-night; let us still be to each other as friends—as brother and sister. Believe me," he concluded, in a deeper tone, "the confession has not lessened you in my estimation."

He made a movement as though he would get over the stile, but Barbara did not stir: the tears were silently coursing down her pallid face. At that moment there was an interruption.

"Is that you, Miss Barbara?"

Barbara started as if she had been shot. On the other side of the stile stood Wilson, their upper maid. How long might she have been there? She began to explain that Mr. Hare had sent Jasper out, and Mrs. Hare had thought it better to wait no longer for the man's return, so had despatched her, Wilson, for Miss Barbara. Mr. Carlyle got over the stile, and handed over Barbara.

"You need not come any further now," she said to him, in a low tone.

"I shall see you home," was his reply: and he held out his arm. Barbara took it.

They walked on in silence. Arrived at the back gate of the Grove, which gave entrance to the kitchen-garden, Wilson went forward. Mr. Carlyle took both Barbara's hands in his.

"Good night, Barbara. God bless you."

She had had time for reflection; and, the excitement gone, she saw her outbreak in all its shame and

folly. Mr. Carlyle noticed how subdued and white she looked.

“I think I have been mad,” she groaned. “I must have been mad to say what I did. Forget that it was uttered.”

“I told you I would.”

“You will not betray me to—to—your wife?” she panted.

“Barbara!”

“Thank you. Good night.”

But he still retained her hands. “In a short time, Barbara, I trust you will find one more worthy to receive your love than I have been.”

“Never,” she impulsively answered. “I do not love and forget so lightly. In the years to come, in my old age, I shall still be nothing but Barbara Hare.”

Mr. Carlyle walked away in a fit of musing. The revelation had given him pain (and possibly a little flattery), for he was fond of pretty Barbara. Fond in his way; not in hers; not with the sort of fondness he felt for his wife. He asked his conscience whether his manner to her in the past days had been a tinge warmer than we bestow upon a sister, and he decided that it might have been, but that he most certainly had never cast a suspicion to the mischief it was doing.

“I heartily hope she will soon find somebody to her liking, and forget me,” was his concluding thought. “As to living and dying Barbara Hare, that is all moonshine; the sentimental rubbish that girls like to ——”

“Archibald!”

He was passing the very last tree in the park, the nearest to his house, and the interruption came from a dark form standing under it.

“Is it you, my dearest?”

“I came out to meet you. Have you not been very long?”

“I think I have,” he answered, as he drew his wife to his side, and walked on with her. “We met one of the servants at the second stile, but I went all the way.”

“You have been intimate with the Hares?”

“Quite so. Cornelia is related to them.”

“Do you think Barbara pretty?”

“Very.”

“Then — intimate as you were — I wonder you never fell in love with her.”

Mr. Carlyle laughed; a very conscious laugh, considering the recent interview.

“Did you, Archibald?”

The words were spoken in a low tone, almost, or he fancied it, a tone of emotion, and he looked at her in amazement. “Did I what, Isabel?”

“You never loved Barbara Hare?”

“Loved *her!* What is your head running on, Isabel? I never loved but one woman: and that one I made my wife.”

CHAPTER XVII.

DEATH OR LIFE.

ANOTHER year came in. Isabel would have been altogether happy but for Miss Carlyle: that lady still inflicted her presence upon East Lynne, and made the bane of its household. She deferred outwardly to Lady Isabel as the mistress; but the real mistress was herself, Isabel little more than an automaton. Her impulses were checked, her wishes frustrated, her actions tacitly condemned by the imperiously-willed Miss Carlyle: poor Isabel, with her refined manners and her timid and sensitive temperament, had no chance against the strongminded woman, and she was in a state of galling subjection in her own house. Mr. Carlyle suspected it not. At home but morning and evening, and then generally alone with his wife, and becoming gradually more absorbed with the cares of his business, which increased upon him, he saw not that anything was wrong. Once, certain counter-orders of the two ladies had clashed, and caused a commotion in the household: Miss Carlyle immediately withdrew hers, but, in doing so, her peculiarly ungracious manner was more ungracious than ever. Isabel had then hinted to her husband that they might be happier if they lived alone, hinted it with a changing cheek and beating heart, as if she were committing a wrong upon Miss Carlyle. He proposed to

his sister that she should return to her own home; she turned round and accused him of speaking for Isabel. In his truthful, open way, he acknowledged the fact, making no secret of it. Miss Carlyle bounced off and presented herself before Lady Isabel, demanding to know what offence she had committed, and why the house was not large enough for her to have a corner in it. Isabel, shrinkingly tenacious of hurting the feelings, even of an enemy, absolutely made a sort of apology, and afterwards begged her husband to think no more of what she had said. He did not; he was easy and unsuspecting; but had he but gained the faintest inkling of the truth, he would not have lost a moment in emancipating his wife from the thralldom of Miss Corny.

Not a day passed but Miss Carlyle, by dint of hints and innuendoes, contrived to impress upon Lady Isabel the unfortunate blow to his own interests that Mr. Carlyle's marriage had been, the ruinous expense she had entailed upon the family. It struck a complete chill to Isabel's heart, and she became painfully imbued with the incubus she must be to Mr. Carlyle—so far as his pocket was concerned. Lord Mount Severn, with his little son, had paid them a short visit at Christmas, and Isabel had asked him, apparently with unconcern, whether Mr. Carlyle had put himself very much out of the way to marry her; whether it had entailed on him an expense and a style of living he would not otherwise have deemed himself justified in affording. Lord Mount Severn's reply was an unfortunate one: he said, his opinion was that it had, and that Isabel ought to feel grateful to him for his generosity. She sighed as she listened, and from

thenceforth determined to *put up* with Miss Carlyle. That lady contributed a liberal share to the maintenance of the household, and *would* do it, quite as much as would have kept up her establishment at home. She was not at East Lynne to save her own pocket, and there lay a greater difficulty in getting rid of her. Whether she spent her money at East Lynne or not, it would come to the same in the end, for it was known that all she had would go to Archibald.

More timid and sensitive by nature than many would believe or can imagine, reared in seclusion more simply and quietly than falls to the general lot of peers' daughters, and completely inexperienced, Isabel was unfit to battle with the world, totally unfit to battle with Miss Carlyle. The penniless state in which she was left at her father's death; the want of a home, save that accorded her at Castle Marling, even the hundred poundnote left in her hand by Mr. Carlyle, all had imbued her with a deep consciousness of humiliation; and, far from rebelling at or despising the small establishment (comparatively speaking) provided for her by Mr. Carlyle, she felt thankful to him for it. But to be told continually that this was more than he could afford, that she was in fact a blight upon his prospects, was enough to turn her heart to bitterness. Oh, that she had had the courage to speak out openly to her husband! that he might, by a single word of earnest love and assurance, have taken the weight from her heart, and rejoiced it with the truth — that all these miserable complaints were but the phantoms of his narrow-minded sister. But Isabel never did: when Miss Corny lapsed into her grumbling mood, she would hear in silence, or

gently bend her aching forehead in her hands, never retorting.

One day, it was in the month of February, after a tolerably long explosion of wrath on Miss Corny's part, not directed against Isabel, but at something which had gone wrong amongst the servants, silence supervened. Isabel, who was sitting listless and dispirited, suddenly broke it, speaking more to herself than to Miss Carlyle.

"I wish evening was come!"

"Why do you wish that?"

"Because Archibald would be at home."

Miss Carlyle gave an unsatisfactory grunt. "You seem tired, Lady Isabel."

"I am very tired."

"I don't wonder at it, I should be tired to death if I sat doing nothing all day. Indeed, I think I should soon drop into my grave."

"There's nothing to do," returned Lady Isabel.

"There's always something to do when people like to look for it. You might help me with these new table napkins, rather than do nothing."

"I make table napkins!" exclaimed Lady Isabel.

"You might do a worse thing, ma'am," snapped Miss Corny.

"I don't understand that sort of work," said Isabel gently.

"Neither does anybody else till they try. For my part I'd rather set on and make or mend shoes, than I'd sit with my hands before me. It's a sinful waste of time."

"I never feel very well now," answered poor Isabel, in an apologetic tone. "I am not equal to exertion."

“Then I’d go out for a drive, and take the air. Moping in-doors all day does invalids no good.”

“But, since the ponies started last week and alarmed me, Archibald will not allow me to go out, unless he drives me himself.”

“There’s nothing the matter with John’s driving,” returned Miss Corny, in her spirit of contradiction. “And in the matter of experience he has had quite as much as your husband, ma’am.”

“John was driving when the ponies took fright.”

“If ponies take fright once, it’s no reason that they should a second time. Ring the bell, and order John to bring the carriage round: it is what I should advise.”

Isabel shook her head decisively. “No: Archibald bade me not go out without him, unless it was in the close carriage. He is so careful of me just now; and he knows that I should not be alarmed with him, if the ponies did start, like I should with a servant.”

“It occurs to me that you have grown a little fanciful of late, Lady Isabel.”

“I suppose I have,” was the meek answer, “I shall be better when baby is born: and I shall never feel at a loss then, I shall have plenty to do.”

“So will most of us I expect,” returned Miss Corny, with a groan. “Why, what on earth—why, if I don’t believe here’s Archibald! What brings him home at this time of day?”

“Archibald!” Out she flew in her glad surprise, meeting him in the hall, and falling upon him in her delight. “Oh, Archibald, my darling, it is as if the sun had shone! What have you come home for?”

“To drive you out, love,” he whispered, as he took her back with him and rang the bell.

“You never told me this morning.”

“Because I was not sure of being able to come. Peter, let the pony-carriage be brought round without delay. I am waiting for it.”

“Why, where are you going with the pony-carriage?” exclaimed Miss Carlyle, as Isabel left the room to dress herself.

“Only for a drive.”

“A drive!” repeated Miss Corny, looking at him in bewilderment.

“To take Isabel for one. I shall not trust her to John again, yet awhile.”

“*That’s* the way to get on with your business!” retorted Miss Corny, when she could find temper to speak. “Deserting the office in the middle of the day!”

“Isabel’s health is of more consequence, just now, than business,” he returned, good-humouredly. “And you really speak, Cornelia, as if I had neither Dill to replace me, nor plenty of clerks under him.”

“John is a better driver than you are.”

“He is as good a one. But that is not the question.”

Isabel came down, looking radiant, all her listlessness gone. Mr. Carlyle placed her in the carriage, and drove away, Miss Corny gazing after them with an expression of face enough to turn a whole dairy of milk sour.

There were many such little episodes as these, so you need not wonder that Isabel was not altogether happy. But never, before Mr. Carlyle, was the lady’s

temper vented upon her ; plenty fell to his own share when he and his sister were alone ; and he had been so accustomed to the sort of thing all his life, had got so used to it, that it made no impression : he never dreamt that Isabel also received her portion.

It was a morning early in April. Joyce sat, in its grey dawn, over a large fire in the dressing-room of Lady Isabel Carlyle, her hands clasped to pain, and the tears coursing down her cheeks. Joyce was frightened : she had had some experience in illness ; but illness of this nature she had never witnessed, and she was fervently hoping never to witness it again. In the adjoining room was Lady Isabel, lying between life and death.

