



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
W85e
1862a
v.2

The person charging this material is responsible for its return on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

JUN 14 2000

JUN 14 2000

MAY 24 2000



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

<http://www.archive.org/details/eastlynn02wood>

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. II.



LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1862.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE

823

W85e

1862a

v. 2

EAST LYNNE.

PART THE SECOND

CONTINUED.

CHAPTER III.

QUITTING THE DANGER.

LADY ISABEL was seated on one of the benches of the Petit Camp, as it is called, underneath the ramparts of the upper town. A week or ten days had passed away since the departure of Mr. Carlyle, and in her health there was a further visible improvement. In her strength, the change was almost beyond belief. She had walked from her home to the cemetery, had lingered there, reading the inscriptions on the English graves, and now on her departure sat down to rest. Tired, it must be owned, but not much more so than many a lady would be, rejoicing in rude health. Captain Levison was her companion, as he mostly was in her walks; shake him off, she could not. She had tried a few stratagems; going out on unusual hours, or choosing unfrequented routes; but he was sure to trace her steps and come upon her. Isabel thought he must watch: probably he did. She would not take

more decided steps, or say to him, you shall not join me; he might have asked for an explanation, and Isabel in her conscious state of feeling, avoided that, above all things. It will be but for a little time she reflected; I shall soon be gone, and leave him, I hope, for ever. But meanwhile, she felt that this prolonged intercourse with him was bringing its fruits; that her cheek blushed at his approach, her heart beat with something too like rapture. She tried to put it down: why did she not try to step the breeze as it filled the sails of the passing vessels? It would not have been a more hopeless task.

It was a still evening, cool for July, no sound was heard save the hum of the summer insects, and Lady Isabel sat in silence with her companion, her rebellious heart beating with a sense of its own happiness. But for the voice of conscience, strong within her; but for the sense of right and wrong; but for existing things; in short, but that she was a wife, she might have been content so to sit by his side forever, never to wish to move, or to break the silence. Did he read her feelings? He told her, months afterwards, that he did: but it might have been only a vain boast.

“Do you remember the evening, Lady Isabel, just such a one as this, that we all passed at Richmond?” he suddenly asked. “Your father, Mrs. Vane, you, I, and others?”

“Yes, I remember it. We had spent a pleasant day: the two Miss Challoners were with us. You drove Mrs. Vane home, and I went with papa. You drove recklessly, I recollect, and Mrs. Vane said when we got home that you should never drive her again.”

“Which meant, not till the next time. Of all capricious, vain, exacting women, Emma Vane was the

worst; and Emma Mount Severn is no improvement upon it: she's a systematic flirt, and nothing better, I drove recklessly on purpose to put her in a fright, and pay her off."

"What had she done to you?"

"Put me in a rage. She had saddled herself upon me, when I wanted — I wished for another to be my companion."

"Blanche Challoner."

"Blanche Challoner!" echoed Captain Levison, in a mocking tone: "what did I care for Blanche Challoner?"

Isabel remembered that he had been supposed in those days to care a great deal for Miss Blanche Challoner — a most lovely girl of seventeen. "Mrs. Vane used to accuse you of caring too much for her," she said aloud.

"She accused me of caring for some one else more than for Blanche Challoner," he significantly returned, "and for once her jealous surmises were not misplaced. No, Lady Isabel, it was not Blanche Challoner I wished to drive home. Could you not have given a better guess than that at the time?" he added, turning to her.

There was no mistaking the tone of his voice or the glance of his eye. Lady Isabel felt a crimson flush rising, and she turned her face away.

"The past is gone, and cannot be recalled," he continued, "but we both played our cards like simpletons. If ever two beings were formed to love each other, you and I were. I sometimes thought you read my feelings —"

Surprise had kept her silent, but she interrupted him now, haughtily enough.

“ I must speak, Lady Isabel: a few words, and then I am silent for ever. I would have declared myself had I dared, but my uncertain position, my debts, my inability to keep a wife, weighed me down; and instead of appealing to Sir Peter, as I hoped to have done, for the means to assume a position that would justify me in asking for Lord Mount Severn’s daughter, I crushed my hopes within me, and suffered you to escape — ”

“ I will not hear this, Captain Levison,” she cried, rising from her seat in anger.

He touched her arm to place her on it again. “ One single moment yet, I pray you. I have for years wished that you should know why I lost you, a loss that tells upon me yet. I have bitterly worked out my own folly since. I knew not how passionately I loved you, until you became the wife of another. Isabel, I love you passionately still.”

“ How dare you to presume so to address me ? ”

She spoke in a cold, dignified tone of hauteur, as it was her bounden duty to speak. But nevertheless she was conscious of an under-current of feeling, whispering that under other auspices the avowal would have brought to her heart the most intense bliss.

“ What I have said can do no harm now,” resumed Captain Levison; “ the time has gone by for it; for neither you nor I are likely to forget that you are a wife. We have each chosen our path in life, and must abide by it; the gulf between us is impassable; but the fault was mine. I ought to have avowed my affection, and not have suffered you to throw yourself away upon Mr. Carlyle.”

“ Throw myself away ! ” she indignantly uttered, roused to the retort. “ Mr. Carlyle is my dear hus-

band; esteemed, respected, beloved. I married him of my own free choice, and I have never repented it; I have grown more attached to him day by day. Look at his noble nature, his noble form: what are *you* by his side? You forget yourself, Francis Levison."

He bit his lips. "No, I do not."

"You are talking to me as you have no right to talk," she exclaimed in her agitation. "Who, but you, would so insult me, or take advantage of my momentarily unprotected condition? Would you dare to do it, were Mr. Carlyle within reach? I wish you good evening, sir."

She walked away as quickly as her tired frame would permit. Captain Levison strode after her. He took forcible possession of her hand, and placed it within his arm.

"I pray you forgive and forget what has escaped me, Lady Isabel. Suffer me to be as before, the kind friend, the anxious brother, endeavouring to be of service to you in the absence of Mr. Carlyle."

"It is what I have suffered you to be, looking upon you as—I may say—a relative," she coldly rejoined, withdrawing her hand from his contact. "Not else should I have permitted your incessant companionship: and this is how you have repaid it! My husband thanked you for your attention to me; could he have read what was in your false heart, he had offered you a different sort of thanks, I fancy."

"I ask you for pardon, Lady Isabel; I have acknowledged my fault; and I can do no more. I will not so offend again: but there are moments when our dearest feelings break through the rules of life, and betray themselves, in spite of our sober judgment.

Suffer me to support you down this steep hill," he added, for they were then going over the sharp stones of the Grande Rue; you are not strong enough to proceed alone, after this evening's long walk."

"You should have thought of that before," she said, some sarcasm in her tone. "No. I have declined."

So he had to put his arm back, which he was holding out, and she walked on unsupported, with what strength she had, he continuing to walk by her side. Arrived at her own door, she wished him a cold good evening, and he turned away in the direction of his hotel.

Lady Isabel brushed past Peter, and flew up-stairs, startling Wilson, who had taken possession of the drawing-room to air her smart cap at its windows in the absence of her lady.

"My desk, Wilson, immediately," cried she, tearing off her gloves, her bonnet, and her shawl. "Tell Peter to be in readiness to take a letter to the post; and he must walk fast, or he will not catch it before the English mail is closed."

The symptoms of sinful happiness throbbing at her heart while Francis Levison told her of his love, spoke plainly to Lady Isabel of the expediency of withdrawing entirely from his society and his dangerous sophistries; she would be away from the very place that contained him; put the sea between them. So she dashed off a letter to her husband; an urgent summons that he should come for her without delay, for, remain away longer, she *would not*. It is probable she would have started alone, not waiting for Mr. Carlyle, but for fear of not having sufficient funds for the journey, after the rent and other things were paid.

Mr. Carlyle, when he received the letter and marked its earnest tone, wondered much. In reply, he stated he would be with her on the following Saturday, and then her returning, or not, with him could be settled. Fully determined not to meet Captain Levison, Isabel, in the intervening days, only went out in a carriage. He called once, and was shown into the drawing-room: but Lady Isabel, who happened to be in her own chamber, sent out a message, which was delivered by Peter. "My lady's compliments, but she must decline receiving visitors."

Sunday morning—it had been impossible for him to get away before—brought Mr. Carlyle. He strongly combated her wish to return home until the six weeks should have expired, he nearly said he would not take her, and she grew earnest over it, almost to agitation.

"Isabel," he said "let me know your motive, for it appears to me that you have one. The sojourn here is evidently doing you a vast deal of good, and what you urge about 'being dull,' sounds very like nonsense. Tell me what it is."

A sudden impulse flashed over her that she *would* tell him the truth. Not tell him that she loved Francis Levison, or that he had spoken to her as he did: she valued her husband too greatly to draw him into any unpleasantness whose end could not be seen; but own to him that she had once felt a passing fancy for Francis Levison, and preferred not to be subjected to his companionship now. Oh, that she had done so! her kind, her noble, her judicious husband! Why did she not? The whole truth, as to her present feelings, it was not expedient that she should tell, but she might have confided to him quite sufficient. He would only

have cherished her the more deeply, and sheltered her under his fostering care, safe from harm.

Why did she not? In the impulse of the moment she was about to do so, when Mr. Carlyle, who had been taking a letter from his pocket-book, put it into her hand. Upon what slight threads do the events of life turn! Her thoughts diverted, she remained silent while she opened the letter. It was from Miss Carlyle, who had handed it to her brother in the moment of his departure, to carry to Lady Isabel and save postage. Mr. Carlyle had nearly dropped it into the Folkestone post office.

A letter as stiff as Miss Corny herself. The children were well, and the house was going on well, and she hoped lady Isabel was better. It filled three sides of note-paper, but that was all the news it contained, and it wound up with the following sentence: "I would continue my epistle, but Barbara Hare, who is to spend the day with us, has just arrived."

Barbara Hare spending the day at East Lynne! That item was quite enough for Lady Isabel; and her heart and her confidence closed to her husband. She must go home to her children, she urged; she could not remain longer away from them; and she urged it at length with tears.

"Nay, Isabel," said Mr. Carlyle, "if you are so much in earnest as this, you shall certainly go back with me."

Then she was like a child let loose from school. She laughed; she danced in her excess of content; she showered kisses on her husband, thanking him in her gleeful gratitude. Mr. Carlyle set it down to her love for him; he arrived at the conclusion that, in

reiterating that she could not bear to be away from him, she spoke the fond truth.

“Isabel,” he said, smiling tenderly upon her, “do you remember, in the first days of our marriage, you told me you did not love me, but that the love would come. I think this is it.”

Her face flushed nearly to tears at the word; a bright, glowing, all too conscious flush. Mr. Carlyle mistook its source, and caught her to his heart.

One day more, and then they — she and that man — should be separated by the broad sea! The thought caused her to lift up her heart in thankfulness. She knew that to leave him would be as though she left the sun behind her, that the other side might for a time be somewhat dreary; nevertheless, she fervently thanked Heaven. Oh, reader! never doubt the principles of poor Lady Isabel, her rectitude of mind, her wish and endeavour to do right, her abhorrence of wrong; her spirit was earnest and true, her intentions were pure.

Captain Levison paid a visit to Mr. Carlyle, and inquired if he had had time to see Sir Peter. Not yet; Mr. Carlyle had been too busy to think of it; but he should soon have more leisure on his hands, and would not fail him. Such was the reply; the reply of an honourable man to a man of dishonour: but, of the dishonour, Mr. Carlyle suspected nothing. It is a pity but what bad men could be turned inside out sometimes: to put others on their guard.