The door from the corridor softly opened, and Miss Carlyle entered. She had probably never walked with so gentle a step in all her life, and she had a thick wadded mantle over her head and ears. She sat down in a chair quite meekly, and Joyce saw that her face looked grey as the early morning.

“Joyce,” whispered she, “is there danger?”

“Oh, ma’am, I trust not ! But it’s hard to witness, and it must be awful to bear.”

“It is our common curse, Joyce. You and I may congratulate ourselves that we have not chosen to encounter it. Joyce,” she added, after a pause, “I trust there’s no danger : I should not like her to die.”

Miss Carlyle spoke in a low, dread tone. Was she fearing that if her poor young sister-in-law did die, a weight would rest on her conscience for all time?—a heavy, ever-present weight, whispering that she might have rendered her short year of marriage more happy, had she chosen ; and that she had not so

chosen, but had deliberately steeled every crevice of her heart against her? Very probably: she looked anxious and apprehensive in the dusky twilight.

“If there’s danger, Joyce—”

“Why do you think there is danger, ma’am?” interrupted Joyce. “Are other people not as ill as this?”

“It is to be hoped they are not,” rejoined Miss Carlyle. “And why is the express gone to Lynneborough for Dr. Martin?”

Up started Joyce, awestruck. “An express for Dr. Martin! Oh, ma’am! Who sent it? When did it go?”

“All I know is, that it’s gone. Mr. Wainwright went to your master, and he came out of his room and sent John galloping to the telegraph-office at West Lynne: where could your ears have been, not to hear the horse tearing off? *I* heard it, I know that, and a nice fright it put me in. I went to Mr. Carlyle’s room to ask what was amiss, and he said he did not know himself; nothing, he hoped. And then he shut his door again in my face, instead of stopping to speak to me as any other Christian would.”

Joyce did not answer: she was faint with apprehension; and there was a silence, broken only by the sounds from the next room. Miss Carlyle rose, and a fanciful person might have thought she was shivering.

“I can’t stand this, Joyce; I shall go. If they want coffee, or anything, it can be sent in. Ask.”

“I will presently; in a few minutes,” answered Joyce, with a real shiver. “You are not going in, are you, ma’am?” she uttered in apprehension, as Miss Carlyle began to steal on tiptoe to the inner

door, and Joyce had a lively consciousness that her sight would not be an agreeable one to Lady Isabel. "They want the room free: they sent me out."

"No," answered Miss Corny. "I could do no good; and those, who cannot, are better away."

"Just what Mr. Wainwright said, when he dismissed me," murmured Joyce. And Miss Carlyle finally passed into the corridor and withdrew.

Joyce sat on: the time seemed to her interminable. And then she heard the arrival of Dr. Martin; heard him go into the next room. By-and-by Mr. Wainwright came out of it, into the room where Joyce was sitting. Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and before she could bring out the ominous words, "Is there danger?" he had passed through it.

Mr. Wainwright was on his way to the apartment where he expected to find Mr. Carlyle. The latter was pacing it: he had so paced it all the night. His pale face flushed as the surgeon entered.

"You have little mercy on my suspense, Wainwright. Dr. Martin has been here these twenty minutes. What does he say?"

"Well, he cannot say any more than I did. The symptoms are critical, but he hopes she will do well. There's nothing for it but patience."

Mr. Carlyle resumed his weary walk.

"I come now to suggest that you should send for Little. In these protracted cases—"

The speech was interrupted by a cry from Mr. Carlyle, half horror, half despair. For the Reverend Mr. Little was the incumbent of St. Jude's, and his apprehensions had flown — he hardly knew to what they had not flown.

“Not for your wife?” hastily rejoined the surgeon. “I spoke for the child. Should it not live, it may be satisfactory to you and Lady Isabel to know that it was baptized.”

“I thank you, I thank you,” said Mr. Carlyle, grasping his hand in his inexpressible relief. “Little shall be sent for.”

“You jumped to the conclusion that your wife’s soul was flitting. Please God, she may yet live to bear you other children, if this one should die.”

“Please God!” was the inward aspiration of Mr. Carlyle.

“Carlyle,” added the surgeon, in a musing sort of tone, as he laid his hand on Mr. Carlyle’s shoulder, which his own head scarcely reached, “I am sometimes at death-beds where the clergyman is sent for, in this desperate need, to the fleeting spirit: and I am tempted to ask myself what good another man, priest though he be, can do at the twelfth hour, where the accounts have not been made up previously?”

It was hard upon mid-day. The Reverend Mr. Little, Mr. Carlyle, and Miss Carlyle were gathered in the dressing-room, round a table on which stood a rich china bowl, containing water for the baptism. Joyce, her pale face working with emotion, came into the room, carrying what looked like a bundle of flannel. Little cared Mr. Carlyle for that bundle, in comparison with his care for his wife.

“Joyce,” he whispered, “is all well still?”

“I believe so, sir.”

The service commenced. The clergyman took the child. “What name?” he asked.

Mr. Carlyle had never thought about the name. But he replied pretty promptly,

“William.” For he knew it was the name revered and loved by Lady Isabel.

The minister dipped his fingers in the water. Joyce interrupted, in much confusion, looking at her master.

“It is a little girl, sir. I beg your pardon, I’m sure I thought I had said so: but I am flurried as I never was before.”

There was a pause, and then the minister spoke again. “Name this child.”

“Isabel Lucy,” said Mr. Carlyle. Upon which a strange sort of resentful sniff was heard from Miss Corny. She had probably thought to hear him mention her own; but he had named it after his wife and his mother.

Mr. Carlyle was not allowed to see his wife until the evening. His eyelashes glistened as he looked down at her. She detected his emotion, and a faint smile parted her lips.

“I fear I bore it badly, Archibald; but let us be thankful that it is over. How thankful, none can know, save those who have gone through it.”

“I think they can,” he murmured. “I never knew what thankfulness was until this day.”

“That the baby is safe?”

“That *you* are safe, my darling; safe and spared to me. Isabel,” he whispered, hiding his face upon hers, “I never until to-day knew what prayer was—the prayer of a heart in its sore need.”

“Have you written to Lord Mount Severn?” she asked, after a while.

“This afternoon,” he replied.

“Why did you give baby my name—Isabel?”

“Do you think I could have given it a prettier one? I don’t.”

“Why do you not bring a chair and sit down by me?”

He smiled and shook his head. “I wish I might. But they limited my stay with you to four minutes; and Wainwright has posted himself outside the door with his watch in his hand.”

Quite true. There stood the careful surgeon: and the short interview was over almost as soon as it had begun.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILSON'S TONGUE.

THE baby lived, and appeared likely to live, and of course the next thing was to look out for a maid for it. Isabel did not get strong very quickly; fever and weakness had a struggle with each other and with her. One day when she was dressed and sitting in her easy chair, Miss Carlyle entered.

“Of all the servants in the neighbourhood, who should you suppose is come up after the place of nurse?” she said to Lady Isabel.

“Indeed I cannot guess.”

“Why, Wilson, Mrs. Hare’s maid. Three years and five months she has been with them, and now leaves in consequence of a quarrel with Barbara. Will you see her?”

“Is she likely to suit? Is she a good servant?”

“She’s not a bad servant, as servants go,” responded Miss Carlyle. “She’s steady and respectable; but she has got a tongue as long as from here to Lynneborough.”

“That won’t hurt the baby,” said Lady Isabel. “But if she has lived as lady’s-maid, she probably does not understand the care of infants.”

“Yes, she does. She was upper nurse at Squire Pinner’s, before going to Mrs. Hare’s. She lived there five years.”

“I will see her,” said Lady Isabel.

Miss Carlyle left the room to send the servant in, but came back first alone.

“Mind, Lady Isabel, don’t you engage her. If she is likely to suit you, let her come again for the answer, and meanwhile I will go down to Mrs. Hare’s and learn the ins and outs of her leaving. It is all very plausible for her to put it upon Barbara, but that is only one side of the question. Before engaging her, it may be well to hear the other.”

Of course this was but right. Isabel acquiesced, and the servant was introduced: a tall, pleasant-looking woman, with black eyes. Lady Isabel inquired why she was leaving Mrs. Hare’s.

“My lady, it is through Miss Barbara’s temper. Latterly—oh, for this year past—nothing has pleased her; she has grown nearly as imperious as the justice himself. I have threatened many times to leave, and last evening we came to another outbreak, and I left this morning.”

“Left entirely?”

“Yes, my lady. Miss Barbara provoked me so, that I said last night I would leave as soon as breakfast was over. And I did so. I should be very glad to take your situation, my lady, if you would please to try me.”

“You have been the upper maid at Mrs. Hare’s?”

“Oh yes, my lady.”

“Then possibly this situation might not suit you so well as you imagine. Joyce is the upper servant here, and you would, in a manner, be under her. I have great confidence in Joyce; and in case of my

illness or absence, Joyce would superintend the nursery."

"I should not mind that," was the applicant's answer. "We all like Joyce, my lady."

A few more questions, and then the girl was told to come again in the evening for her answer. Miss Carlyle went to the Grove for the "inns and outs" of the affair, when Mrs. Hare frankly stated that she had nothing to urge against Wilson, save her hasty manner of leaving, of which she believed the chief blame to be due to Barbara. Wilson was therefore engaged, and was to enter upon her new service the following morning.

In the afternoon succeeding to it, Isabel was lying on the sofa in her bed-room, asleep, as was supposed. In point of fact, she was in that state, half sleep, half wakeful delirium, which those who suffer from weakness and fever know only too well. Suddenly she was aroused from it by hearing her own name mentioned in the adjoining room, where sat Joyce and Wilson, the latter holding the sleeping infant on her knee, the former sewing, the door between the rooms being ajar.

"How ill she looks," observed Wilson.

"Who?" asked Joyce.

"Her ladyship. She looks as if she'd never get over it."

"She is getting over it quickly, now," returned Joyce. "If you had seen her a week ago, you would not say she was looking ill now — speaking in comparison."

"My goodness! would not somebody's hopes be up again if anything should happen?"

“Nonsense!” crossly returned Joyce.

“You may cry out ‘nonsense’ for ever, Joyce, but they would,” went on Wilson. “And she would snap him up, to a dead certainty; she’d never let him escape her a second time. She is as much in love with him as she ever was.”

“It was all talk and fancy,” said Joyce. “West Lynne must be busy. Mr. Carlyle never cared for her.”

“That’s more than you know. I have seen a little, Joyce; I have seen him kiss her.”

“A pack of rubbish!” remarked Joyce. “That tells nothing.”

“I don’t say it does: he gave her that locket and chain she wears.”

“Who wears?” retorted Joyce, determined not graciously to countenance the subject. “I don’t want to hear anything about it.”

“‘Who,’ now! Why, Miss Barbara. She has hardly had it off her neck since: my belief is, she wears it in her sleep.”

“More simpleton she!” echoed Joyce.

“The night before he left West Lynne to marry Lady Isabel—and didn’t the news come upon us like a thunderclap!—Miss Barbara had been at Miss Carlyle’s and he brought her home. A lovely night it was, the moon rising, and nearly as light as day. He somehow broke her parasol in coming home, and when they got to our gate there was a love scene.”

“Were you a third in it?” sarcastically demanded Joyce.

“Yes—without meaning to be. That skinflint

old justice won't allow followers in-doors, and there's no seeing anybody on the sly in that conspicuous back kitchen-garden, when there's nothing higher than a cauliflower, so the only chance we have is to get half an hour's chat amidst the grove trees in the front, if a friend comes up. I was expecting somebody that evening—a horrid faithless fellow he turned out, and went, three months after, and married the barmaid at the Buck's Head!—and I was in the trees waiting for him. Up came Mr. Carlyle and Miss Barbara. She wanted him to go in, but he would not, and they stood there. Something was said about the locket, and about his giving her a piece of his hair to put it in: I could not catch the words distinctly, and I did not dare to stir nearer, for fear of their hearing me. It was a regular love scene; I could hear enough for that. If ever anybody thought to be Mrs. Carlyle, Barbara Hare did that night."

"Why, you great gaby! You have just said it was the night before he went to be married!"

"I don't care; she did. After he was gone, I saw her lift up her hands and her face in ecstasy, and say he could never know how much she loved him until she was his wife. Be you very sure, Joyce, many a love passage had passed between them two: but I suppose when my lady was thrown in his way he couldn't resist her rank and her beauty, and the old love was cast over. It is in the nature of man to be fickle, especially those that can boast of their own good looks, like Mr. Carlyle."

"Mr. Carlyle's not fickle."

"I can tell you some more yet. Two or three

days after that, Miss Corny came up to our house with the news of his marriage. I was in mistress's bed-room, and they were in the room underneath, the windows open, and I heard Miss Corny tell the tale, for I was leaning out. Up came Miss Barbara upon an excuse and flew into her room, and I went into the corridor. A few moments, and I heard a noise; it was a sort of wail, or groan, and I opened the door softly, fearing she might be fainting. Joyce, if my heart never ached for anybody before, it ached then. She was lying on the floor, her hands writhed together, and her poor face all white, like one in mortal agony. I'd have given a quarter's wages to be able to say a word of comfort to her; but I didn't dare interfere with such sorrow as that. I came out again and shut the door without her seeing me."

"How thoroughly stupid she must have been!" uttered Joyce; "to go caring for one who did not care for her."

"I tell you, Joyce, you don't know that he did not care. You are as obstinate as the justice! And I wish to goodness you wouldn't interrupt me. They came up here to pay the wedding visit, master, mistress, and she; came in state in the grand chariot, with the coachman and Jasper; if you have got any memory at all, you can't fail to recollect it. Miss Barbara remained behind at East Lynne to spend the rest of the day."

"I remember it."

"I was sent to attend her home in the evening, Jasper being out. I came the field way; for the dust by the road was enough to smother one, and at the last stile but one, what do you think I came upon?"

Joyce lifted her eyes. "A snake, perhaps."

"I came upon Miss Barbara and Mr. Carlyle. What had passed, nobody knows but themselves. She was leaning her back against the stile, crying; sobs breaking from her, like one might expect to hear from a breaking heart. It seemed as if she had been reproaching him, as if some explanation had passed, and I heard him say that from henceforth they could only be brother and sister. I spoke soon, for fear they should see me, and Mr. Carlyle got over the stile. Miss Barbara said to him that he need not come any farther, but he just held out his arm and came with her to our back gate. I went on then to open the door, and I saw him with his head bent down to her, and her two hands held in his. We don't know how it was between them, I tell you."

"At any rate she is a downright fool to suffer herself to love him still!" uttered Joyce, indignantly.

"So she is, but she does do it. She'll often steal out to the gate about the time she knows he'll be passing, and watch him by, not letting him see her. It is nothing but her unhappiness, her jealousy of Lady Isabel, that makes her cross: I assure you, Joyce, in this past year she has so changed that she's not like the same person. If Mr. Carlyle should ever get tired of my lady, and——"

"Wilson!" harshly interrupted Joyce. "Have the goodness to recollect yourself."

"What have I said now? Nothing but truth. Men are shamefully fickle, husbands worse than sweethearts, and I'm sure I'm not thinking of anything wrong. But to go back to the argument that we began with — I say that if anything happened to

my lady, Miss Barbara, as sure as fate, would step into her shoes."

"Nothing is going to happen to her," returned Joyce, with composure.

"I hope it is not, now or later — for the sake of this dear little innocent thing upon my lap," went on the undaunted Wilson. "She would not make a very kind stepmother, for it is certain that where the first wife has been hated, her children won't be loved. She would turn Mr. Carlyle against them—"

"I tell you what it is, Wilson," interrupted Joyce, in a firm, unmistakable tone, "if you think to pursue these sort of topics at East Lynne, I shall inform my lady that you are unsuitable for the situation."

"I dare say!"

"And you know that when I make up my mind to a thing, I do it," continued Joyce. "Miss Carlyle may well say you have the longest tongue in West Lynne; but you might have the grace to know that this subject is one more unsuitable to it than another, whether you are eating Mr. Hare's bread, or whether you are eating Mr. Carlyle's. Another word, Wilson; it appears to me that you have carried on a prying system in Mrs. Hare's house; do not attempt such a thing in this."

"You were always one of the straight-laced sort, Joyce," cried Wilson, laughing good-humouredly. "But now that I have had my say out, I shall stop; and you need not fear I should be such a simpleton as to go prattling of this kind of thing to the servants."

Now just fancy this conversation penetrating to Lady Isabel! She heard it, every word. It is all

very well to oppose the argument, "Who attends to the gossip of servants?" Let me tell you it depends upon what the subject may be, whether the gossip is attended to or not. It might not, and indeed would not, have made so great an impression upon her had she been in strong health, but she was weak, feverish, in a state of partial delirium; and she hastily took up the idea that Archibald Carlyle had never loved her, that he had admired her and made her his wife in his ambition, but that his heart had been given to Barbara Hare.

A pretty state of excitement she worked herself into as she lay there; jealousy and fever, ay, and love too, playing pranks with her brain. It was near the dinner hour, and when Mr. Carlyle entered, he was startled to see her: her pallid cheeks were burning with a red hectic, and her eyes glistened with fever.

"Isabel! you are worse!" he uttered, approaching her with a quick step.

She partially rose from the sofa, and clasped hold of him in her emotion. "Oh, Archibald! Archibald!" she uttered, "don't marry her! I could not rest in my grave."

Mr. Carlyle, in his puzzled astonishment, believed her to be labouring under some temporary hallucination, the result of weakness. He set himself to soothe her, but it seemed that she could not be soothed. She burst into a storm of tears, and began again: wild words.

"She would ill-treat my child; she would draw your love from it, and from my memory. Archibald, you must not marry her."

"You must be speaking from the influence of a

dream, Isabel," he soothingly said; "you have been asleep, and are not yet awake. Be still, and recollection will return to you. There, love; rest upon me."

"To think of her as your wife brings pain enough to kill me," she continued to reiterate. "Promise me that you will not marry her: Archibald, promise it!"

"I will promise you anything in reason," he replied, bewildered with her words, "but I do not know what you mean. There is no possibility of my marrying any one, Isabel: you are my wife."

"But if I die? I may; you know I may; and many think I shall—do not let her usurp my place."

"Indeed she shall not—whichever you may be talking of. What have you been dreaming? Who is it that is troubling your mind?"

"Archibald, do you need to ask? Did you love no one before you married me? Perhaps you have loved her since—perhaps you love her still?"

Mr. Carlyle began to discern "method in her madness." He changed his cheering tone to one of grave earnestness. "Of whom do you speak, Isabel?"

"Of Barbara Hare."

He knitted his brow; he was both annoyed and vexed. Whatever had put this bygone nonsense into his wife's head? He quitted the sofa, where he had been supporting her, and stood upright before her, calm, dignified, almost solemn in his seriousness.

"Isabel, what notion you can possibly have picked up about myself and Barbara Hare, I am unable to conceive. I never loved Barbara Hare; I never entertained the faintest shadow of love for her; either before my marriage or since. You must tell me what has given rise to this idea in your mind."

“But she loved you.”

A moment's hesitation; for of course Mr. Carlyle was conscious she had; but, taking all the circumstances into consideration, more especially, how he learnt the fact, he could not in honour acknowledge it even to his wife. “If it was so, Isabel, she was more reprehensibly foolish than I should have given Barbara's good sense credit for: a woman may almost as well lose herself, as suffer herself to love, unsought. If she did give her love to me, I can only say I was entirely unconscious of it. Believe me, you have as much cause to be jealous of Cornelia, as you have of Barbara Hare.”

Isabel sighed: it was a sigh of relief, and her breath grew calmer. She felt inexpressibly reassured. Mr. Carlyle bent his head, and spoke in a tender, though a pained tone.

“I had not thought that the past year was quite thrown away. What proof can a man give of true and earnest love, that I have not given to you?”

She looked up, her eyelashes wet with contrition, took his hand and held it between hers. “Don't be angry with me, Archibald: the trouble and the doubt would not have arisen had I cared for you less.”

He smiled again, his own fond smile, and bent lower. “And now tell me what put this into your brain?”

An impulse rose within her that she would tell him all, the few words dropped by Susan and Joyce twelve months before, the conversation she had just overheard; but, in that moment of renewed confidence, it appeared to her that she must have been very foolish to attach importance to it — that a sort of humilia-

tion, in listening to the converse of servants, was reflected on her; and she remained silent.

“Has any one been striving to bias your mind against me?” he resumed.

“Archibald! no. Would any one dare to do it?”

“Then did you dream?—and could not forget it on awaking?”

“I do sometimes dream strange things, especially in my feverish afternoon sleeps. I think I am a little delirious at times, Archibald, and do not know what is real, and what fancy.”

The answer, while expressing correctly her physical state, was an evasive one, but not evasively did it fall upon the ear of Mr. Carlyle. It presented to him the only probable solution of the enigma, and he never questioned it.

“Don’t have any more of these dreams, if you can help it,” he said. “Regard them for what they are—illusions—neither pleasant for you, nor fair to me. I am bound to you by fond ties as well as by legal ones, remember, Isabel; and it is out of Barbara Hare’s power to step between us.”

There never was a passion in this world, there never will be one, so fantastic, so delusive, so powerful as jealousy. Mr. Carlyle dismissed the episode from his thoughts; he believed his wife’s emotion to have arisen simply from a feverish dream, and never supposed but that, with the dream, its recollection would pass away from her. Not so. Implicitly relying upon her husband’s words at the moment, feeling quite ashamed at her own suspicion, Lady Isabel afterwards suffered the unhappy fear to regain its influence: the ill-starred revelations of Wilson reasserted their power, over-

mastering the denial of Mr. Carlyle. Shakspeare calls jealousy yellow and green : I think it may be called black and white ; for it most assuredly views white as black, and black as white. The most fanciful surmises wear the aspect of truth, the greatest improbabilities appear as consistent realities. Isabel said not another word to her husband ; and the feeling— you will understand this, if you have ever been foolish enough to sun yourself in its delights—only caused her to grow more attached to him, to be more eager for his love. But certain it is, that Barbara Hare dwelt on her heart like an incubus.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN THORN AT WEST LYNNE.