It was high water in the afternoon, and the Folkestone boat was announced to start at one. The Carlyles and their servants went on board in good time, and Captain Levison greeted them and said

farewell as they stepped on the steamer. Lady Isabel took her seat on the deck, her husband standing by her; the cords were unloosened, and the boat moved slowly down the harbour. On the shore stood Francis Levison, watching its progress, watching *her*. He was a bold, unscrupulous man; and there was little doubt that the more refined feelings, both of the past and the present, he had thought fit to avow for Lady Isabel, were all put on, meant to serve a purpose. However, he had received his checkmate.

As he receded from Isabel's view, a sensation of relief thrilled through her whole frame, causing it to shudder, and involuntarily she clasped the hand of Mr. Carlyle.

"You are not cold, Isabel?" he said, bending over her.

"Oh no: I am very comfortable; very happy."

"But you were surely shivering?"

"At the thought of what I could have done with myself, had you come away and left me there still, all alone. Archibald," she continued, in an impassioned whisper, "never let me go from you again; keep me by you always."

He smiled as he looked down into her pleading eyes, and a whole world of tender response and love might be detected in his earnest tone. "Always and always, Isabel. It is greater pain to me than to you, to have you away from me."

How could she ever doubt him?

CHAPTER IV.

THE FRACTURED ANKLE.

LADY ISABEL had returned home to bodily health, to the delight of meeting her children, to the glad sensation of security. But, as the days went on, a miserable feeling of apathy stole over her: a feeling as if all whom she had loved in the world had died, leaving her living and alone. It was a painful depression, the vacuum in her heart which was making itself felt in its keen intensity. She strove to drive that bad man away from her thoughts; but, even while she so strove, he was again in them. Too frequently she caught herself thinking that if she could but see him once again, for ever so short a period, one hour, one day, she could compose her spirit afterwards to rest. She did not encourage these reflections: from what you know of her, you may be sure of that: but they thrust themselves continually forward. The form of Francis Levison was ever present to her; not a minute of the day but it gave the colouring to her thoughts, and at night it made the subject of her dreams. Oh, those dreams! they were painful to awake from; painful from the contrast they presented to reality; and equally painful to her conscience, in its strife after what was right. She would have given much not to have these dreams; never

to see or think of him in her sleep. But, how prevent it? There was no prevention: for when the mind (or the imagination, if you like the word better) is thoroughly imbued with a subject of this nature, especially if unhappiness mingles with it, then the dreams follow necessarily the bent of the waking thoughts. Poor Lady Isabel would awake to self-reproach, restless and feverish; wishing that this terrible disease could be driven away, root and branch: but Time, the great healer, must, she knew, pass over her, before that could be.

Mr. Carlyle mounted his horse one morning and rode over to Levison Park. He asked for Sir Peter, but was shown into the presence of Lady Levison: a young and pretty woman, dressed showily. She inquired his business.

“My business, madam, is with Sir Peter.”

“But Sir Peter is not well enough to attend to business. It upsets him; worries him.”

“Nevertheless I am here by his own appointment. Twelve o'clock, he mentioned; and the hour has barely struck.”

Lady Levison bit her lip and bowed coldly; and at that moment a servant appeared to conduct Mr. Carlyle to Sir Peter. The matter which had taken Mr. Carlyle thither was entered upon immediately—Francis Levison, his debts, and his gracelessness. Sir Peter, an old gentleman in a velvet skull-cap, particularly enlarged upon the latter.

“I would pay his debts to-day and set him upon his legs again, but that I know I should have to do the same thing over and over again to the end of the chapter—as I have done before,” cried Sir Peter. “His grandfather was my only brother, his father

my dutiful and beloved nephew; but he is just as bad as they were estimable. He is a worthless fellow, and nothing else, Mr. Carlyle."

"His tale drew forth my compassion, and I promised I would see you and speak for him," returned Mr. Carlyle. "Of Captain Levison's personal virtues or vices I know nothing."

"And the less you know the better," growled Sir Peter. "I suppose he wants me to clear him and start him afresh."

"Something of the sort, I conclude."

"But how is to be done? I am at home, and he is over there. His affairs are in a state of confusion, and nobody can come to the bottom of them without an explanation from him. Some liabilities, for which I have furnished the money, the creditors swear have not yet been liquidated. He must come over if he wants anything done."

"Where is he to come to? He must be in England *sub rosâ*."

"He can't be here," hastily rejoined Sir Peter. "Lady Levison would not have him for a day."

"He might be at East Lynne," good-naturedly observed Mr. Carlyle. "Nobody would think of looking for him there. I think it is a pity that you should not meet, if you do feel inclined to help him."

"You are a great deal more considerate to him than he deserves, Mr. Carlyle. "May I ask if you intend to act for him in a professional capacity?"

"I do not."

A few more words, and it was decided that Captain Levison should be immediately sent for. As Mr. Carlyle left Sir Peter's presence, he encountered Lady Levison.

“I can scarcely be ignorant that your conference with my husband has reference to his grand-nephew,” she observed.

“It has,” replied Mr. Carlyle.

“I have a very bad opinion of him, Mr. Carlyle: at the same time I do not wish you to carry away a wrong impression of me. Francis Levison is my husband’s nephew, his presumptive heir; it may therefore appear strange that I set my face so determinately against him. Two or three years ago, previous to my marriage with Sir Peter, in fact before I knew Sir Peter, I was brought into contact with Francis Levison. He was acquainted with some friends of mine, and at their house I met him. He behaved shamefully ill; he repaid their hospitality with gross ingratitude: other details and facts, regarding his conduct, also became known to me. Altogether, I believe him to be a base and despicable man, both by nature and by inclination, and that he will remain such to the end of time.”

“I know very little indeed of him,” observed Mr. Carlyle. “May I inquire the nature of his ill conduct in the instance you mention?”

“He ruined them. He ruined them, Mr. Carlyle. They were simple, unsuspecting country people, understanding neither fraud nor vice, nor the ways of an evil world. Francis Levison got them to put their names to bills, ‘as a simple matter of form, to accommodate him for a month or so,’ he stated, and so they believed. They were not wealthy: they lived upon their own small estate in comfort, but with no superfluous money to spare, and when the time came for them to pay—as come it did—it brought ruin, and they had to leave their home. He

deliberately did it: I am certain that Francis Levison deliberately did it, knowing what would be the end. And I could tell you of other things. Sir Peter may have informed you that I object to receive him here. I do. My objection is to the man, to his character; not owing, as I hear it has been said, to any jealous, paltry feeling touching his being the heir. I must lose my own self-respect before I admit Francis Levison to my house, an inmate. Sir Peter may assist him and welcome, may pay his debts and get him out of his scrapes as often as he pleases; but I will not have him here."

"Sir Peter said you declined to receive him. But it is necessary he should come to England—if his affairs are to be set straight—and also that he should see Sir Peter."

"Come to England?" interrupted Lady Levison. "How can he come to England under present circumstances? Unless, indeed, he comes *en cachette*."

"*En cachette*, of course," replied Mr. Carlyle. "There is no other way. I have offered to let him stay at East Lynne: he is, you may be aware, a connexion of Lady Isabel's."

"Take care that he does not repay *your* hospitality with ingratitude," warmly returned Lady Levison. "It would only be in accordance with his practice."

Mr. Carlyle laughed. "I do not well see what harm he could do me, allowing that he had the inclination. He would not scare my clients from me; nor beat my children; and I can take care of my pocket. A few days, no doubt, will be the extent of his sojourn."

Lady Levison smiled too, and shook hands with Mr. Carlyle. "In your house perhaps there may be no

field for his vagaries ; but rely upon it, where there is one, he is sure to be at some mischief or other."

This visit of Mr. Carlyle's to Levison Park took place on a Friday morning, and on his return to his office he despatched an account of it to Captain Levison at Boulogne, telling him to come over. But Mr. Carlyle, like many another man whose brain has its share of work, was sometimes forgetful of trifles, and it entirely slipped his memory to mention the expected arrival at home. The following evening, Saturday, he and Lady Isabel were dining in the neighbourhood, when the conversation at table turned upon the Ducies and their embarrassments. The association of ideas led Mr. Carlyle's thoughts to Boulogne, to Captain Levison and *his* embarrassments, and it immediately occurred to him that he had not told his wife of the anticipated visit. He kept it in his mind, and spoke as soon as they were in the chariot returning home.

"Isabel," he began, "I suppose we have always rooms ready for visitors. Because I am expecting one."

"Oh yes. Or, if not, they are soon made ready."

"Ay, but to-morrow is Sunday, and I have no doubt that it is the day he will take advantage of to come. I am sorry I forgot to mention it yesterday."

"Who is coming?"

"Captain Levison."

"Who?" repeated Lady Isabel in a sharp tone of consternation.

"Captain Levison. Sir Peter consents to see him, with a view to the settlement of his liabilities, but Lady Levison declines to receive him at the park.

So I offered to give him house room at East Lynne for a few days."

There is an old saying — the heart leaping into the mouth; and Lady Isabel's heart leaped into hers. She grew dizzy at the words; her senses seemed for the moment to desert her: her first sensation was as if the dull earth had opened and shown her a way into paradise; her second, was a lively consciousness that Francis Levison ought not to be suffered to come again into companionship with her. Mr. Carlyle continued to converse of the man's embarrassments, of his own interview with Sir Peter, of Lady Levison; but Isabel was as one who heard not. She was debating the question, how could she prevent his coming?

"Archibald," she presently said, "I do not wish Francis Levison to stay at East Lynne."

"It will only be for a few days: perhaps but a day or two. Sir Peter is in the humour to discharge the claims; and, the moment his resolve is known, the ex-captain can walk on her Majesty's dominions, an unmolested man; free to go where he will."

"That may be," interrupted Lady Isabel, in an accent of impatience, "but why should he come to our house?"

"I proposed it myself. I had no idea you would dislike his coming. Why should you?"

"I don't like Francis Levison," she murmured. "That is, I don't care to have him at East Lynne."

"My dear, I fear there is no help for it now: he is most likely on his road, and will arrive to-morrow: I cannot turn him out again, after my own voluntary invitation. Had I known it would be disagreeable to you, I should not have proposed it."

“To-morrow!” she exclaimed, all of the words that caught her ear; “is he coming to-morrow?”

“Being Sunday, a free day, he will be sure to take advantage of it. What has he done, that you should object to his coming? You did not say in Boulogne that you disliked him.”

“He has done nothing,” was her faltering answer, feeling that her grounds of opposition must melt under her, one by one.

“Lady Levison appears to possess a very ill opinion of him,” resumed Mr. Carlyle. “She says she knew him in years gone by. She mentioned one or two things which, if true, were bad enough: but possibly she may be prejudiced.”

“She is prejudiced,” said Isabel. “At least, so Francis Levison told me in Boulogne. There appeared to be no love lost between them.”

“At any rate, his ill doings or well doings cannot affect us for the short period he is likely to remain. You have taken a prejudice against him also, I suppose, Isabel.”

She suffered Mr. Carlyle to remain in the belief, and sat with clasped hands and a despairing spirit, feeling that fate was against her. How could she accomplish her task of forgetting this man, if he was thus to be thrown into her home and her companionship? Suddenly she turned to her husband, and laid her cheek upon his shoulder.

He thought she was tired. He passed his arm round her waist, drew her face to a more comfortable position, and bent his own lovingly upon it. It came into her mind as she lay there, to tell him a portion of the truth, like it had done once before. It was a strong arm of shelter round her; a powerful pillar of

protection, him upon whom she leaned ; why did she not confide herself to him as trustingly as a little child ? Simply because her courage failed. Once, twice, the opening words were upon her lips, but come forth they did not ; and then the carriage stopped at East Lynne, and the opportunity was over. Oh, how many a time, in her after years, did Lady Isabel recal that midnight drive with her husband, and wish, in her vain repentance, that she had opened his eyes to that dangerous man !