“BARBARA, how fine the day seems!”

“It is a beautiful day, mamma.”

“I think I should be all the better for going out.”

“I am sure you would, mamma,” was Barbara’s answer. “If you went out more, you would find the benefit: every fine day you ought to do so.”

“But I have not spirits for it, dear,” sighed Mrs. Hare. “The first bright days of spring, the first warm days of summer, always have an exhilarating effect upon me. I think I must go out to day. There’s your papa in the garden: ask him if it will be convenient.”

Barbara was darting off, but arrested her steps for a moment. “Mamma, you have been talking these three weeks of buying the new dresses and other things that we require: why not do so to day?”

“Well—I don’t know,” hesitated Mrs. Hare, in the irresolution natural to her.

“Yes, yes, you will not find a better opportunity.” And away went Barbara.

Justice Hare was in his front garden, imperiously pointing out to his servant, Benjamin, something which had not been done according to his directions. Benjamin fulfilled the duties of coachman and groom at the Grove, filling up his spare time with gardening. He was a married man, and slept at home, though he

took his meals in the house ; coming to it early, and going away late. The justice was in his dressing-gown and wig, and was working himself into a passion when Barbara approached. She was the only one of the three children not afraid of her father : Barbara stood in awe of him, but not so utterly as the others.

“ Papa.”

“ What do you want ?” said the justice, turning round his portly person.

“ Mamma thinks that it would do her good to go out this fine day. Can we have the carriage ?”

The justice paused before he answered, and looked up at the sky. “ Where does she want to be off to ?”

“ We wish to do some shopping, please papa. Only in West Lynne,” hastily added Barbara, seeing a cloud rise on the paternal countenance. “ Not at Lynneborough.”

“ And your mamma thinks I am going to drive her !” cried Justice Hare. “ I’d see the shops further, first. The last time you and she went into one, you kept me waiting an hour and a half.”

“ Benjamin can drive us, papa.”

Mr. Hare strode pompously across the grass to the dining-room window, threw it up, and addressed his wife. Barbara drew close, and stood timidly at his side.

“ Do you say you want to go shopping to-day, Anne ?”

“ Not particularly to-day,” was the meek answer, meekly delivered ; “ any day will do for it. Did you think of using the carriage yourself ?”

“ I don’t know,” replied the justice. The fact is, he had not thought about it at all ; but he liked

every scheme, every movement to be proposed by himself, to be regulated by his own will.

“The day is so fine that I think I should like to take advantage of it,” said Mrs. Hare. “And Barbara must have her summer dresses bought.”

“She’s always having dresses bought,” growled the justice.

“Oh, papa! I—”

“Silence, young lady, you have twice as many as you need.”

“Perhaps, Richard, I might manage to walk in and back, without being much fatigued, if you cannot spare me the carriage,” said Mrs. Hare, gently.

“And have you laid up for a week! What next! The idea of your walking into West Lynne and back! that would be a piece of folly.”

The justice shut down the window, and strode back to Benjamin, leaving Mrs. Hare and Barbara at an uncertainty: were they to go, or were they not? Barbara went in doors to her mother.

“Barbara, dear, I wonder where your papa was thinking of going in the carriage?”

“I don’t believe he was going anywhere,” replied independent Miss Barbara.

“Oh, child!”

“Well, I don’t. Only he always must oppose everybody. Mamma, I do think you might walk in, and we could come back in one of Coke’s flies.”

Mrs. Hare shook her head. “I have no doubt I could walk quite well one way, Barbara: but I should not think of doing so, unless your papa approved.”

Barbara was looking from the window. She saw Benjamin gather up his garden tools and put them

away. He then crossed to the narrow side-path which led down by the house to the back, where the stables were situated. Barbara ran through the hall and intercepted him.

“Has papa given any orders about the carriage, Benjamin?”

“Yes, miss. I am to drive you and mistress into West Lynne. I was to get ready directly, he said.”

Back waltzed Barbara. “Mamma, it is all right: Benjamin is gone to get the carriage ready. You would like luncheon before you go? I will order in the tray.”

“Anything you please, my dear,” said the sweet-tempered, gentle woman. “I don’t know why, but I feel glad to go out to-day: perhaps, because it is lovely.”

Benjamin made ready his carriage and himself, drove out of the yard at the back, and brought the carriage round to the front gate. As Mrs. Hare and Barbara went down the path, Mr. Hare was in the garden still.

“Thank you, Richard,” she said, as she passed him, a loving smile lighting her delicate face.

“Mind you are home by the dinner hour, and don’t let Barbara spend too much money,” cried the justice, in return. But he was not polite enough to go and hand them in.

The carriage—or phaeton, as it was often called—was a somewhat old-fashioned concern, as many country things are apt to be. A small box in front for the driver, and a wide seat with a head behind, accommodating Barbara well between them when Mr. and Mrs. Hare both sat in it. Mr. Hare, however, generally drove, himself, taking no servant. The head

was down to-day, but it was found convenient in rainy weather ; and there were a double set of poles, so that one horse or a pair might be driven in it. Very rarely, never unless they were going a distance, was a pair used : the long-tailed, black coach horses were taken out in turn, for the justice kept but that pair ; and a saddle-horse for himself.

Benjamin drew the rug carefully over his mistress's knees—the servants did not like Mr. Hare, but would have laid down their lives for her — ascended to his box, and drove them to their destination, the linen-draper's. It was an excellent shop, situated a little beyond the office of Mr. Carlyle, and Mrs. Hare and Barbara were soon engaged in that occupation, said to possess for all women a fascination. They had been deep in it about an hour, when Mrs. Hare discovered that her bag was missing.

“I must have left it in the carriage, Barbara. Go and bring it, will you, my dear? The pattern of that silk is in it.”

Barbara went out. The carriage and Benjamin and the sleek old horse were all waiting drowsily together. Barbara could not see the bag, and she appealed to the servant.

“Find mamma's bag, Benjamin. It must be somewhere in the carriage.”

Benjamin got off his box, and began to search. Barbara waited, gazing listlessly down the street. The sun was shining brilliantly, and its rays fell upon the large cable chain of a gentleman, who was sauntering idly up the pavement, making its gold links and its drooping seal and key glitter, as they crossed his waistcoat. It shone also upon the enamelled gold studs of his

shirt front, making *them* glitter; and as he suddenly raised his ungloved hand, a white hand, to stroke his moustache — by which action you may know a vain man—a diamond ring gleamed with a light that was positively dazzling. Involuntarily Barbara thought of the description her brother Richard had given of certain dazzling jewels worn by another.

She watched him advance. He was a handsome man of, perhaps, seven or eight-and-twenty, tall, slender, and well made, his eyes and hair black. A very pleasant expression sat upon his countenance, and on the left hand he wore a light buff kid glove, and was swinging its fellow by the fingers, apparently in deep thought, as he softly whistled to himself. But for the great light cast at that moment by the sun, Barbara might not have noticed the jewellery, or connected it in her mind with the other jewellery in that unhappy secret.

“Halloa! Thorn, is that you? Just step over here!”

The speaker was Otway Bethel, who was on the opposite side of the street; the spoken-to, the gentleman with the jewellery. But the latter was in a brown study, and did not hear. Bethel called out again, louder.

“Captain Thorn!”

That was heard. Captain Thorn nodded, and turned short off across the street. Barbara stood like one in a dream, her brain, her mind, her fancy all a confused mass together.

“Here’s the bag, Miss Barbara. It had got among the folds of the rug.”

Benjamin held it out to her, but she took no notice:

she was unconscious of all external things, save one. That she beheld the real murderer of Hallijohn, she entertained no manner of doubt. In every particular he tallied with the description given by Richard : tall, dark, vain, handsome, delicate hands, jewellery, and— Captain Thorn ! Barbara's cheeks grew white, and her heart turned sick.

“ The bag, Miss Barbara.”

But Barbara was gone, leaving Benjamin and the bag. She had caught sight of Mr. Wainwright the surgeon at a little distance, and sped towards him.

“ Mr. Wainwright,” began she, forgetting ceremony in her agitation, “ you see that gentleman, talking to Otway Bethel. Who is he ?”

Mr. Wainwright had to put his glasses across the bridge of his nose before he could answer, for he was short-sighted. “ That ? Oh, it is a Captain Thorn. He is visiting the Herberts, I believe.”

“ Where does he come from ? Where does he live ?” reiterated Barbara, in her eagerness.

“ I don't know anything about him. I saw him this morning with young Smith, and he told me he was a friend of the Herberts. You are not looking well, Miss Barbara.”

She made no answer. Captain Thorn and Mr. Bethel came walking down the street, and the latter saluted her, but she was too much confused to respond to it. Mr. Wainwright then wished her good day, and Barbara walked slowly back. Mrs. Hare was appearing at the shop door.

“ My dear, how long you are ! Cannot the bag be found ?”

“ I went to speak to Mr. Wainwright,” answered

Barbara, mechanically taking the bag from Benjamin and giving it to her mother, her whole heart and eyes still absorbed with that one object moving away in the distance.

“You look pale, child. Are you well?”

“Oh yes, quite. Let us get our shopping over, mamma.”

She moved on to their places at the counter as she spoke, eager to “get it over” and be at home, that she might have time for thought. Mrs. Hare wondered what had come to her; the pleasant interest, displayed in their purchases previously, was now gone; and she sat inattentive and absorbed.

“Now, my dear, it is only waiting for you to choose. Which of the two silks will you have?”

“Either. Any. Take which you like, mamma.”

“Barbara, what *has* come to you?”

“I believe I am tired,” said Barbara, with a forced laugh, as she compelled herself to pay some sort of attention. “I don’t like the green: I will take the other.”

They arrived at home. Barbara was five minutes alone in her chamber, before the dinner was on the table. All the conclusion she could come to, was, that *she* could do nothing, save tell the facts to Archibald Carlyle.

How could she contrive to see him? The business might admit of no delay. She supposed she must go to East Lynne that evening; but where would be her excuse for it at home? Puzzling over it, she went down to dinner. During the meal, Mrs. Hare began talking of some silk she had purchased for a mantle. She should have it made like Miss Carlyle’s new

one: when Miss Carlyle was at the Grove the other day, about Wilson's character, she had offered her the pattern, and she, Mrs. Hare, would send one of the servants up for it after dinner.

"Oh, mamma, let me go!" burst forth Barbara. She spoke so vehemently, that the justice paused in his carving, and demanded what ailed her. Barbara made some timid excuse.

"Her eagerness is natural, Richard," smiled Mrs. Hare. "Barbara thinks she shall get a peep at the baby, I expect. All young folks are fond of babies."

Barbara's face flushed crimson: but she did not contradict the opinion. She could not eat her dinner; she was too full of poor Richard: she played with it and then sent away her plate, nearly untouched.

"That's through the finery she has been buying," pronounced Justice Hare. "Her head is stuffed up with it."

No opposition was offered to Barbara's going to East Lynne. She reached it just as their dinner was over. It was for Miss Carlyle she asked.

"Miss Carlyle is not at home, Miss. She is spending the day out; and my lady does not receive visitors yet."

It was a sort of checkmate. Barbara was compelled to say she would see Mr. Carlyle. Peter ushered her into the drawing-room, and Mr. Carlyle came to her.