The following morning proved a wet one, but it cleared up in the middle of the day. In the afternoon, however, whilst they were at church, the rain came on again.

“Cornelia,” whispered Mr. Carlyle, getting near to his sister when service was over, “it is raining heavily : you had better return with us in the pony carriage. John can walk.”

Not she. Had it poured cats and dogs Miss Carlyle would not have gone to or from church otherwise than on her two legs, and off she started with her large umbrella. Mr. Carlyle and Isabel soon passed her, striding along the footpath, and some of the servants behind her. *Not* in attendance upon Miss Carlyle : she would have scorned such attendance worse than she scorned the pony carriage. No matter what might be the weather, this adventurous lady would be seen pushing through it ; through the summer’s heat and the winter’s snow ; through the soft shower and the impetuous storm ; the great umbrella (it might have covered any moderate-sized haystack) her nearly constant companion, for Miss Corny was one of those prudent spirits who like to be prepared for contingencies and be on the safe side ; those who act

up to the maxim "When it's fine, take an umbrella; when it rains, do as you like." In fine weather she chose the pathway through the fields, but not in wet, the damp grass not agreeing with her petticoats.

Mr. Carlyle had driven in at the gates and was winding up the avenue, when sounds of distress were heard, and they saw little Isabel flying towards them from the slopes, crying and sobbing in the greatest agitation. Mr. Carlyle jumped out and met the child.

"Oh, papa, papa! oh come, pray come! I think she is dead."

He took the child in his arms to soothe her. "Hush, my little darling, you will alarm mamma. Don't tremble so. Tell me what it is."

Isabel told her tale. She had been a naughty child, she freely confessed, and had run out in the rain for fun because Joyce told her not, she had run amidst the wet grass of the park, down the slopes, Joyce after her. And Joyce had slipped and was lying at the foot of the slopes with a white face, never moving.

"Take care of her, Isabel," said Mr. Carlyle, placing the agitated and repentant child by his wife's side. "She says Joyce has fallen by the slopes. No, do not come: I will go first and see what is amiss."

Joyce was lying just as she fell, at the foot of the slopes. But her eyes were open now, and if she had fainted—as might be inferred from the little girl's words—she had recovered consciousness.

"Oh, master, don't try to move me! I fear my leg is broken."

He did, however, essay gently to raise her, but she screamed with the pain, and he found he must

wait for assistance. "I trust you are not much hurt," he kindly said. "How did it happen?"

"Miss Isabel ran out, sir, in all the rain and wet, and I went after her to bring her back again. But the slopes are slippery, and down I went, and just at first I remembered nothing more."

Mr. Carlyle despatched John and the pony carriage back for Mr. Wainwright, and with the aid of the servants, who were soon up from church, Joyce was carried in, and laid on a bed, dressed as she was. Mr. Carlyle and Lady Isabel remained with her. Miss Carlyle also was there, fidgeting and banging about, getting things ready that she fancied might be wanted, and pressing cordials upon Joyce which the latter could not take. Miss Carlyle's frame of mind, between sympathy and anger, was rather an explosive one: altogether, she did more harm than good. Little Isabel stole in and drew her mother away from the bed.

"Mamma," she whispered, "there is a strange gentleman down stairs. He came in a chaise. He has got a portmanteau, and he is asking for you and papa."

Lady Isabel turned sick with apprehension: was he really come.

"Who is it, Isabel?" she said, by way of making some answer: she guessed but too well.

"I don't know. I don't like him, mamma. He laid hold of me and held me tight, and there was an ugly look in his eyes."

"Go round the bed and tell your papa that a stranger is down stairs," said Lady Isabel.

"Mamma," shivered the child, before she stirred to obey, "will Joyce die?"

“No, dear; I hope not.”

“Because you know it will be my fault. Oh, mamma, I am so sorry! what can I do?”

“Hush! If you sob, it will make Joyce worse. Go and whisper to papa about the gentleman.”

“But will Joyce ever forgive me?”

“She has forgiven you already, I am sure, Isabel, but you must be all the more obedient to her for the future. Go to papa, my dear, as I tell you.”

The stranger was of course Captain Levison. Mr. Carlyle went down to receive and entertain him. Lady Isabel did not: the accident to her maid being put forth as an excuse.

Mr. Wainwright pronounced the injury to be a simple fracture of the ankle-bone. It might have been much worse, he observed: but Joyce would be confined to her bed for three or four weeks.

“Joyce,” whispered Isabel, “I’ll come and read my Bible-stories to you always; always and always; I know mamma will let me, and then you won’t be dull. And there’s that beautiful new book of fairy tales with the pictures; you’ll like to hear them; there’s about a princess who was locked up in a castle with nothing to eat.

Joyce faintly smiled, and took the child’s eager little hand in hers.

Later in the evening, Isabel and William were in the room with Mr. Carlyle. “These are fine children,” observed Francis Levison. “Beautiful faces!”

“They resemble their mother much, I think,” was the reply of Mr. Carlyle. “She was a very lovely child.”

“Did you know Lady Isabel as a child?” inquired Francis Levison, some surprise in his tone.

“I frequently saw her. She used to stay here with Lady Mount Severn.”

“Ah, by the way, this place was Mount Severn’s property then. What a reckless man he was! Young lady, I must take possession of you,” continued Captain Levison, extending his hand and pulling Isabel towards him. “You ran away from me when I first came, and would not tell me what your name was.”

“I ran away to tell mamma that you were come. She was with Joyce.”

“Joyce! Who is Joyce?”

“Lady Isabel’s maid,” interposed Mr. Carlyle. “The one to whom, as I told you, the accident had just happened. A particularly valued servant in our family, is Joyce.”

“It is a curious name,” remarked Captain Levison. “Joyce — Joyce! I never heard such a name. Is it a christian or surname?”

“She was baptised Joyce. It is not so very uncommon. Her name is Joyce Hallijohn. She has been with us several years.”

At this moment, Isabel, having been trying in vain to escape from Captain Levison, burst into tears. Mr. Carlyle inquired what was amiss.

“I don’t like him to hold me,” was the response of Miss Isabel, ignoring ceremony.

Captain Levison laughed, and held her tighter. But Mr. Carlyle rose, and with quiet authority drew away the child, and placed her on his own knee. She hid her face upon him, and put up her little hand round his neck.

“Papa, I don’t like him,” she whispered softly; “I am afraid of him. Don’t let him take me again.”

Mr. Carlyle’s only answer was to press her to him.

“You are not accustomed to children, Captain Levison,” he observed. “They are curious little plants to deal with, capricious and sensitive.”

“They must be a great worry,” was the rejoinder. “This accident to your servant must be a serious one. It will confine her to her bed for some time, I presume?”

“For weeks, the doctor says. And no possibility of her getting up from it.”

Captain Levison rose, and caught hold of William in apparent glee, and swung him round. The boy laughed, unlike his sister, and seemed to enjoy the fun.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. HARE'S DREAM.

THE next day rose bright, warm, and cloudless, and the morning sun streamed into the bed-room of Mrs. Hare. That lady lay in bed, a flush on her delicate cheeks, and her soft eyes rather glistening, as if with a touch of fever. The justice, in a cotton nightcap with a little perky tassel, sat on a chair tying his drawers at the knee, preparatory to inducting his legs into his pantaloons — if any single damsel in years, who may read this, will forgive this slight revelation as to the mysteries of a gentleman's toilette. The pantaloons assumed, and the braces fastened, the justice threw his nightcap on to the bed and went up to the wash-hand-stand, where he splashed away for a few minutes at his face and hands: he never shaved till after breakfast. Mr. and Mrs. Hare were of the old-fashioned class who know nothing about dressing-rooms; their bed-room was very large, and they had never used a dressing-room in their lives, or found the want of one. The justice rubbed his face to a shiny brilliancy, settled on his morning wig and his dressing-gown, and then turned to the bed.

“What will you have for breakfast?”

“Thank you, Richard, I do not think that I can eat anything. I shall be glad of my tea; I am very thirsty.”

“All nonsense,” responded the justice, alluding to the intimation of not eating. “Have a poached egg.”

Mrs. Hare smiled at him and gently shook her head. “You are very kind, Richard, but I could not eat it this morning. Barbara may send up the smallest bit of dry toast.”

“My belief is, that you just *give way* to this notion of feeling ill, Anne,” cried the justice. “It’s half fancy, I know. If you’d get up and shake it off, and come down, you would relish your breakfast and be set up for the day. Whereas you lie here, taking nothing but some trashy tea, and get up afterwards weak, shaky, and fit for nothing.”

“It is ever so many weeks, Richard, since I lay in bed to breakfast,” remonstrated poor Mrs. Hare. “I really don’t think I have once, since — since the spring.”

“And have been all the better for it.”

“But indeed I am not equal to getting up this morning. Would you please to throw this window open before you go down; I should like to feel the air.”

“You will get the air too near from this window,” replied Mr. Justice Hare, opening the further one. Had his wife requested that further one to be opened, he would have opened the other; his own will and opinions were ever paramount. Then he descended.

A minute or two, and up ran Barbara, looking bright and fair as the morning, her pink muslin dress with its ribbons and its open white lace sleeves as pretty as she was. She leaned over to kiss her mother.

Barbara had grown more gentle and tender of late years, the bitterness of her pain had passed away,

leaving all that had been good in her love to mellow and fertilise her nature. Her character had been greatly improved by sorrow.

“Mamma, are you ill? And you have been so well lately; you went to bed so well last night! Papa says —”

“Barbara dear,” interrupted Mrs. Hare, glancing round the room with dread, and speaking in a deep whisper, “I have had one of those dreadful dreams again.”

“Oh, mamma, how *can* you!” exclaimed Barbara, starting up in vexation. “How can you suffer a foolish dream so to overcome you as to make you ill? You have good sense in other matters; but, in this, you seem to put all sense away from you.”

“Child, will you tell me how I am to help it?” returned Mrs. Hare, taking Barbara’s hand and drawing her to her again. “I do not give myself the dreams; I cannot prevent their making me sick, prostrate, feverish. I was as well yesterday as I could be; I went to bed quite comfortable, in excellent spirits; I do not know that I had even once thought of poor Richard during the day. And yet the dream came. There were no circumstances to lead to or induce it, either in my thoughts or in outward facts; but, come it did. . How can I help these things, I ask?”

“And it is so long since you had one of these disagreeable dreams! Why, how long is it, mamma?”

“So long, Barbara, that the dread of them had nearly left me. I scarcely think I have had one since that stolen visit of Richard’s, years ago.”

“Was it a very bad dream, mamma?”

“Oh, child, yes. I dreamt that the real murderer

came to West Lynne : that he was with us here, and we — ”

At this moment the bed-room door was flung open, and the face of the justice, especially stern and cross then, was pushed in. So startled was Mrs. Hare, that she shook till she shook the pillow, and Barbara sprang away from the bed. Surely he had not distinguished their topic of conversation !

“ Are you coming to make breakfast to-day, or not, Barbara ? Do you expect me to make it ? ”

“ She is coming this instant, Richard,” said Mrs. Hare, her voice more faint than usual. And the justice turned and stamped down again.

“ Barbara, could your papa have heard me mention Richard ? ”

“ No, no, mamma, impossible ; the door was shut. I will bring up your breakfast myself, and then you can tell me about the dream.”

Barbara flew after Mr. Hare, poured out his coffee, saw him settle at his breakfast, with a plateful of grouse-pie before him, and then returned up-stairs with her mamma’s tea and dry toast.

“ Go on with the dream, mamma,” she said.

“ But your own breakfast will be cold, child.”

“ Oh, I don’t mind that. Did you dream of Richard ? ”

“ Not very much of Richard ; except that the old and continuous trouble, of his being away and unable to return, seemed to pervade it all through. You remember, Barbara, Richard asserted to us, in that short, hidden night visit, that he did not commit the murder ; that it was another who did ? ”

“ Yes. I remember it,” replied Barbara.

“ Barbara, I am convinced he spoke the truth : I trust him implicitly.”

“ I feel sure of it also, mamma.”

“ I asked him, you may remember, whether it was Otway Bethel who committed it ; for I have always doubted Bethel in an indefinite, vague manner : Richard replied it was not Bethel, but a stranger. Well, Barbara, in my dream I thought that stranger came to West Lynne, that he came to this house, here, and we were talking to him of it, conversing as we might with any other visitor. Mind you, we seemed to *know* that he was the one who actually did it ; but he denied it ; he wanted to put it upon Richard : and I saw him—yes I did, Barbara—whisper to Otway Bethel. But oh, I cannot tell you the sickening horror that was upon me throughout, and seemed to be upon you also, lest he should make good his own apparent innocence, and crush Richard, his victim. I think the dread and horror awoke me.”

“ What was this stranger like ? ” asked Barbara, in a low tone.

“ Well, I cannot quite tell you : the recollection of his appearance seemed to pass away from me with the dream. He was dressed as a gentleman, and we conversed with him as an equal.”

Barbara’s mind was full of Captain Thorn ; but his name had not been mentioned to Mrs. Hare, neither would she mention it now. She fell into deep thought, and Mrs. Hare had to speak twice before she could be aroused.

“ Barbara, I say, don’t you think that this dream, coming uncalled for, uninduced, must forbode some

ill? Rely upon it, something connected with that wretched murder is going to be stirred up again."

"You know, mamma, I do not believe in dreams," was Barbara's answer. "I think when people say 'this dream is a sign of such and such a thing,' it is the greatest absurdity in the world. I wish you could remember what the man was like in your dream."

"I wish I could," answered Mrs. Hare, breaking off a particle of her dry toast. "All I remember is, that he appeared to be a gentleman."

"Was he tall? Had he black hair?"

Mrs. Hare shook her head. "I tell you, my dear, the remembrance has passed from me; so whether his hair was black or light, I cannot say. I think he was tall: but he was sitting down, and Otway Bethel stood behind his chair. I seemed to feel that Richard was outside the door, in hiding, trembling lest the man should go out and see him there; and I trembled too. Oh, Barbara, it was a distressing dream!"

"I wish you could avoid having them, mamma, for they seem to upset you very much."

"Why did you ask whether the man was tall, and had black hair?"

Barbara returned an evasive answer. It would not do to tell Mrs. Hare that her suspicions pointed to one particular quarter: it would have agitated her too greatly.

"So vivid was the dream, so matter-of-fact, and like reality, that even when I awoke I could not for some minutes believe but the murderer was actually at West Lynne," resumed Mrs. Hare. "The impression that he is here, or is coming here, is upon

me yet; a sort of under-current of impression, you understand, Barbara: of course my own good sense tells me that there is no real foundation for supposing such to be the case. Oh, Barbara, Barbara!" she added, in a tone of wailing, as she let her head droop forward, in its pain, till it rested on her daughter's arm, "when will this unhappy state of things end? One year glides away and another comes; year after year, year after year they drag on, and Richard remains a banned exile!"

Barbara spoke not: what sympathy or comfort could she offer in words? the case admitted of none: but she pressed her lips upon her mother's pale forehead.

"Child, I am getting sick, sick to hear of Richard. My heart aches for the sight of him," went on the poor lady. "Seven years next spring, it will be, since he stole here to see us. Seven years, and not a look at his beloved face, not a word of news from him to say that he is yet in life! Was any mother ever tried as I am tried?"

"Dear mamma, don't! You will make yourself ill."

"I am ill already, Barbara."

"Yes; but this grief and emotion will render you worse. People say that the seventh year always brings a change: it may bring one as regards Richard. It may bring him clearance, mamma, for all we know. Do not despair."

"Child! I do not despair. Despondency I cannot help at times feeling, but it has not reached despair. I believe, I truly believe that God will some time bring the right to light; how can I despair, then, while I trust in Him?"

There was a pause which Barbara broke. "Shall I bring you up some more tea, mamma?"

“No, my dear. *Send* me some up, for I am thirsty still; but you must remain below and get your own breakfast. What may your papa not be suspecting, if you do not? Guard your very countenance. I always dread lest, if we appear sad, he should suppose we are thinking of Richard.”

“And what if he did, mamma? Surely thoughts are free.”

“Hush, Barbara! hush!” repeated Mrs. Hare, in a whispered tone of warning. “You know the oath he has taken to bring Richard to justice; you know how determined he is; and you know that he fully believes Richard to be guilty. If he found we dwelt upon his innocence, he might be capable of scouring the whole land from one end of it to the other in search of him, to deliver him up for trial. Your papa is so very—”

“Pig-headed,” put in Barbara, saucily, though it was not precisely a young lady’s word, and her cherry lips pouted after uttering it.

“Barbara!” remonstrated Mrs. Hare. “I was going to say so very just.”

“Then I say he would be cruel and unnatural, rather than just, if he were to search the country that he might deliver up his own son to death,” returned Barbara, with a bold tongue, but wet eyelashes. Very carefully did she wipe them dry, before entering the breakfast-room.

The dinner hour of the Hares, when they were alone, was four o’clock, and it arrived that day as usual, and they sat down to table. Mrs. Hare was better then; the sunshine and the business of stirring life had in some measure effaced the visions of the night, and restored her to her wonted frame of mind.

The justice mentioned the accident to Joyce: they had not heard of it; but they had not been out during the day, and had received no visitors. Mrs. Hare was full of concern: Joyce was a universal favourite.

The cloth was removed, the justice sat but a little while over his port wine, for he was engaged to smoke an after-dinner pipe with a brother magistrate, Mr. Justice Herbert.

“Shall you be home to tea, papa?” inquired Barbara.

“Is it any business of yours, young lady?”

“Oh, not in the least,” answered Miss Barbara. “Only, if you had been coming home to tea, I suppose we must have waited for you.”

“I thought you said, Richard, that you were going to stay the evening with Mr. Herbert,” observed Mrs. Hare.

“So I am,” responded the justice. “But Barbara has a great liking for the sound of her own tongue.”

The justice departed, striding pompously down the gravel-walk. Barbara waltzed round the large room to a gleeful song, as if she felt his absence a relief. Perhaps she did. “You can have tea now, mamma, at any time you please, if you are thirsty, without waiting till seven,” said she.

“Yes, dear. Barbara.”

“What, mamma?”

“I am sorry to hear of this calamity which has fallen upon Joyce. I should like to walk to East Lynne this evening and inquire after her; and see her, if I may. It would be but neighbourly.”

Barbara’s heart beat quicker. Hers was indeed a

true and lasting love, one that defied time and change. The having to bury it wholly within her, had perhaps but added to its force and depth. Who could suspect, under Barbara's sometimes cold, sometimes playful exterior, that *one* was hidden in her heart, filling up its every crevice? one who had no right there. The intimation that she might soon possibly be in his presence, sent every pulse throbbing.

"Walk, did you say, mamma? Should you do right to walk?"

"I feel quite equal to it. Since I have accustomed myself to take more exercise I feel better for it, and we have not been out to-day. Poor Joyce! What time shall we go, Barbara?"

"If we were to get up there by—by seven, I should think their dinner will be over then."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Hare with alacrity, who was always pleased when somebody else decided for her. But I should like some tea before we start, Barbara."

Barbara took care that her mamma should have some tea, and then they proceeded towards East Lynne. It was a lovely evening. The air was warm, and the humming gnats sported in it, as if anxious to make the most of the waning summer. Mrs. Hare enjoyed it at first, but ere she reached East Lynne she became aware that the walk was too much for her. She did not usually venture upon so long a one; and probably the fever and agitation of the morning had somewhat impaired her day's strength. She laid her hand upon the iron gate as they were turning into the park, and stood still.

"I did wrong to come, Barbara."

"Lean on me, mamma. When you reach those benches, you can rest before proceeding to the house. It is very warm, and that may have fatigued you."

They gained the benches, which were placed under some of the dark trees, in view of the gates and the road, but not of the house, and Mrs. Hare sat down. Another minute, and they were surrounded. Mr. Carlyle, his wife and sister, who were taking an after-dinner stroll amidst the flowers with their guest, Francis Levison, discerned them and came up. The children, except the youngest, were of the party. Lady Isabel warmly welcomed Mrs. Hare: she had become quite attached to the delicate and suffering woman.

“I am a pretty one, am I not, Archibald, to come inquiring after an invalid, when I am so much of an invalid myself that I have to stop halfway!” exclaimed Mrs. Hare, as Mr. Carlyle took her hand. “I am greatly concerned to hear of poor Joyce.”

“You must stay the evening now you are here,” cried Lady Isabel. “It will afford you a rest, and tea will refresh you.”

“Oh, thank you, but we have taken tea,” said Mrs. Hare.

“That is no reason why you should not take some more,” she laughed. “Indeed, you seem too fatigued to be anything but a prisoner with us for this next hour or two.”

“I fear I am,” answered Mrs. Hare.

“Who are they?” Captain Levison was muttering to himself, as he contemplated the guests from a distance. “It’s a deuced lovely girl, whoever she may be. I think I’ll approach; they don’t look formidable.”

He did approach, and the introduction was made. “Captain Levison, Mrs. Hare, and Miss Hare.” A few formal words, and Captain Levison disappeared again, challenging little William Carlyle to a foot-race.

“How very poorly your mamma looks!” Mr Carlyle exclaimed to Barbara, when they were beyond the hearing of Mrs. Hare, who was busy talking with Lady Isabel and Miss Carlyle. She has appeared so much stronger lately; altogether better.”

“The walk here has fatigued her; I feared it would be too long; so that she looks unusually pale,” replied Barbara. “But what do you think it is that has upset her again, Mr. Carlyle?”

He turned his inquiring eyes on Barbara.

“Papa came down stairs this morning saying mamma was ill; that she had one of her old attacks of fever and restlessness. As papa spoke, I thought to myself could mamma have been dreaming some foolish dream again—for you remember how ill she used to be after them. I ran up-stairs, and the first thing mamma said to me was, that she had had one of those dreadful dreams.”

“I fancied she must have outlived her fear of them; that her own plain sense had come to her aid long ago, showing her how futile dreams are, meaning nothing, even if hers do occasionally touch upon that—that unhappy mystery.”

“You may just as well reason with a post as reason with mamma, when she is suffering from the influence of one of those dreams,” returned Barbara. “I tried it this morning; I asked her to call up—as you observe—good sense to her aid. All her answer was, ‘How could she help her feelings? She did not induce the dream by thinking of Richard, or in any other way, and yet it came and shattered her.’ Of course, so far, mamma is right, for she cannot help the dreams coming.”

Mr. Carlyle made no immediate reply. He picked

up a ball belonging to one of the children, which lay in his path, and began tossing it gently in his hand. "It is a singular thing," he observed, presently, "that we do not hear from Richard."

"Oh, very; very. And I know mamma distresses herself over it. A few words, which she let fall this morning, betrayed it plainly. I am no believer in dreams," continued Barbara, "but I cannot deny that these, which take such hold upon mamma, bear upon the case in a curious manner. The one she had last night especially."

"What was it?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"She dreamt that the real murderer was at West Lynne. She thought he was at our house—as a visitor, she said, or like one making a morning call—and that she and I were conversing with him about the murder. He wanted to deny it; to put it upon Richard; and he turned and whispered to Otway Bethel, who stood behind his chair. That is another strange thing," added Barbara, lifting her blue eyes in their deep earnestness to the face of Mr. Carlyle.