"I am so very sorry to disturb you; to have asked for you," began Barbara, with a burning face, for a certain evening interview of hers with him, twelve months before, was disagreeably present to her. Never, since that evening of agitation, had Barbara suffered herself to betray emotion to Mr. Carlyle: her man-

ners to him had been calm, courteous, and indifferent. And she now more frequently called him "Mr. Carlyle" than "Archibald."

"Take a seat, take a seat, Barbara."

"I asked for Miss Carlyle," she continued, "for mamma is in want of a pattern that she promised to lend her; but, in point of fact, it was you I wished to see. You remember the Lieutenant Thorn, whom Richard spoke of as being the real criminal?"

"Yes."

"I think he is at West Lynne."

Mr. Carlyle was aroused to eager interest. "He! That same Thorn?"

"It can be no other. Mamma and I were shopping to-day, and I went out for her bag which she had left in the carriage. While Benjamin was getting it, I saw a stranger coming up the street; a tall, good-looking, dark-haired man, with a conspicuous gold chain and studs. The sun was full upon him, causing the ornaments to shine, especially a diamond ring which he wore, for he had one hand raised to his face. The thought flashed over me, 'That is like the description Richard gave of the man Thorn.' Why the idea should have occurred to me in that strange manner, I do not know, but it most assuredly did occur: though I did not really suppose him to be the same. Just then I heard him spoken to by some one on the other side the street, it was Otway Bethel, and he called him *Captain Thorn*."

"That is curious indeed, Barbara. I did not know any stranger was at West Lynne."

"I saw Mr. Wainwright, and asked him who it was. He said a Captain Thorn, a friend of the

Herberts. A Lieutenant Thorn four or five years ago, would probably be Captain Thorn now."

Mr. Carlyle nodded, and there was a pause.

"What can be done?" asked Barbara.

Mr. Carlyle was passing one hand over his brow; it was a habit of his when deep in thought. "It is hard to say what is to be done, Barbara. The description you give of this man certainly tallies with that given by Richard. Did he look like a gentleman?"

"Very much so. A remarkably aristocratic-looking man, as it struck me."

Mr. Carlyle again nodded assentingly. He remembered Richard's words, when describing the other; "an out-and-out aristocrat." "Of course, Barbara, the first thing must be to try and ascertain whether it is the same," he observed. "If we find that it is, then we must deliberate upon future measures. I will see what I can ascertain, and let you know."

Barbara rose. Mr. Carlyle escorted her across the hall, and then strolled down the park by her side, deep in the subject; and quite unconscious that Lady Isabel's jealous eyes were watching them from her dressing-room window.

"You say he seemed intimate with Otway Bethel?"

"As to being intimate, I do not know. Otway Bethel spoke as though he knew him.

"This must have caused excitement to Mrs. Hare."

"You forget that mamma was not told anything about Thorn," was the answer of Barbara. "The uncertainty would have worried her to death. All Richard said to her was, that he was innocent, that it was a stranger who did the deed, and she asked for no particulars: she has implicit faith in Richard's truth.

“True; I did forget,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “I wish we could find out some one who knew the other Thorn: to ascertain that they were the same would be a great point gained.”

He went as far as the park gates with Barbara, shook hands, and wished her good evening. Scarcely had she departed, when Mr. Carlyle saw two gentlemen advancing from the opposite direction, in one of whom he recognised Tom Herbert, and the other—instinct told him—was Captain Thorn. He waited till they came up,

“If this isn’t lucky, seeing you,” cried Mr. Tom Herbert, who was a free-and-easy sort of gentleman, the second son of a brother justice of Mr. Hare’s. “I wish to goodness you’d give us a draught of your cider, Carlyle. We went up to Beauchamp’s for a stroll, but found them all out; and I’m awfully thirsty. Captain Thorn, Carlyle.”

Mr. Carlyle invited them to his house, and ordered in refreshments. Young Herbert coolly threw himself into an arm-chair and lit a cigar. “Come, Thorn,” cried he, “here’s a weed for you.”

Captain Thorn glanced towards Mr. Carlyle: he appeared of a far more gentlemanly nature than Tom Herbert.

“You’ll have one too, Carlyle,” said Herbert, holding out his cigar-case. “Oh, I forgot; you are a muff; don’t smoke one twice in a year. I say, how’s Lady Isabel?”

“Very ill still.”

“By Jove, is she, though? Tell her I am sorry to hear it, will you, Carlyle. But—I say! will she smell the smoke?” asked he, with a mixture of alarm and concern in his face.

Mr. Carlyle reassured him upon that point, and turned to Captain Thorn.

“Are you acquainted with this neighbourhood?”

Captain Thorn smiled. “I only reached West Lynne yesterday.”

“You were never here before, then?” continued Mr. Carlyle, setting down the last as a probably evasive answer.

“No.”

“He and my brother Jack, you know, are in the same regiment,” put in Tom Herbert, with scant ceremony. “Jack had invited him down for some fishing, and Thorn arrives. But he never sent word he was coming. Jack had given him up, and is off on some Irish expedition, the deuce knows where. Precious unlucky that it should have happened so. Thorn says he shall cut short his stay, and go again.”

The conversation turned upon fishing, and in the heat of argument the stranger mentioned a certain pond, and its famous eels — “the Low Pond.” Mr. Carlyle looked at him, speaking, however, in a careless manner.

“Which do you mean? We have two ponds not far apart, each called the ‘Low Pond.’”

“I mean the one on an estate about three miles from here: Squire Thorpe’s, unless I am mistaken.”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “I think you must have been in the neighbourhood before, Captain Thorn. Squire Thorpe is dead, and the property has passed to his daughter’s husband, and that Low Pond was filled up three years ago.”

“I have heard a friend mention it,” was Captain

Thorn's reply, spoken in an indifferent tone, though he evidently wished not to pursue the subject.

Mr. Carlyle, by easy degrees, turned the conversation upon Swainson, the place whence Richard Hare's Captain Thorn was suspected to have come. The present Captain Thorn said he knew it "a little," he had once been "staying there a short time." Mr. Carlyle became nearly convinced that Barbara's suspicions were correct. The descriptions certainly agreed, as far as he could judge, in the most minute particulars. The man before him wore two rings, a diamond—and a very beautiful diamond, too—on the one hand; a seal ring on the other; his hands were delicate to a degree, and his handkerchief, a cambric one of unusually fine texture, was not entirely guiltless of scent: a mark of dandyism, which, in the other Captain Thorn, used considerably to annoy Richard. Mr. Carlyle quitted the room for a moment, and summoned Joyce to him.

"My lady has been asking for you, sir," said Joyce.

"Tell her I will be up the moment these gentlemen leave. Joyce," he added, "find an excuse to come into the room presently; you can bring something or other in; I want you to look at this stranger who is with young Mr. Herbert. Notice him well; I fancy you may have seen him before."

"Mr. Carlyle returned to the room, leaving Joyce surprised. However, she presently followed, taking in some water, and lingered a few minutes, apparently placing the things on the table in better order.

When the two departed, Mr. Carlyle called Joyce, before proceeding to his wife's room. "Well?" he questioned, "did you recognise him?"

“Not at all, sir. He seemed quite strange to me.”

“Cast your thoughts back, Joyce. Did you never see him in years gone by?”

Joyce looked puzzled, but she replied in the negative.

“Is he the man, think you, who used to ride over from Swainson to see Afy?”

Joyce’s face flushed crimson. “Oh, sir!” was all she uttered.

“The name is the same, Thorn: I thought it possible the men might be,” observed Mr. Carlyle.

“Sir, I cannot say. I never saw that Captain Thorn but once, and I don’t know — I don’t know” — Joyce spoke slowly and with consideration — “that I should at all know him again. I did not think of him when I looked at this gentleman; but at any rate, no appearance in this one struck upon my memory as being familiar.”

So, from Joyce Mr. Carlyle obtained no clue, one way or the other. The following day he sought out Otway Bethel.

“Are you intimate with that Captain Thorn who is staying with the Herberts?” asked he.

“Yes,” answered Bethel, derisively, “if passing a couple of hours in his company can constitute intimacy. That’s all I have seen of Thorn.”

“Are you sure?” pursued Mr. Carlyle.

“Sure!” returned Bethel; “why, what are you driving at now? I called in at Herbert’s the night before last, and Tom asked me to stay the evening. Thorn had just come. A jolly bout we had; cigars and cold punch.”

“Bethel,” said Mr. Carlyle, dashing to the point,

“is it the Thorn who used to go after Afy Hallijohn? Come, you can tell if you like.”

Bethel remained dumb for a moment, apparently with amazement. “What a confounded lie!” uttered he, at length. “Why, it’s no more that Thorn than—What Thorn?” he broke off, abruptly.

“You are equivocating, Bethel. The Thorn who was mixed up—or said to be—in the Hallijohn affair. Is this the same man?”

“You are a fool, Carlyle: which is what I never took you to be yet,” was Mr. Bethel’s rejoinder, spoken in a savage tone. “I have told you that I never knew there was any Thorn mixed up with Afy, and I should like to know why my word is not to be believed? I never saw Thorn in my life till I saw him the other night at the Herberts, and that I would take an oath to, if put to it.”

Bethel quitted Mr. Carlyle with the last word, and the latter gazed after him, revolving points in his brain. The mention of Thorn’s name (the one spoken of by Richard Hare) appeared to excite some sore feeling in Bethel’s mind, arousing it to irritation. Mr. Carlyle remembered that it had done so previously, and now it had done so again: and yet, Bethel was an easy-natured man in general, far better-tempered than principled. That there was something hidden, some mystery connected with the affair, Mr. Carlyle felt sure, but he could not attempt so much as a guess at what it might be. And his interview with Bethel brought him no nearer the point he wished to find out—whether this Thorn was the same man. In walking back to his office, he met Mr. Tom Herbert.

“Does Captain Thorn purpose making a long stay with you?” he stopped him to inquire.

“He’s gone: I have just seen him off by the train,” was the reply of Tom Herbert. “It seemed rather slow work for him without Jack, so he shortened his visit, and says he will pay us one when Jack’s to the fore.”

As Mr. Carlyle went home to dinner that evening, he entered the Grove, ostensibly to make a short call on Mrs. Hare. Barbara, on the tenterhooks of impatience, accompanied him outside when he departed, and walked down the path.

“What have you learnt?” she eagerly asked.

“Nothing satisfactory,” was the reply of Mr. Carlyle. “The man is gone.”

“Gone!” said Barbara.

Mr. Carlyle explained. He told her how they had come to his house the previous evening after Barbara’s departure, and his encounter with Tom Herbert that day: he mentioned, also, his interview with Bethel.

“Can he have gone on purpose, fearing consequences?” wondered Barbara.

“Scarcely: or why should he have come?”

“You did not suffer any word to escape you last night, causing him to suspect that he was doubted?”

“Not any. You would make a bad lawyer, Barbara.”

“Who or what is he?”

“An officer in her Majesty’s service, in John Herbert’s regiment. I ascertained no more. Tom said he was of good family. But I cannot help suspecting it is the same man.”

“Can nothing more be done?”