"What is strange? You speak in enigmas, Barbara."

"I mean, that Otway Bethel should invariably appear in her dreams. Until that stolen visit of Richard's, we had no idea Bethel was near the spot at the time, and yet he had always made a prominent feature in these dreams. Richard assured mamma that Bethel had nothing to do with the murder, could have had nothing to do with it; but I do not think he shook mamma's belief that he *had*; that he was in some way connected with the mystery, though perhaps not the actual perpetrator. Well, Archibald, mamma has not dreamt of it, as she believes, since

that visit of Richard's until last night; when again there was Bethel prominent in the dream. It certainly is singular."

Barbara, in the heat of her subject, in forgetfulness of the past, had called him by the old familiar name "Archibald:" it was only when she was on the stilts of propriety, of coldness, that she said "Mr. Carlyle."

"And who was the murderer—in your mamma's dream?" continued Mr. Carlyle, speaking as gravely as though he were upon a subject that men ridicule not.

"She cannot remember; except that he seemed a gentleman, and that we held intercourse with him as such. Now, that again is remarkable. We never told her, you know, our suspicions of Captain Thorn: Richard said 'another' had done it, but he did not give mamma the faintest indications of who that other might be, or what sphere of life he moved in. It seems to me that it would be more natural for mamma to have taken up the idea in her mind that he was a low, obscure man: we do not generally associate the notion of gentlemen with murderers: and yet, in her dream, she saw he was a gentleman."

"I think you must be becoming a convert to the theory of dreams yourself, Barbara; you are so very earnest," smiled Mr. Carlyle.

"No, not to dreams; but I am earnest for my dear brother Richard's sake. Were it in *my* power to do anything to elucidate the mystery, I would spare no pains, no toil; I would walk barefoot to the end of the earth to bring the truth to light. If ever that Thorn should come to West Lynne again, I will hope, and pray, and strive, to be able to bring it home to him."

“That Thorn does not appear in a hurry, again to favour West Lynne with his —”

Mr. Carlyle paused, for Barbara had hurriedly laid her hand upon his arm with a warning gesture. In talking, they had wandered across the park to its ornamental grounds, and were now in a quiet path, over-shaded on either side by a chain of imitation rocks. Seated astride on the summit of these rocks, right above where Mr. Carlyle and Barbara were standing, was Francis Levison. His face was turned from them, and he appeared intent upon a child's whip, winding leather round its handle. Whether he heard their footsteps or not, he did not turn. They quickened their pace, and quitted the walk, bending their steps backwards towards the group of ladies.

“Could he have heard what we were saying?” ejaculated Barbara, below her breath.

Mr. Carlyle looked down on the concerned, flushed cheeks, with a smile. Barbara was evidently perturbed. But for a certain episode of their lives, some years ago, he might have soothed her.

“I think he must have heard a little, Barbara: unless his own wits were wool-gathering: he might not be attending. What if he did hear? it is of no consequence.”

“I was speaking, you know, of Captain Thorn — of his being the murderer.”

“You were not speaking of Richard or his movements, so never mind. Levison is a stranger to the whole; it is nothing to him: if he heard the name of Thorn mentioned, or could even have distinguished the subject, it would bear for him no interest; would

go, as the saying runs, in at one ear and out at the other. Be at rest, Barbara."

He really did look somewhat tenderly upon her as he spoke—and they were near enough to Lady Isabel for her to note the glance. She need not have been jealous: it bore no treachery to her. But she did note it: she had noted also their wandering away together, and she jumped to the conclusion that it was premeditated—that they had gone beyond her sight to enjoy each other's society for a few stolen moments. Wonderfully attractive looked Barbara, that evening, for Mr. Carlyle or any one else to steal away with. Her elegant, airy summer attire, her bright blue eyes, her charming features, and her lovely complexion. She had untied the strings of her pretty white bonnet, and was restlessly playing with them, more in thought than nervousness.

"Barbara, love, how are we to get home?" asked Mrs. Hare. "I fear I shall never be able to walk. I wish I had told Benjamin to bring the phaeton."

"I can send to him," said Mr. Carlyle.

"But it is too bad of me, Archibald, to take you and Lady Isabel by storm in this unceremonious manner, and to give your servants trouble besides."

"A great deal too bad, I think," returned Mr. Carlyle, with mock gravity. "As to the servants, the one who has to go will never recover from the trouble, depend upon it. You always were more concerned for others than for yourself, dear Mrs. Hare."

"And you were always kind, Archibald, smoothing difficulties for all, and making a trouble of nothing. Ah, Lady Isabel, were I a young woman, I should

be envying you your good husband: there are not many like him."

Possibly the sentence reminded Lady Isabel that another, who was young might be envying her. Isabel's cheeks flushed crimson. Mr. Carlyle held out his strong arm of help to Mrs. Hare.

"If sufficiently rested, I fancy you would be more comfortable on a sofa in-doors. Allow me to support you thither."

"And you can take my arm on the other side," cried Miss Carlyle, placing her tall form by Mrs. Hare. "Between us both we will pull you bravely along: your feet need scarcely touch the ground."

Mrs. Hare laughed, but said she thought Mr. Carlyle's arm would be sufficient. She took it, and they were turning towards the house, when her eye caught the form of a gentleman passing along the road by the park gates.

"Barbara, run," she hurriedly exclaimed. There's Tom Herbert going towards our house: he will call in and tell them to send the phaeton, if you ask him, which will save the trouble to Mr. Carlyle's servants of going expressly. Haste, child; you will be up with him in half a minute."

Barbara, thus urged, set off, on the spur of the moment, towards the gates, before the rest of the party well knew what was being done. It was too late for Mr. Carlyle to stop her and repeat that a servant should go, for Barbara was already up with Mr. Tom Herbert. The latter had seen her running towards him, and waited at the gate.

"Are you going past our house?" inquired Barbara, perceiving then that Otway Bethel also stood there, but just beyond view of the avenue.

“Yes. Why?” replied Tom Herbert, who was not famed for his politeness, being blunt by nature and “fast” by habit.

“Mamma would be so much obliged to you if you would just call in and leave word that Benjamin is to bring up the phaeton. Mamma walked here, intending to walk home, but she finds herself so fatigued as to be unequal to it.”

“All right; I’ll call and send him. What time?”

Nothing had been said to Barbara about the time, so she was at liberty to name her own. “Ten o’clock. We shall be home then before papa.”

“That you will,” responded Tom Herbert. “He and the governor and two or three more old codgers are blowing clouds till you can’t see across the room: and they are sure to get at it again after supper. I say, Miss Barbara, are you good for a few pic-nics?”

“Good for a great many,” returned Barbara.

“Our girls want to get up some in the next week or two. Jack is at home, you know.”

“Is he?” said Barbara, in surprise.

“We had the letter yesterday, and he came to-day, a brother officer with him. Jack vows if the girls don’t cater well for them in the way of amusement, he’ll never honour them by spending his leave at home again: so mind you keep yourself in readiness for any fun that may turn up. Good evening.”

“Good evening, Miss Hare,” added Otway Bethel. As Barbara was returning their salutation, she became conscious of other footsteps, advancing from the same direction that they had come, and moved her head hastily round. Two gentlemen, walking arm-in-arm, were close upon her, in one of whom she

recognised "Jack," otherwise Major Herbert. He stopped and held out his hand.

"It is some years since we met, but I have not forgotten the pretty face of Miss Barbara," he cried. "A young girl's face it was then, but it is a stately young lady's now."

Barbara laughed. "Your brother told me you had arrived at West Lynne; but I did not know you were so close to me. He has been asking me if I am ready for some pic —"

Barbara's voice faltered, and the rushing crimson of emotion dyed her face. Whose face was *that*, who was he, standing opposite to her, side by side with John Herbert? She had seen the face but once, yet it had planted itself upon her memory in characters of fire. Major Herbert continued to talk, but Barbara for once lost her self-possession: she could not listen; she could not answer; she could only stare at that face as if fascinated to the gaze, looking herself something like a simpleton, her shy blue eyes anxious and restless, and her lips turning to an ashy whiteness. A strange feeling of wonder, of superstition, was creeping over Barbara. Was that man before her in sober veritable reality? — or was it but a phantom, called up in her mind by the associations arising from her mamma's dream; or by the conversation held not many moments ago with Mr. Carlyle?

Major Herbert may have deemed that Barbara, who was not attending to him, but to his companion, wished for an introduction, and he accordingly made it. "*Captain Thorn; Miss Hare.*"

Then Barbara roused herself; her senses were partially coming to her, and she became alive to the fact

that they must deem her behaviour unorthodox for a young lady.

“I—I— looked at Captain Thorn, for I thought I remembered his face,” she stammered.

“I was in West Lynne for a day or two some five years ago,” he observed.

“Ah—yes,” returned Barbara. “Are you going to make a long stay now?”

“We have several weeks leave of absence. Whether we shall remain here all the time I cannot say.”

Barbara parted from them. Thought upon thought crowded upon her brain as she flew back to East Lynne. She ran up the steps to the hall, gliding towards a group which stood near its further end — her mother, Miss Carlyle, Mr. Carlyle, and little Isabel: Lady Isabel she did not see. Mrs. Hare was then going up to see Joyce. In the agitation of the moment she stealthily touched Mr. Carlyle, and he stepped away from the rest to speak to her, she drawing back towards the door of one of the reception rooms, and motioning him to approach.

“Oh, Archibald, I must speak to you alone? Could you not come out again for a little while?”

He nodded, and walked out openly by her side. Why should he not? What had he to conceal? But, unfortunately, Lady Isabel, who had but gone into that same room for a minute and was coming out again to join Miss Hare, both saw Barbara’s touch upon her husband’s arm, marked her agitation, and heard her words. She went to one of the hall windows and watched them saunter towards the more private parts of the grounds; she saw her husband send back Isabel. Never, since her marriage, had

Lady Isabel's jealousy been excited as it was excited that evening."

"I—I feel—I scarcely know whether I am awake or dreaming," began Barbara, putting up her hand to her brow, and speaking in a dreamy tone. "Pardon me for bringing you out in this unceremonious fashion."

"What state secrets have you to disclose?" asked Mr. Carlyle, in a jesting manner.

"We were speaking of mamma's dream. She said the impression it left upon her mind—that the murderer was at West Lynne—was so vivid that, in spite of common sense, she could not persuade herself that he was not. Well—just now—"

"Barbara, what *can* be the matter?" said Mr. Carlyle, perceiving that her agitation was so great as to impede her words.

"*I have just seen him,*" she rejoined.

"Seen him?" echoed Mr. Carlyle, looking at her fixedly, a doubt crossing his mind whether Barbara's mind might be as uncollected as her manner.

"What were nearly my last words to you? That if ever that Thorn did come to West Lynne again, I would leave no stone unturned to bring it home to him. He is here, Archibald. When I went to the gates to speak to Tom Herbert, his brother Major Herbert was also there, and with him Captain Thorn, Bethel also. Do you wonder, I say, that I know not whether I am awake or dreaming? They have some weeks' holiday and are here to spend it."

"It is a singular coincidence," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle.

"Had anything been wanting to convince me that Thorn is the guilty man, this would have done it,"

went on Barbara in her excitement. "Mamma's dream, with the steadfast impression it left upon her that Hallijohn's murderer was now at West Lynne—"

In turning the sharp corner of the covered walk, they came in contact with Captain Levison, who appeared to be either standing or sauntering there, his hands underneath his coat-tails. Again Barbara felt vexed, wondering how much he had heard, and beginning in her heart to dislike the man. He accosted them familiarly, and appeared as if he would have turned with them; but none could put down presumption more effectually than Mr. Carlyle, calm and gentlemanly though he always was.