“Nothing, in the present stage of the affair,” concluded Mr. Carlyle, as he passed through the gate to continue his way. “We can only wait on again with what patience we may, hoping that time will bring about its own elucidation.”

Barbara pressed her forehead down on the cold iron of the gate as his footsteps died away. “Ay, to wait on,” she murmured, “to wait on in dreary pain; to wait on, perhaps for years, perhaps for ever! And poor Richard—wearing out his days in poverty and exile!”

Lady Isabel recovered, and grew strong. And a few years passed smoothly on, no particular event occurring to note them.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

GOING FROM HOME.

A FEW years had passed on.

“I should recommend a complete change of scene altogether, Mr. Carlyle. Say some place on the French or Belgian coast. Sea-bathing might do wonders.”

“Should you think it well for her to go so far from home!”

“I should. Where there is any chronic or confirmed disorder, one we can grapple with, I don't care a straw for change of scene or air, a patient is as well at his own home as away, a certain treatment must be gone through, surgical or physical, and it is of little moment whether it is pursued on a mountain in Switzerland or in a vale in Devonshire. But in these cases of protracted weakness, where you can do nothing but try to coax the strength back again, change of air and scene are of immense benefit.”

“I will propose it to her,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“I have just done so,” replied Dr. Martin, who was the other speaker. “She met it with objection; which I expected, for invalids naturally feel a disin-

clination to move from home. But it is necessary that she should go."

The object of their conversation was Lady Isabel. There were three children now at East Lynne; Isabel, William, and Archibald; the latter twelve months old. Lady Isabel had, a month or two back, been attacked with illness: she recovered from it; that is, she recovered from the disorder; but it had left her in an alarming state of weakness. Mr. Wainwright tried in vain to grapple with the weakness; she seemed to get worse, rather than better, and Dr. Martin was summoned from Lynneborough. The best thing he could recommend—as you have seen—was change of scene and air.

Lady Isabel was unwilling to take the advice; more especially to go so far as the "French coast." And but for a circumstance that seemed to have happened purposely to induce her to decide, would probably never have gone. Mrs. Ducie—the reader may not have forgotten her name—had, in conjunction with her husband the Honourable Augustus, somewhat run herself out at elbows, and found it convenient to enter for a time on the less expensive life of the Continent. For eighteen months she had been staying in Paris, the education of her younger daughters being the plea put forth for the sojourn, and a very convenient plea it is, and serves hundreds. Isabel had had two or three letters from her during her absence, and she now received another, saying they were going to spend a month or two at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Dr. Martin and Mr. Wainwright, declared that this must remove all Lady Isabel's unwillingness to go from home, for Mrs. Ducie's society would do

away with the loneliness she had anticipated, which had been the ostensible score of her objection.

“Boulogne-sur-Mer, of all places in the world!” remonstrated Lady Isabel. “It is spoken of as being crowded and vulgar.”

Mr. Carlyle also demurred to Boulogne-sur-Mer. It did not stand high in his estimation. It was not a place he cared to send his wife to: the more especially as he could not remain with her. Trouville, a pleasant, retired watering-place, situated near Harfleur, and little known in those days, had been the one fixed upon. Lady Isabel, probably, would have found it dull.

Dr. Martin strongly urged its being changed for Boulogne. “What did it matter if Boulogne was crowded and vulgar?” he asked: “there would be the more amusement for Lady Isabel. He had had his doubts of Trouville before, in regard to its dullness: by all means let her go to Boulogne to join Mrs. Ducie.”

Mr. Carlyle yielded the point, and finished by approving it. And Lady Isabel, finding she had no chance against them all, consented to go, and plans were hastily decided upon.

She certainly was looking very ill; her features were white and attenuated, her sweet, sad eyes had grown larger and darker, her hands were hot and sickly. Though warm weather, she had generally a shawl folded round her, and would sit for hours without rousing herself, as those, suffering from great weakness, like to do; would sit gazing out on the calm landscape, or watching her children at play. She went out once a day in the close carriage, and that was all: no other exertion could she be aroused to make.

In this illness the old trouble had come back again — the sore feeling touching her husband and Barbara Hare. It had lain pretty dormant in the last few years, nothing having occurred to excite it: but Lady Isabel was in that state of weakness, where grievances, let them be old or new, grow upon the mind. Her thoughts would wander to the unsatisfactory question of whether Mr. Carlyle had ever truly loved her; or whether, lured by her rank and her beauty, he had married her, loving Barbara. Mr. Carlyle's demonstrative affection, shown so greatly for her in the first twelve months or so of their married life, had subsided into calmness. Is not a similar result arrived at by every husband that the Church ever made one with woman? It was not that his love had faded, but that time and custom had wrought their natural effects. Look at children with their toys; a boy with a new drum, a girl with a new doll. Are not the playthings kissed, and hugged, and clasped in arms, and never put down? Did ever playthings seem like them? Are not all other things neglected, or submitted to unwillingly — the reading lessons, the sports, the daily works, even the pudding at dinner, while the new toy is all in all? But, wait. A little time, and the drum (if it has escaped breakage) is consigned to some dark closet; the doll to its cradle; and neither of them is visited or looked at. Tell the children to go and get their lately-cherished playthings, to make them their evening's amusement; and they will go unwillingly (if they don't openly rebel), for they are tired of them. It is of no use scolding the children for being fickle: it is in their nature to be fickle, for they are human. Are grown children otherwise?

Do we not all, men and women, become indifferent to our toys when we hold them securely in possession? Young lady, when he, who is soon to be your lord and master, protests to you that he shall always be as ardent a lover as he is now, believe him if you like, but don't reproach him when the disappointment comes. He does not wilfully deceive you; he only forgets that it is in the constitution of man to change, the very essence of his nature. The time will arrive when his manner must settle down into a calmness, which to you, if you be of an exacting temperament, may look like indifference, or coldness; but you will do well to put up with it, for it will never now be otherwise. Never: the heyday of early love, of youth, and of novelty is past.

Lady Isabel did not understand the even manner, the quiet calmness into which her husband's once passionate love had subsided, and in her fanciful jealousy she attributed it to the influence Barbara held upon his memory. She looked for the little tender episodes of daily life: she would fain have had him hang over her chair as she sang, and draw her face to his, and feel his kisses on her lips, as when she first came, a wife, to East Lynne. It has been seen that Lady Isabel did not love Mr. Carlyle; but his tenderness, his anxious care for her in their early married days, caused her to lift up her heart to him with gratitude, and to try earnestly to love him. But — to try to love! Vain effort: love never yet came for the *trying*: it is a capricious passion, and generally comes without the knowledge and against the will. It is possible she thought she had succeeded, for her whole esteem, her respect, and her admiration were

his. When she compared him with other men, and saw how far he surpassed them, how noble and how good he was, how little the rest looked beside him, her heart rose up with pride at the consciousness of being his wife: a princess might have deemed it an honour to be the chosen of such a man as Archibald Carlyle. Spare one single corner of *his* heart to Barbara Hare! No indeed; Isabel could not afford that.

On the day that the journey was finally decided, Lady Isabel was in the drawing-room with her three children; even the little fellow was sitting on the carpet. Isabel was a delicate, pretty child in her fifth year, William was the very image of his mother, Archibald was like Mr. Carlyle.

“Come hither, my darlings,” she cried.

Isabel and William ran to her, and she placed an arm round each. Master Archie was kicking his heels on the carpet at a distance. They looked up at their mother.

“Would my little dears like to go a great way with mamma? Over the sea in a boat?”

Isabel—she had inherited the refined, sensitive feelings of her mother—replied only by a smile and a vivid blush. William clapped his hands. “Oh yes, in a boat! Arty too, mamma?”

“Archie and all,” answered Lady Isabel. “And Joyce, and Wilson, and—”

Miss Carlyle, who was seated near one of the windows, sewing, turned sharply round to interrupt the gladness. Miss Carlyle, though not openly dissenting, did not inwardly approve of the proposed emigration. What did people want with change of air? thought she. *She* had never wanted any. A

pack of new-fangled notions that doctors had got into, recommending change of air for everything! they'd order it, next, for a cut finger. If Lady Isabel would make an effort, she'd get strong fast enough at home.

"The children are not going to the sea-side," said she. "They are not ordered there."

"But they must go with me," replied Lady Isabel. "Of course they are not expressly ordered to it. Why should they not go?"

"Why should they not?" retorted Miss Corny. "Why, on account of the expense, to be sure. I can tell you what it is, Lady Isabel, what with one expense and another, your husband will soon be on the road to ruin. Your journey with Joyce and Peter will cost enough, ma'am, without taking a van-load of nurses and children."

Lady Isabel's heart sank within her.

"Besides, your object in going, is to pick up health, and how can you do that, if you are to be worried with the children?" pursued Miss Corny. "People who go abroad for pleasure, or invalids in search of health, won't find much of either, if they carry their cares with them."

Lady Isabel rose and, with difficulty, lifted Archibald from the carpet; sat down with him on her knee, and pressed his little face to hers.

"Would my baby like mamma to go away and leave him?" she asked, the tears falling fast on his fair curls. "Oh! I could not leave them behind me!" she added, looking imploringly at Miss Carlyle. "I should get no better if you send me there alone; I should ever be yearning for the children."

“Alone, Lady Isabel! is your husband nothing?”

“But he will only take me; he will not remain.”

“Well, you can’t expect his business to go to rack and ruin,” snapped Miss Corny. “How can he stay away from it? With all these heavy expenses upon him, there’s more need than ever for his sticking to it closely. And, before the children are gallavanted over the water, it might be as well to sit down and calculate the cost. Of course, Lady Isabel, I only offer my opinion; you are Archibald’s wife, and sole mistress, and will do as you please.”

Do as she pleased! Poor Lady Isabel laid her head meekly down upon her children, effectually silenced, and her heart breaking with pain. Joyce, who was then in the room, heard a little, and conjectured much of what had passed.

In the evening Mr. Carlyle carried little Isabel up to the nursery on his shoulder. Joyce happened to be there, and thought it a good opportunity to speak.

“My lady wishes to take the children with her to France, sir.”

“Does she?” replied Mr. Carlyle.

“And I fear she will make herself very unhappy if they do not go, sir.”

“Why should they not go?” asked Mr. Carlyle.

He went back to the drawing-room, where his wife was alone. “Isabel, do you wish to take the children with you?”

“Oh, I did so wish it!” she replied, the hectic of hope lighting her pale cheeks. “If they might but go, Archibald?”

“Of course they may go. It will be a nice change for them, as well as for you. Why should you hesitate?”

“The expense,” she timidly whispered, the hectic growing deeper.

He looked right into her eyes with his pleasant smile. “Expense is no concern of yours, Isabel: it is mine. Never let the word, expense, trouble you, until I tell you that it must.”

“It will not increase the cost so very much,” she returned, her eyes smiling with happiness. “And I shall get well all the sooner for having them with me.”

“And, to further that, you should take them, if it were to the end of the world. Why should you study aught but your own wishes and comfort?”

She took his hand in her love and gratitude — for every tone of his voice spoke of care and tenderness for her; all jealous fancies were forgotten, all recollection, in that moment, that his manner was calmer than of old. “Archibald! I do believe you care for me as much as you used to?”