"I will join you presently, Captain Levison," he said, with a wave of the hand. And he turned back with Barbara towards the open parts of the park.

"Do you like that Captain Levison?" she abruptly inquired, when they were beyond hearing.

"I cannot say that I do," was Mr. Carlyle's reply. "He is one who does not improve upon acquaintance."

"To me, it looks as though he had placed himself in our way to hear what we were saying."

"No, no, Barbara. What interest could it bear for him?"

Barbara did not contest the point: she turned to the one nearer at heart. "What must be our course with regard to Thorn?"

"It is more than I can tell you," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I cannot go up to the man and unceremoniously accuse him of being Hallijohn's murderer. In the first place, Barbara, we are not positively sure that he is the same man spoken of by Richard."

"Oh, Archibald, how can you doubt? The extra-

ordinary fact of his appearing here at this moment, coupled with mamma's dream, might assure us of it."

"Not quite," smiled Mr. Carlyle. "All we can do is to go cautiously to work, and endeavour to ascertain whether he is the same."

"And there is no one but you to do it!" wailed Barbara. "How vain and foolish are our boastings! I said I would not cease striving to bring it home to him, did he come again to West Lynne: and now he is here, even as the words were in my mouth, and what can I do? Nothing."

They took their way to the house, for there was nothing further to discuss. Captain Levison had entered it before them, and saw Lady Isabel standing at the hall window. Yes, she was standing and looking; brooding over her fancied wrongs.

"Who is that Miss Hare?" he demanded, in a cynical tone. "They appear to have a pretty good understanding together: twice this evening I have met them in secret conversation."

"Did you speak to me, sir?" sharply and haughtily returned Lady Isabel.

"I did not mean to offend you: I spoke of Mr. Carlyle and Miss Hare," he replied in a gentle voice. He knew she had distinctly heard his first speech in spite of her question.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN THORN IN TROUBLE ABOUT A "BILL."

IN talking over a bygone misfortune, we sometimes make the remark, or hear it made, "Circumstances worked against it." Such and such a thing might have turned out differently, we say, had the surrounding circumstances been more favourable, but they were in opposition; they were dead against it. Now, if ever attendant circumstances can be said to have borne a baneful influence upon any person in this world, they most assuredly did at the present time upon Lady Isabel Carlyle.

Coeval, you see, with the arrival of the ex-captain, Levison, at East Lynne, all the jealous feeling, touching her husband and Barbara Hare, was renewed, and with greater force than ever. Barbara, painfully anxious that something should be brought to light by which her brother should be exonerated from the terrible charge under which he lay; fully believing that Frederick Thorn, captain in her Majesty's service, was the man who had committed the crime, as asserted by Richard, was in a state of excitement bordering on frenzy. Too keenly she felt the truth of her own words, that she was powerless, that she could, herself, do nothing. When she rose in the morning, after a night passed in troubled reflection more than in sleep,

her thoughts were, "Oh, that I could this day find out something certain!" She was often at the Herberts; frequently invited there, sometimes going uninvited: she and the Miss Herberts were intimate, and they pressed Barbara into all the impromptu fêtes got up for their brother now he was at home. There she of course saw Captain Thorn, and now and then she was enabled to pick up scraps of his past history. Eagerly were these scraps carried to Mr. Carlyle. Not to his office; Barbara would not appear there. It may be, that she feared, if seen haunting Mr. Carlyle's office, Captain Thorn might come to hear of it and suspect the agitation that was afloat—for who could know better, than he, the guilt that was falsely attaching to Richard? Therefore she chose rather to go to East Lynne, or to waylay Mr. Carlyle as he passed to and from business. It was but little she gathered to tell him: one evening she met him with the news that Thorn *had* been in former years at West Lynne, though she could not fix the date: another time she went boldly to East Lynne in eager anxiety, ostensibly to make a call on Lady Isabel—and a very restless one it was—contriving to make Mr. Carlyle understand that she wanted to see him alone. He went out with her when she departed, and accompanied her as far as the park gates, the two evidently absorbed in earnest converse: Lady Isabel's jealous eyes saw that. The communication Barbara had to make was, that Captain Thorn had let fall the avowal that he had once been "in trouble," though of its nature there was no indication given. Another journey of hers took the scrap of news, that she had discovered he knew Swainson well. Part all of this, nay, perhaps the whole of it, Mr. Carlyle had found

out for himself; nevertheless he always received Barbara with vivid interest. Richard Hare was related to Miss Carlyle, and if his innocence could be made clear in the sight of men, it would be little less gratifying to them than to the Hares. Of Richard's innocence, Mr. Carlyle now entertained little, if any doubt, and he was becoming impressed with the guilt of Captain Thorn. The latter spoke mysteriously of a portion of his past life—when he could be brought to speak of it at all—and he bore evidently some secret that he did not care to have alluded to.

But now, look at the mean treachery of that man, Francis Levison! The few meetings that Lady Isabel witnessed between her husband and Barbara would have been quite enough to excite her anger and jealousy, and to trouble her peace; but, in addition, Francis Levison took care to tell her of those she did not see. It pleased him—he could best tell his own motive—to watch the movements of Mr. Carlyle and Barbara. There was a hedge pathway through the fields, on the opposite side of the road to the residence of Justice Hare, and as Mr. Carlyle walked down the road to business, in his unsuspectance (not one time in fifty did he choose to ride: he said the walk to and fro kept him in health), Captain Levison would be strolling down like a serpent behind the hedge, watching all his movements, watching his interviews with Barbara if any took place, watching Mr. Carlyle turn into the grove, as he sometimes did, and perhaps watch Barbara run out of the house to meet him. It was all retailed, with miserable exaggeration, to Lady Isabel, whose jealousy, as a natural sequence, grew feverish in its extent.

It is scarcely necessary to explain that of Lady Isabel's jealousy Barbara knew nothing: not a shadow of suspicion had ever penetrated to her mind that Lady Isabel was jealous of her. Had she been told that such was the fact, she would have laughed in derision at her informant. Mr. Carlyle's happy wife, proudly secure in her position and in his affection, jealous of *her!* of her, to whom he never gave an admiring look or a loving word! It would have taken a good deal to make Barbara believe that.

How different were the facts in reality. These meetings of Mr. Carlyle's and Barbara's, instead of being episodes of love-making and tender speeches, were positively painful to Barbara, from the unhappy nature of the subject to be discussed. Far from feeling a reprehensible pleasure in seeking the meetings with Mr. Carlyle, Barbara shrank from them: but that she was urged by dire necessity, in the interests of Richard, she would wholly have avoided them. Poor Barbara, in spite of that explosion of feelings years back, was a lady, possessed of lady's ideas and feelings, and—remembering that explosion—it did not at all accord with her pride to be pushing herself into what might be called secret meetings with Archibald Carlyle. But Barbara, in her love for her brother, pressed down all thoughts of self, and went perseveringly forward for Richard's sake.

Mr. Carlyle was seated one morning in his private room at his office, when his head clerk, Mr. Dill, came in. "A gentleman is asking to see, you Mr. Archibald."

"I am too busy to see anybody for this hour to come. You know that, Dill."

"So I told him, sir, and he says he will wait. It

is that Captain Thorn who is staying here with John Herbert."

Mr. Carlyle raised his eyes, and they encountered those of the old man: a peculiar expression was in the face of both. Mr. Carlyle glanced down at the parchments he was persuing, as if calculating his time. Then he looked up again and spoke.

"I will see *him*, Dill. Send him in."

The business, leading to the visit, was quite simple. Captain Frederick Thorn had got himself into some trouble and vexation about "a bill"—like too many other captains do on occasions, and he had come to crave advice of Mr. Carlyle.

Mr. Carlyle felt dubious as to giving it. This Captain Thorn was a pleasant, attractive man, who won much on acquaintance; one whom Mr. Carlyle would have been pleased, in a friendly point of view, and setting professional interests apart, to help out of his difficulties: but if he were the villain they suspected him to be, the man with crime upon his hand, then Mr. Carlyle would have ordered his office door held wide for him to slink out of it.

"Cannot you advise me what my course ought to be?" he inquired, detecting Mr. Carlyle's hesitation.

"I could advise you, certainly. But—you must excuse my being plain, Captain Thorn—I like to know who my clients are, before I take up their cause or accept them as clients."

"I am able to pay you," was Captain Thorn's reply. "I am not short of ready money; only this bill—"

Mr. Carlyle laughed out, after having bit his lip with annoyance. "It was a natural inference of yours," he said, "but I assure you I was not thinking of your purse. My father held it right never to un-

dertake business for a stranger : unless a man was good, and his cause good, he did not entertain it ; and I have acted on the same principle. By these means, the position and character of our business is such, as is rarely attained by a solicitor. Now, in saying that you are a stranger to me, I am not casting any doubt upon you, Captain Thorn ; I am merely upholding my common practice."

"My family is well connected," was Captain Thorn's next venture.

"Excuse me ; family has nothing to do with it. If the poorest day labourer, if a pauper out of the work-house came to me for advice, he should be heartily welcome to it, provided he were an honest man in the face of day. Again I repeat, you must take no offence at what I say, for I cast no reflection on you : I only urge that you and your character are unknown to me."

Curious words from a lawyer to a client-aspirant, and Captain Thorn found them so. But Mr. Carlyle's tone was so courteous, his manner so affable, in fact, he was so thoroughly the gentleman, that it was impossible to feel hurt.

"Well—how can I convince you that I am respectable ? I have served my country ever since I was sixteen, and my brother officers have found no cause of complaint. My position as an officer and a gentleman would be generally deemed a sufficient guarantee. Inquire of John Herbert. The Herberts, too, are friends of yours, and they have not disdained to give me house room amidst their family."

"True," returned Mr. Carlyle, feeling that he could not well object further ; and also that all men

should be deemed innocent until proved guilty. "At any rate, I will advise you what must be done at present;" he added, "though if the affair must go on, do not promise that I can continue to act for you. I am very busy just now."

Captain Thorn explained his dilemma, and Mr. Carlyle told him what to do in it. "Were you not at West Lynne some ten years ago?" he suddenly inquired at the close of the conversation. "You denied it to me once at my house, but I concluded from an observation you let fall, that you had been here."

"Yes, I was," replied Captain Thorn, in a confidential tone. "I don't mind owning it to you in confidence, but I do not wish it to get abroad. I was not at West Lynne, but in its neighbourhood. The fact is, when I was a careless young fellow, I was stopping a few miles from here, and got into a scrape, through a—a—in short, it was an affair of gallantry. I did not show out very well at the time, and I don't care that it should be known I am in the county again."

"Mr. Carlyle's pulses—for Richard Hare's sake—beat a shade quicker. The avowal "an affair of gallantry" was almost a confirmation of his suspicions.

"Yes," he pointedly said. "The girl was Afy Hallijohn."

"Afy—who?" repeated Captain Thorn, opening his eyes, and fixing them on Mr. Carlyle's.

"Afy Hallijohn."

Captain Thorn continued to look at Mr. Carlyle, an amused expression, rather than any other, predominant on his features. "You are mistaken," he

observed. "Afy Halijohn? I never heard the name before in my life."

"Did you never hear, or know, that a dreadful tragedy was enacted in this place about that period?" returned Mr. Carlyle, in a low, meaning tone. "That Afy Hallijohn's father—"

"Oh, stay, stay, stay," hastily interrupted Captain Thorn. "I am telling a story in saying I never heard the name. Afy Hallijohn? Why, that's the girl Tom Herbert was telling me about: who—what was it?—disappeared, after her father was murdered."