He did not understand the words, but he held her to him as in days gone by, and kissed her tenderly. “More precious, far more precious to me than of yore, Isabel!”

Miss Carlyle flew out when she heard the decision, and frightened her brother to repentance, assuring him that his sending the children, was the certain way to preclude all chance of his wife’s recovery. Mr. Carlyle was sorely puzzled between Isabel’s wishes and Isabel’s welfare: he would promote both if he could, but if they clashed—? He feared his own judgment, he feared his wife’s; and he appealed to the medical men. But Miss Corny had forestalled him there: she had contrived so to impress those gen-

tlemen of the incessant worry the children would prove to Lady Isabel, that they pronounced their veto, and forbade the children's going. So, after all, Lady Isabel had to resign herself to the disappointment.

"Joyce," said she to her waiting-maid, "I shall leave you at home; I must take Wilson instead."

"Oh, my lady! what have I done?"

"You have done all that you ought, Joyce, but you must stay with the children. If I may not take them, the next best thing will be to leave them with you. I shall give them into your charge, not into Miss Carlyle's," she said, sinking her voice: "if it were Wilson who remained, I could not do that."

"My lady, I must do whatever you think best. I wish I could attend you and stay with them, but of course I cannot do both."

"I am sent away to get health and strength, but it may be I shall die, Joyce. If I never come back, will you promise to remain with my children?"

Joyce felt a creeping sensation in her veins: the sobs rose in her throat, but she swallowed them down, and constrained her voice to calmness. "My lady, I hope you will come back to us as well as you used to be. I trust you will hope so too, my lady, and not give way to low spirits."

"I sincerely hope and trust I shall," answered Lady Isabel, fervently. "Still, there is no telling, for I am very ill. Joyce, give me your promise in case of the worst, that you will remain with the children."

"I will, my lady—as long as I am permitted."

"And be kind to them, and love them, and shield

them from—from—any unkindness that may be put upon them,” she added, her head full of Miss Carlyle. “And talk to them sometimes of their poor mother who is gone.”

“I will, I will: oh, my lady, I will!” And Joyce sat down in the rocking-chair as Lady Isabel quitted her, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER II.

FRANCIS LEVISON.

MR. CARLYLE and Lady Isabel, with Wilson and Peter in attendance, arrived at Boulogne, and proceeded to the Hôtel des Bains. It may be as well to mention that Peter had been transferred from Miss Carlyle's service to theirs, when the establishment was first formed at East Lynne. Upon entering the hotel, they inquired for Mrs. Ducie, and then a disappointment awaited them: a letter was handed them, which had arrived that morning from Mrs. Ducie, expressing her regret that certain family arrangements prevented her visiting Boulogne; she was proceeding to some of the baths in Germany instead.

"I might almost have known it," remarked Isabel. "She was always the most changeable of women."

Mr. Carlyle proposed that they should, after all, go on to Trouville, but Isabel said she would stay, now she had come. He went out in search of lodgings, Isabel objecting to remain in the bustling hotel. He succeeded in finding some very desirable ones, situated in the Rue de l'Ecu, near the port, and they moved into them. He thought the journey had done her good, for she looked better, and said she already felt stronger. Mr. Carlyle remained with her three days; he had promised only one, but he was pleased with Isabel's returning glimpses of health, and amused with the scenes of the busy town.

“I shall make no acquaintance here,” Isabel observed to him, as they sat together at the end of the first division of the pier, which she had reached without much fatigue, and watched the gay idlers flocking past them.

“It would not be advisable to do so indiscriminately,” he replied, “but you may chance to find some whom you know. All sorts of people come over here: some respectable, and from respectable motives; others the contrary. Some of these men, going by now, are here because they have kites flying in England.”

“Kites!” echoed Lady Isabel.

“Kites, and bills, and ghosts of renewed acceptances,” returned Mr. Carlyle. “And well for them if they are over here for nothing else. The worse a man’s conduct has been at home, the more assurance he puts on abroad, and is the first to rush and proclaim his arrival at the consulate. To hear these men boast, we might deem they were millionnaires in England, and had led the lives of saints.”

“You have never stayed in these continental towns, Archibald: how do you know this?”

“I have had plenty to do with those who have stayed in them. There goes Buxton!” he suddenly exclaimed; “he sees me, too. Look at him, Isabel. He does not know whether to come on, or to turn and make a run for it.”

“Who? Which?” inquired Isabel, confused by the many passers-by.

“That stout, well-dressed man, with the light hair, and bunch of seals hanging to his watch-chain. He thinks better of it, and comes on. All safe, my good sir, on Boulogne pier, but if they catch you on the

other side the water— Here comes his wife, following with some ladies. Look at her satins, and her chains, and her hanging bracelets — all swindled out of credulous tradespeople. There's not a doubt they are playing at being grand people in the English society here. It must be as good as a comedy to be behind the scenes in this Anglo-French town, and watch the airs and graces of some of its sojourners. Are you tired, Isabel?"

"A little. I should like to return."

Mr. Carlyle rose, and giving his arm to his wife, they walked slowly down the pier. Many an eye was turned to look at them; at his tall, noble form; at her young beauty; at the unmistakable air of distinction which enshrined both: they were not like the ordinary visitors of Boulogne-sur-Mer.

The tide served at eight o'clock the following morning, and Mr. Carlyle left by the Folkestone boat. Wilson made his breakfast, and after swallowing it in haste, he returned to his wife's room to say farewell."

"Good bye, my love," he said, stooping to kiss her. "Take care of yourself."

"Give my dear love to the darlings, Archibald. And—and—"

"And what?" he asked. "I have not a moment to lose."

"Do not get making love to Barbara Hare while I am away."

She spoke in a tone half jest, half serious—could he but have seen how her heart was beating! Mr. Carlyle took it wholly as a jest, and went away laughing. Had he believed she was serious, he could have been

little more surprised had she charged him not to go about the country on a dromedary.

Isabel rose later, and lingered over her breakfast, listless enough. She was wondering how she could make the next few weeks pass: what she should do with her time. She had taken two sea-baths since her arrival, but they had appeared not to agree with her, leaving her low and shivering afterwards, so it was not deemed advisable that she should attempt more. It was a lovely morning, and she determined to venture on to the pier, where they had been the previous evening. She had not Mr. Carlyle's arm, but it was not far, and she could take a good rest at the end of it.

She went, attended by Peter, took her seat, and told him to come for her in an hour. She watched the strollers on the pier; not in crowds now, but stragglers, coming on at intervals. There came a gouty man, in a list shoe, there came three young ladies and their governess, there came two fast puppies in shooting-jackets and eye-glasses, which they turned with a broad stare on Lady Isabel; but there was something about her which caused them to drop their glasses and their ill manners together. After an interval, there appeared another, a tall, handsome, gentlemanly man. Her eyes fell upon him; and—what was it that caused every nerve in her frame to vibrate, every pulse to quicken? *Whose* form was it that was thus advancing, and changing the monotony of her mind into a tumult? It was that of one whom she was soon to find had never been entirely forgotten.

Captain Levison came slowly on, approaching the part of the pier where she sat. He glanced at her, not

with the hardihood displayed by the two young men, but with quite sufficiently evident admiration.

“What a lovely girl?” thought he to himself. “Who can she be, sitting there alone?” All at once a recollection flashed into his mind: he raised his hat and extended his hand, his fascinating smile in full play.

“I certainly cannot be mistaken. Have I not the honour of once more meeting Lady Isabel Vane?”

She allowed him to take her hand, answering a few words at random, for her wits seemed to have gone wool-gathering.

“I beg your pardon — I should have said Lady Isabel Carlyle. Time has elapsed since we parted, and in the pleasure of seeing you again so unexpectedly, I thought of you as you were then.”

She sat down again, the brilliant flush of emotion dying away on her cheeks. It was the loveliest face Francis Levison had seen since he had last seen hers, and he thought so as he gazed at it.

“What can have brought you to this place?” he inquired, taking a seat by her.

“I have been ill,” she explained, “and am ordered to the sea-side. We should not have come here but for Mrs. Ducie; we expected to meet her. Mr. Carlyle only left me this morning.”

“Mrs. Ducie is off to Ems. I see them occasionally. They have been fixtures in Paris for some time. You do indeed look ill!” he abruptly added, in a tone of sympathy, “alarmingly ill. Is there anything I can do for you?”

She was aware that she looked unusually ill at that moment, for the agitation and surprise of meeting him

were fading away, leaving her face of an ashy whiteness. She was exceedingly vexed and angry with herself, that the meeting him should have had power to call forth emotion. Until that moment she was unconscious that she retained any sort of feeling for Captain Levison.

“Perhaps I have ventured out too early,” she said, in a tone that would seem to apologise for her looks; “I think I will return. I shall meet my servant, no doubt. Good morning, Captain Levison.”

“But indeed you do not appear fit to walk alone,” he remonstrated. “You must allow me to see you safely home.”

Drawing her hand within his arm quite as a matter of course, as he had done many a time in the days gone by, he proceeded to assist her down the pier. Lady Isabel, conscious of her own feelings, felt that it was not quite the thing to walk thus familiarly with him, but he was a sort of relation of the family—a connection at any rate, and she could find no ready excuse for declining.

“Have you seen Lady Mount Severn lately?” he inquired.

“I saw her when I was in London this spring with Mr. Carlyle. The first time we have met since my marriage: we do not correspond. Lord Mount Severn has paid us some visits at East Lynne. They are in town yet, I believe.”

“For all I know. I have not seen them, or England either, for ten months. I have been staying in Paris, and got here yesterday.”

“A long leave of absence,” she observed.

“Oh, I have left the army. I sold out. The truth

is, Lady Isabel—for I don't mind telling you—things are rather down with me at present. My old uncle has behaved shamefully: he has married again.”

“I heard that Sir Peter had married.”

“He is seventy-three—the old simpleton! Of course this materially alters my prospects, for it is just possible he may have a son of his own now; and my creditors all came down upon me. They allowed me to run into debt with complacency when I was heir to the title and estates, but as soon as Sir Peter's marriage appeared in the papers, myself and my consequence dropped a hundred per cent.; credit was stopped, and I was dunned for payment. So I sold out and came abroad.”

“Leaving your creditors?”

“What else could I do? My uncle would not pay them, or increase my allowance.”

“What are your prospects, then?” resumed Lady Isabel.

“Prospects? Do you see that little ragged boy, throwing stones into the harbour?—it is well if the police don't drop upon him. Ask him what his prospects are, and he would stare in your face, and say, ‘None.’ Mine are on a par.”

“You may succeed Sir Peter yet.”

“I may: but I may not. When these old idiots get a young wife—”

“Have you quarrelled with Sir Peter?” interrupted Lady Isabel.

“I should quarrel with him, as he deserves, if it would do any good; but I might get my allowance stopped. Self-interest, you see, Lady Isabel, is the order of the day with most of us.”

“Do you purpose staying in Boulogne long?”

“I don't know. As I may find amusement. Paris is a fast capital, with its heated rooms and its late hours, and I came down for the refreshment of a few sea dips. Am I walking too fast for you?”