"Murdered in his own cottage; almost in Afy's presence; murdered by—by—" Mr. Carlyle recollected himself: he had spoken more impulsively than was his custom. "Hallijohn was my father's faithful clerk for many years," he more calmly concluded.

"And he, who committed the murder, was young Hare, son of Justice Hare, and brother to that attractive girl, Barbara. Your speaking of this has recalled what they told me to my recollection. The first evening I was at the Herberts, Justice Hare and others were there, smoking—half a dozen pipes were going at once; I also saw Miss Barbara that evening at your park gates; and Tom told me of the murder. An awful calamity for the Hares. I suppose that is the reason the young lady is Miss Hare still: one, with her good fortune and good looks, ought to have changed her name ere this."

"No, it is not the reason," resumed Mr. Carlyle.

"What is the reason, then?"

A faint flush tinged the brow of Mr. Carlyle. "I know more than one who would be glad to get Barbara, in spite of the murder. Do not depreciate Miss Hare."

“Not I, indeed; I like the young lady too well,” replied Captain Thorn. “The girl, Afy, has never been heard of since, has she?”

“Never,” said Mr. Carlyle. “Did you know her well?” he deliberately added.

“I never knew her at all, if you mean Afy Halli-john. Why should you think I did? I never heard of her till Tom Herbert amused me with the history.”

Mr. Carlyle devoutly wished he could tell whether the man before him was speaking truth or falsehood. He continued.

“Afy’s favours—I mean her smiles and her chatter—were pretty freely dispersed, for she was heedless and vain. Amidst others who got the credit for occasionally basking in her rays, was a gentleman of the name of Thorn. Was it not yourself?”

Captain Thorn stroked his moustache with an air that seemed to say he *could* boast of his share of such baskings; in short, as if he felt half inclined to do it. “Upon my word,” he simpered, “you do me too much honour: I cannot confess to having been favoured by Miss Afy.”

“Then she was not the—the damsel you speak of, who drove you—if I understood aright—from the locality?” resumed Mr. Carlyle, fixing his eyes upon him, so as to take in every tone of the answer, and shade of the countenance, as he gave it.

“I should think not, indeed. It was a married lady, more’s the pity; young, pretty, vain, and heedless, as you represent this Afy. Things went smoother after a time, and she and her husband—a stupid country yeoman—became reconciled: but I have been ashamed of the affair ever since; doubly ashamed of it since I have grown wiser, and I do not care

ever to be recognised as the actor in it, or to have it raked up against me."

Captain Thorn rose, and took a somewhat hasty leave. Was he, or was he not the man? Mr. Carlyle could not solve the doubt.

Mr. Dill came in as he disappeared, closed the door and advanced to his master, speaking in an under tone.

"Mr. Archibald, has it struck you that the gentleman, just gone out, may be the Lieutenant Thorn you once spoke to me about?—he who had used to gallop over from Swainson to court Afy Hallijohn?"

"It has struck me so most forcibly," replied Mr. Carlyle. "Dill, I would give five hundred pounds out of my pocket this moment, to be assured of the fact—if he is the same."

"I have seen him several times since he has been staying with the Herberts," pursued the old gentleman, "and my doubts have naturally been excited, as to whether it could be the man in question. Curious enough, Bezant, the doctor, was over here yesterday from Swainson; and, as I was walking with him arm-in-arm, we met Captain Thorn. The two recognised each other and bowed, but merely as distant acquaintances. 'Do you know that gentleman?' said I to Bezant. 'Yes,' he answered, 'it is Mr. Frederick.' 'Mr. Frederick with something added to it,' said I: 'his name is Thorn.' 'I know that,' returned Bezant, 'but when he was in Swainson some years ago, he chose to drop the Thorn, and the town in general knew him only as Mr. Frederick.' 'What was he doing there, Bezant?' I asked. 'Amusing himself and getting into mischief,' was the answer: 'nothing very bad, only the random

scrapes of young men.' 'Was he often on horse-back, riding to a distance?' was my next question. 'Yes, that he was,' replied Bezant; 'none more fond of galloping across the country than he: I used to tell him he'd ride his horse's tail off.' Now, Mr. Archibald, what do you think?" concluded the old clerk: "and so far as I could make out, this was about the very time of the tragedy at Hallijohn's."

"Think?" replied Mr. Carlyle, "what can I think but that it is the same man? I am convinced of it now."

And, leaning back in his chair, he fell into a deep reverie, regardless of the parchments that lay before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET SCRAP OF PAPER.

THE weeks went on; two or three: and things seemed to be progressing backwards rather than forwards—if that's not Irish. Francis Levison's affairs—that is, the adjustment of them—did not advance at all: creditors were obstinate. He had been three times over to Levison Park, securely boxed up in Mr. Carlyle's close carriage from the prying eyes of beholders; but Sir Peter seemed to be turning as obdurate as the creditors. Captain Levison had deceived him, he found out: inasmuch as certain sums of money, handed over by Sir Peter some time back to settle certain claims, had been by the gentleman appropriated to his own purposes. Sir Peter did not appear inclined to forgive the deceit, and vowed he would do nothing further yet awhile. There was nothing for him but to return to the Continent, Captain Levison observed. And the best place for him; plenty of scamps congregated there, was the retort of Sir Peter. He apparently meant what he said, for when Francis Levison rose to leave, Sir Peter took out of his pocket-book notes to the value of 100*l.*, told him that would pay for the expense he had been put to in coming, and that his allowance would be continued as usual.

“How did you get on to-day with Sir Peter?”

inquired Mr. Carlyle, that evening at dinner, when his guest was back at East Lynne.

“Middling,” replied Francis Levison. “I did not do much with him. These old stagers like to take their own time over things.”

An answer false as he was. It did not suit his plans to quit East Lynne yet; and, had he told the truth, he would have had no plea for remaining.

Another thing that was going on fast to bad, instead of to good, was the jealousy of Lady Isabel. How could it be otherwise, kept up, as it was, by Barbara’s frequent meetings with Mr. Carlyle, and by Captain Levison’s comments and false insinuations regarding them? Discontented with herself and with everybody about her, Isabel was living now in a state of excitement; a dangerous resentment against her husband working in her heart. That very day, the one of Captain Levison’s visit to Levison Park, in driving through West Lynne in the pony carriage, she had come upon her husband in close converse with Barbara Hare. So absorbed were they that they never saw her, though her carriage passed close to the pavement where they stood.

On the morning following as the Hare family were seated at breakfast, the postman was seen coming towards the house. Barbara sprang from her seat to the open window, and the man advanced to her.

“Only one, miss. It is for yourself.”

“Who is it from?” began the justice, as Barbara returned to her chair. In letters, as in other things, he was curious to know their contents, whether they might be addressed to himself or not.

“It is from Anne, papa,” replied Barbara, as she laid the letter by her side on the table.

“Why don’t you open it and see what she says?”

“I will, directly. I am just going to pour out some more tea for mamma.”

Barbara handed her mamma the tea, and then took up her letter. As she opened it, a small bit of paper, folded, fell upon her lap. Fortunately, most fortunately, Justice Hare, who at the moment had his nose in his coffee-cup, did not see it, but Mrs. Hare did.

“Barbara, you have dropped something.”

Barbara had seen it also, and was clutching stealthily at the “something” with almost a guilty movement. She had no ready answer at hand, but bent her eyes upon her letter, and Mrs. Hare spoke again.

“My love, something dropped on your lap.”

“Don’t you hear your mamma, young lady?” pursued the justice. “What is it you have dropped?”

Barbara, with a crimson face of heat, rose from her chair and shook out her pretty muslin dress—somehow, Barbara’s dresses were always pretty. “There’s nothing at all, papa, nothing that I can see.” And, in sitting down, she contrived to give her mother a warning look, which silenced Mrs. Hare. Then Barbara read her sister’s letter, and laid it open on the table for the benefit of anybody else, who might like to do the same.

The justice snatched it up, taking first benefit to himself—as he was sure to do. He threw it down, grumbling.

“Not much in it. There never is in Anne’s letters: she won’t set the Thames on fire as a correspondent. As if anybody cared to hear about the

baby's being 'short-coated!' I think I'll have a cup more coffee, Barbara."

Finally the justice finished his breakfast and strolled out into the garden. Mrs. Hare turned to Barbara.

"My dear, why did you give me that mysterious look? And what was it that dropped upon your lap? It seemed to fall from Anne's letter."

"Well, mamma, it did fall from Anne's letter. You know how exacting papa is—always will see and inquire into everything—so, when Anne wants to tell me any bit of news that she does not care the whole world to know, she writes it on a separate bit of paper and puts it inside her letter. I suppose it was one of those bits that fell out."

"Child, I cannot let you insinuate that your papa has no right to look into your letters."

"Of course not, mamma," was Miss Barbara's rejoinder. "But if he had a grain of common sense, he might judge that I and Anne may sometimes have little private matters to say to each other, not necessary or expedient for him to pry into."

Barbara had produced the scrap of paper as she spoke, and was opening it. Mrs. Hare watched her movements, and her countenance. She saw the latter flush suddenly and vividly, and then become deadly pale: she saw Barbara crush the note in her hand when read.

"Oh, mamma!" she uttered.

The flush of emotion came also into Mrs. Hare's delicate cheeks. "Barbara! is it bad news?"

"Mamma,—it—it—is about Richard!" she whispered, glancing at the door and window, to see that none might be within sight or hearing. "I never

thought of him: I only fancied Anne might be sending me some bit of news concerning her own affairs. Good Heavens! how fortunate — how providential that papa did not see the paper fall; and that you did not persist in your inquiries! If he—”

“Barbara, you are keeping me in suspense,” interrupted Mrs. Hare, who had also grown white. “What should Anne know about Richard?”

Barbara smoothed out the writing and held it before her mother. It was as follows:

“I have had a curious note from R. It was without date or signature, but I knew his handwriting. He tells me to let you know, in the most sure and private manner that I can, that he will soon be paying you another night visit. You are to watch the grove every evening when the present moon gets bright.”

Mrs. Hare covered her face for some minutes. “Thank God for all his mercies!” she murmured.

“Oh, mamma, but it is an awful risk for him to run!”

“But to know that he is in life — to know that he is in life! And for the risk — Barbara, I dread it not. The same good God who protected him through the last visit, will protect him through this. He will not forsake the oppressed, the innocent. Destroy that paper, child.”

“Archibald Carlyle must first see it, mamma. I will destroy it afterwards.”

“Then seek him out to-day and show it him. I shall not be easy until it is destroyed, Barbara.”

Braving the comments of the gossips, hoping the visit would not reach the ears or eyes of the justice, Barbara went that day to the office of Mr. Carlyle.

He was not there : he was not at West Lynne : he was gone to Lynneborough on business, and Mr. Dill thought it a question if he would be at the office again that day. If so, it would be late in the afternoon. Barbara, as soon as their own dinner was over, took up her patient station at the gate, hoping to see him pass ; but the time went by, and he did not. She had little doubt that he had returned home without going again to West Lynne.

What should she do ? Go up to East Lynne and see him, said her conscience. Barbara's mind was in a strangely excited state. It appeared to her that this visit of Richard's must have been specially designed by Providence, that he might be confronted with Thorn. That they must be confronted the one with the other, or rather, that Richard must have the opportunity given to him of seeing Thorn, was a matter of course ; though how it was to be brought about, Barbara could not guess. For all action, all plans, she must depend upon Mr. Carlyle ; he ought to be put in immediate possession of the news, for the moon was already three or four days old, and there was no knowing when Richard might appear.