“You increased your pace alarmingly when you spoke of Sir Peter's marriage. And I am not sorry for it,” she added, good naturedly, “for it has proved to me how strong I am getting. A week ago I could not have walked half so fast.”

He interrupted with eager apologies, and soon they reached her home. Captain Levison entered with her—uninvited. He probably deemed that between connexions great ceremony might be dispensed with, and he sat a quarter of an hour, chatting to amuse her. When he rose, he inquired what she meant to do with herself in the afternoon.

“To lie down,” replied Lady Isabel. “I am not strong enough to sit up all day.”

“Should you be going out again afterwards, you must allow me to take care of you,” he observed. “I am glad that I happen to be here, for I am sure you are not fit to wander out only followed by a servant. When Mr. Carlyle comes, he will thank me for my pains.”

What was she to urge in objection? Simply nothing. He spoke, let us not doubt, from a genuine wish to serve her, in a plain, easy tone, as any acquaintance might speak. Lady Isabel schooled herself severely; if those old feelings were not quite dead within her, why, she must smother them down again as effectually as if they were: the very fact of recognising such to her own heart, brought its glow

of shame to her brow. She would meet Captain Levison and suffer his companionship as she would that of the most indifferent stranger.

It was just the wrong way for her to go to work.

As the days passed on, Lady Isabel improved wonderfully. She was soon able to go to the sands in a morning and sit there to enjoy the sea-air, watching the waves come up or recede with the tide. She made no acquaintance whatever in the place, and when she had a companion it was Captain Levison. He would frequently join her there, sometimes take her, almost always give her his arm home. She disliked having to take his arm: her conscience whispered it might be better if she did not. One day she said, in a joking sort of manner—she would not say it in any other—that now she was strong she had no need of his arm and his escort. He demanded, in evident astonishment, what had arisen that he might not still afford it, as her husband was not with her to give her his. She had no answer to reply to this, no excuse to urge, and, in default of one, took his arm as usual. In the evening he was always ready to take her to the pier, but they sat apart, mixing not with the bustling crowd, he lending to his manner, as he conversed with her, all that it could call up of fascination—and fascination, such as Francis Levison's, might be dangerous to any ear in the sweet evening twilight. The walk over, he left her at her own door; in the evening she never asked him in, and he did not intrude with- out, as he sometimes would of a morning.

Now where was the help for this? You may say that she should have remained in-doors, and not have subjected herself to his companionship. But the re-

maining in-doors would not have brought her health, and it was health that she was staying in Boulogne to acquire, and the sooner it came the better pleased she would be, for she wanted to be at home with her husband and children.

In a fortnight from the period of his departure, Mr. Carlyle was expected in Boulogne. But what a marvellous change had this fortnight wrought in Lady Isabel! She did not dare to analyse her feelings, but she was conscious that all the fresh emotions of her youth had come again. The blue sky seemed as of the sweetest sapphire, the green fields and the waving trees were of an emerald brightness, the perfume of the flowers was more fragrant than any perfume had yet seemed. She knew that the sky, that the grassy plains, the leafy trees, the brilliant flowers were but as they ever had been; she knew that the sunny atmosphere possessed no more of loveliness, or power of imparting delight, than of old: and she knew that the change, the sensation of ecstasy, was in her own heart. No wonder that she shrank from self-examination.

The change from listless languor to her present feelings brought the hue and contour of health to her face far sooner than anything else could have done. She went down with Captain Levison to meet Mr. Carlyle the evening he came in, and when Mr. Carlyle saw her behind the cords as he was going to the custom-house, he scarcely knew her. Her features had lost their sharpness, her cheeks wore a rosy flush, and the light of pleasure at meeting him again shone in her eyes.

“What can you have been doing to yourself, my

darling?" he uttered in delight, as he emerged from the custom-house and took her hands in his. "You look almost well."

"Yes, I am much better, Archibald, but I am warm now and flushed. We have waited here some time; and the setting sun was full upon us. How long the boat was, coming in."

"The wind was dead against us," replied Mr. Carlyle, wondering who the exquisite was, at his wife's side. He thought he remembered his face.

"Captain Levison," said Lady Isabel. "I wrote you word in one of my letters that he was here. Have you forgotten it?" Yes, it had slipped from his memory.

"And I am pleased that it happened to be so," said that gentleman, interposing, "for it has enabled me to attend Lady Isabel in some of her walks. She is stronger now, but at first she was unfit to venture alone."

"I feel much indebted to you," said Mr. Carlyle, warmly.

Lady Isabel had taken her husband's arm, and Francis Levison walked by the side of Mr. Carlyle. "To tell you the truth," he said, dropping his voice so that it reached only Mr. Carlyle's ear, "when I met Lady Isabel, I was shocked to see her. I thought her days were numbered; that a very short period must close them. I therefore considered it a bounden duty to render her any slight service that might be in my power."

"I am sure she has been obliged for your attention," responded Mr. Carlyle. "And as to her visible improvement, it seems little short of a miracle. I

expected, from Lady Isabel's letters to me, to find her better, but she is more than better; she looks well. Do you hear, Isabel? I say a miracle must have been wrought, to bring back your bloom, for a fortnight's space of time could scarcely have done it. This must be a famous air for invalids."

The bloom, that Mr. Carlyle spoke of, deepened to a glowing crimson as she listened. She knew — and she could not stifle the knowledge, however she might wish to do so—that it was not the place or the sea-air which had renovated her heart and her countenance. But she clasped her husband's arm the closer, and inwardly prayed for strength and power to thrust away from her this dangerous foe, that was creeping on in guise so insidious.

"You have not said a word to me about the children," exclaimed Lady Isabel, as she and her husband entered their rooms, Francis Levison not having been invited to enter. "Did they all send me some kisses? Did Archie send me any?"

Mr. Carlyle laughed: he was not a mother, he was only a father. Archie, with his year of age, send kisses!

"Had you been away, as I am, he should have sent some to you," murmured Lady Isabel. "I would have taken a thousand from him, and told him they were for papa."

"I will take a thousand back to him," answered Mr. Carlyle, folding his wife to his heart. "My dearest, the sight of you has made me glad."

The following day was Sunday, and Francis Levison was asked to dine with them: the first meal he had been invited to in the house. After dinner, when

Lady Isabel left them, he grew confidential with Mr. Carlyle; laying open all his intricate affairs and his cargo of troubles.

“This compulsory exile abroad is becoming intolerable,” he concluded; “and a Paris life plays the very deuce with one. Do you see any chance of my getting back to England?”

“Not the least,” was the candid answer: “unless you can manage to satisfy, or partially satisfy, these claims you have been telling me of. Will not Sir Peter assist you?”

“I believe he would, were the case fairly represented to him; but how am I to get over to do it? I have written several letters to him lately, and for some time I got no reply. Then came an epistle from Lady Levison; not short and sweet, but short and sour. It was to the effect that Sir Peter was ill, and could not at present be troubled with business matters.”

“He cannot be very ill,” remarked Mr. Carlyle; “he passed through West Lynne in his open carriage a week ago.”

“He ought to help me,” grumbled Captain Levison. “I am his heir, so long as Lady Levison does not give him one. I do not hear that she has expectations.”

“You should contrive to see him.”

“I know I should: but it is not possible, under present circumstances. With these thunder-clouds hanging over me, I dare not set foot in England, and run the risk of being dropped upon. I can stand a few things, but I shudder at the bare idea of a prison. Something peculiar in my idiosyncrasy I

take it, for those who have tried it say that it's nothing when you're used to it."

"Some one might see him for you."

"Some one!—who? I have quarrelled with my lawyers, Sharp and Steel, of Lincoln's Inn."

"Keen practitioners," put in Mr. Carlyle.

"Too keen for me. I'd send them over the herring-pond if I could. They have used me shamefully since my uncle's marriage. If ever I do come into the Levison estates, they'll be ready to eat their ears off: they would like a finger in the pie with such a property as that."

"Shall I see Sir Peter Levison for you?"

"*Will* you?" returned Captain Levison, his dark eyes lighting up.

"If you like; as your friend, you understand; not as your solicitor: that, I should decline. I have a slight knowledge of Sir Peter; my father was well acquainted with him; and if I can render you any little service, I shall be happy, in return for your kind attention to my wife. I cannot promise to see him for these two or three weeks," resumed Mr. Carlyle, "for we are terribly busy. Otherwise I should be staying here with my wife."

Francis Levison expressed his gratitude, and the prospect, however remote, of being enabled to return to England, increased his spirits to exultation. Whilst they continued to converse, Lady Isabel sat at the window in the adjoining room, listlessly looking out on the crowds of French, who were crowding to and from the port in their Sunday holiday attire. Looking at them with her eyes, not with her senses; her senses were holding commune with herself, and it was not

altogether satisfactory. She was aware that a sensation all too warm, a feeling of attraction towards Francis Levison, was working within her; not a voluntary one; she could no more repress it than she could repress her own sense of being; and, mixed with it, was the stern voice of conscience, overwhelming her with the most lively terror. She would have given all she possessed to be able to overcome it; she would have given half the years of her future life to separate herself at once and for ever from the man.

But, do not mistake the word terror; or suppose that Lady Isabel Carlyle applied it here in the vulgar acceptation of the term. She did not fear for herself; none could be more securely conscious of their own rectitude of principle and conduct; and she would have believed it as impossible for her ever to forsake her duty as a wife, a gentlewoman, and a Christian, as for the sun to turn round from the west to the east. That was not the fear which possessed her; it had never presented itself to her mind: what she did fear was, that further companionship, especially lonely companionship, with Francis Levison might augment the sentiments she entertained for him to a height, that her life, for perhaps years to come, would be one of unhappiness and concealment: more than all, she shrank from the consciousness of the bitter wrong that these sentiments cast upon her husband.

“Archibald, I have a favour to ask you,” she timidly began, as they sat together after Captain Levison’s departure. “You must promise to grant it me.”

“What is it?”

“But that is not promising.”

“I will grant it, Isabel; if it be in my power.”

“I want you to remain with me for the rest of the time that I must stay here.”

Mr. Carlyle looked at her in surprise. “My dear, how could you think of wishing anything so unlikely? It is circuit time.”

“Oh, Archibald, you must remain!”

“I wish I could; but it is impossible; you must know it to be so, Isabel. A few weeks later in the year, and I could have stayed the whole of the time with you. As it is, I did not know how to get away for these two or three days.”

“And you go back to-morrow!”

“Necessity has no law, my darling.”

“Then take me with you.”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “No, Isabel: not while I find the change is doing you so much good. I took these rooms for six weeks; you must remain certainly until the end of the term, if not longer.”

The colour came flowing painfully into her cheek. “I cannot stay without you, Archibald.”

“Tell me why,” smiled Mr. Carlyle.

Tell him why! “I am so dull without you,” was the best argument she could offer, but her voice faltered, for she felt that it would not be listened to.

Neither was it. Mr. Carlyle left the following day, and when he was departing, commended his wife to the further attention of Captain Levison. Not the faintest suspicion that it might be unwise to do so ever crossed his mind. How should it? Perfectly correct and honourable himself, it never occurred to

him that Captain Levison might be less so ; and as to his wife—he would fearlessly have left her alone with him, or with any one else, on a desert island, so entire was his confidence in her.

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