“ Mamma,” she said, returning in-doors, after seeing the justice depart upon an evening visit to the Buck's Head, where he and certain other justices and gentlemen sometimes congregated to smoke and chat, “ I shall go up to East Lynne if you have no objection. I must see Mr. Carlyle.”

“ What objection can I have, my dear ? I am all anxiety for you to see him. It is so unfortunate that he was out to-day when you ventured to his office. Mind you tell him all : and ask him what is best to be done.”

Away went Barbara. It had struck seven when she arrived at East Lynne.

“Is Mr. Carlyle disengaged?”

“Mr. Carlyle is not yet home, miss. My lady and Miss Carlyle are waiting dinner for him.”

A check for Barbara. The servant asked her to walk in, but she declined, and turned from the door. She was in no mood for visit paying.

Lady Isabel had been standing at the window watching for her husband, wondering what made him so late: she observed Barbara approach the house, and saw her walk away again. Presently the servant who had answered the door entered the drawing-room.

“Was not that Miss Hare?”

“Yes, my lady,” was the man’s reply. “She wanted master. I said your ladyship was at home, but she would not enter.”

Isabel said no more. She caught the eyes of Francis Levison fixed on her with as much compassionate meaning, as they dared express. She clasped her hands in pain, and turned again to the window.

Barbara was slowly walking down the avenue, Mr. Carlyle was then in sight, coming on quickly. Lady Isabel saw their hands meet in greeting.

“Oh, I am so thankful to have met you!” exclaimed Barbara, impulsively. “I actually went to your office to-day, and I have been now to your house. We have great news!”

“Ay! What? About Thorn?”

“No, about Richard,” replied Barbara, taking the scrap of paper from the folds of her dress. “This came to me this morning, from Anne.”

Mr. Carlyle took the document, and Barbara looked over him whilst he read it: neither of them thinking

that Lady Isabel's jealous eyes, and Captain Levison's evil ones, were strained on them from the distant windows. Miss Carlyle's also were, for the matter of that.

"Archibald, it seems to me that Providence must be directing him hither at this moment. Our suspicions, with regard to Thorn, can now be set at rest. You must contrive that Richard shall see him. What can he be coming again for?"

"More money," was the supposition of Mr. Carlyle. "Does Mrs. Hare know of this?"

"She does, unfortunately. I opened the paper before her, never dreaming it was connected with Richard. I wish I could have spared mamma the news, until he was actually here: the expectation and suspense I fear will make her ill. It terrifies me to that extent that I don't know what I am about," she continued. "Not a moment's rest or peace shall I have, until he has been and is gone again. Poor, wandering, unhappy Richard! and not to be guilty?"

"He acted as though he were guilty, Barbara. And that line of conduct often entails as much trouble as real guilt."

"You do not believe him guilty?" she almost passionately uttered.

"I do not. I have little doubt of the guilt of Thorn."

"Oh, if it could but be brought home to him!" reiterated Barbara: "so that Richard might be cleared in the sight of day. How can you contrive that he shall see Thorn?"

"I cannot tell; I must think it over. Let me know the instant he arrives, Barbara."

"Of course I shall. It may be, that he does not

want money; that his errand is only to see mamma. He was always so fond of her."

"I must leave you," said Mr. Carlyle, taking her hand in token of farewell. Then, as the thought occurred to him, he turned and walked a few steps with her, without releasing it. He was probably quite unconscious that he retained it: she was not.

"You know, Barbara, if he should want money, and it should not be convenient to Mrs. Hare to supply it at so short a notice, I can give it him, as I did before."

"Thank you, thank you, Archibald. Mamma felt sure you would."

She lifted her eyes to his with an expression of gratitude: but for the habitual control to which she had schooled herself, a warmer feeling might have mingled with it. Mr. Carlyle nodded pleasantly, and then set off towards the house at the pace of a steam-engine.

Two minutes in his dressing-chamber, and he entered the drawing-room, apologising for having kept them waiting dinner, and explaining that he had been compelled to go to his office to give some orders, subsequent to his return from Lynneborough. Lady Isabel's lips were pressed together, and she preserved an obstinate silence. Mr. Carlyle, in his unsuspectance, did not notice it.

"What did Barbara Hare want?" demanded Miss Carlyle, during dinner.

"She wanted to see me on business," was his reply, given in a tone that certainly did not invite his sister to pursue the subject. "Will you take some more fish, Isabel?"

“What was that you were reading over with her?” pursued the indefatigable Miss Corny. “It looked like a note.”

“Ah, that would be telling,” returned Mr. Carlyle, willing to turn it off with gaiety. “If young ladies choose to make me privy to their love-letters, I cannot betray confidence, you know.”

“What rubbish, Archibald!” quoth she. “As if you could not say outright what Barbara wants, without making a mystery of it. And she seems to be always wanting you now.”

Mr. Carlyle glanced at his sister, a quick, peculiar look: it seemed, to her, to speak both of seriousness and warning. Involuntarily her thoughts—and her fears—flew back to the past.

“Archibald! Archibald!” she uttered, repeating the name as if she could not get any further words out, in her dread. “It—it—is never—that old affair is never being reaped up again?”

Now, Miss Carlyle’s “old affair” referred to one sole and sore point—Richard Hare: and so Mr. Carlyle understood it. Lady Isabel unhappily believed that any “old affair” could but have reference to the bygone loves of her husband and Barbara.

“You will oblige me by going on with your dinner, Cornelia,” gravely responded Mr. Carlyle. Then—assuming a more laughing tone—“I tell you it is unreasonable to expect me to betray a young lady’s secrets, although she may choose to confide them professionally to me. What say you, Captain Levison?”

Captain Levison bowed; a smile of mockery, all too perceptible to Lady Isabel, on his lip. And Miss

Carlyle bent her head over her plate, and went on with her dinner as meek as any lamb.

That same evening, Lady Isabel's indignant and rebellious heart condescended to speak of it when alone with her husband.

"What is it that she wants with you so much, that Barbara Hare?"

"It is private business, Isabel. She has to bring me messages from her mother."

"Must the business be kept from me?"

He was silent for a moment, considering whether he might tell her. But it was impossible he could speak, even to his wife, of the suspicion they were attaching to Captain Thorn, it would have been unfair and wrong: neither could he betray that a secret visit was expected from Richard. To no one would he betray that: unless Miss Corny, with her questioning, got it out of him: and she was safe and true.

"It would not make you the happier to know it, Isabel. There is a dark secret, you are aware, touching the Hare family: it is connected with that."

She did not put faith in a word of the reply. She believed he could not tell her because her feelings, as his wife, would be outraged by the confession: and it goaded her anger into recklessness. Mr. Carlyle on his part, never gave a thought to the supposition that she might be jealous: he had believed that nonsense at an end years ago. He was perfectly honourable and true, giving her no shadow of cause or reason to be jealous of him: and, being a practical, matter-of-fact man, it did not occur to him that she could be so.

Lady Isabel was sitting the following morning, moody and out of sorts. Captain Levison had accompanied Mr. Carlyle in the most friendly manner possible to the park gates on his departure, and then stolen along the hedge-walk. He returned to Lady Isabel with the news of an "ardent" interview with Barbara, who had been watching for Mr. Carlyle at the gate of the Grove. She sat, sullenly digesting the tidings, when a note was brought in. It proved to be an invitation to dinner for the following Tuesday, at a Mrs. Jeafferson's—for Mr. and Lady Isabel Carlyle and Miss Carlyle.

She drew her desk towards her petulantly, to answer it on the spur of the moment, first of all passing the note across the table to Miss Carlyle.

"Do you go?" asked Miss Carlyle.

"Yes," replied Lady Isabel. "Mr. Carlyle and I both want a change of some sort," she added, in a mocking sort of spirit: "it may be as well to have it, if only for an evening." In truth, this unhappy jealousy, this distrust of her husband, appeared to have altered Lady Isabel's very nature.

"And leave Captain Levison alone?" returned Miss Carlyle.

Lady Isabel bent over her desk, making no reply.

"What will you do with him, I ask?" persisted Miss Carlyle.

"He can remain here: he can dine by himself. Shall I accept the invitation for you?"

"No; I shall not go," said Miss Carlyle.

"Then, in that case, there can be no difficulty with regard to Captain Levison," coldly spoke Lady Isabel.

"I don't want his company: I am not fond of it,"

cried Miss Carlyle. "I would go to Mrs. Jeffer-son's, but that I should require a new dress."

"That's easily had," said Lady Isabel. "I shall want one myself."

"*You* want a new dress!" uttered Miss Carlyle. "Why, you have dozens!"

"I don't know that I could count a dozen in all," returned Isabel, chafing at the remark, and the continual thwarting put upon her by Miss Carlyle, which had latterly seemed to be more than usually hard to endure. Petty ills try the temper worse than great ones.

Lady Isabel concluded her note, folded, sealed it, and then rang the bell. As the man left the room with it, she desired that Wilson might be sent to her.

"Is it this morning, Wilson, that the dressmaker comes to try on Miss Isabel's dress?" she inquired.

Wilson hesitated and stammered, and glanced from her mistress to Miss Carlyle. The latter looked up from her work.

"The dressmaker's not coming," spoke she sharply. "I countermanded the order for the frock, for Isabel does not require it."

"She does require it," answered Lady Isabel, in perhaps the most displeased tone she had ever used to Miss Carlyle. "I am a competent judge of what is necessary for my own children."

"She no more requires a new frock than that table requires one, or that you require the one you are longing for," stoically persisted Miss Carlyle. "She has got ever so many lying by: and her striped silk, turned, will make up as handsome as ever."

Wilson backed out of the room and closed the door softly, but her mistress caught a compassionate look

directed towards her. Her heart felt bursting with indignation and despair: there seemed to be no side on which she could turn for refuge. Pitied by her own servants!

She reopened her desk, and dashed off a haughty, peremptory note for the attendance of the dressmaker at East Lynne, commanding its immediate despatch.

Miss Corny groaned in her wrath. "You will be sorry for not listening to me, ma'am, when your husband shall be brought to poverty. He works like a horse now; and, with all his slaving, can scarcely, I fear, keep expenses down.

Poor Lady Isabel, ever sensitive, began to think they might, what with one thing and another, be spending more than Mr. Carlyle's means would justify; she knew their expenses were heavy. The same tale had been dinned into her ear ever since she married him. She gave up in that moment all thought of the new dress for herself and for Isabel: but her spirit, in her deep unhappiness, felt sick and faint within her.

Wilson meanwhile had flown to Joyce's room, and was exercising her dearly-beloved tongue in an exaggerated account of the matter: how Miss Carlyle put upon my lady, and had forbidden a new dress to her, as well as the frock to Miss Isabel.

Joyce, sitting up that day for the first time, was gazing from the window at Captain Levison as Wilson spoke.

"He's a handsome man — to look at him from this," she observed.

And yet a few more days passed on.

CHAPTER VIII.

RICHARD HARE AT MR. DILL'S WINDOW.

BRIGHT was the moon on that genial Monday night, bright was the evening star as they shone upon a solitary wayfarer who walked on the shady side of the road, with his head down, as though he did not care to court observation. A labourer apparently, for he wore a smock frock and had hobnails in his shoes; but his whiskers were large and black, quite hiding the lower part of his face, and his broad-brimmed "wide-awake" came far over his brows. He drew near the dwelling of Richard Hare, Esquire, plunged rapidly over some palings (after looking well to the right and left) into a field, and thence over the side wall into Mr. Hare's garden, where he remained amidst the thick trees.

Now, by some mischievous spirit of intuition or contrariety, Justice Hare was spending this evening at home, a thing which did not happen once in six months, unless he had friends with him. Things, in real life, mostly go by the rules of contrary—as the children say in their play, holding the corners of the handkerchief. "Here we go round and round by the rules of conterrary: if I tell you to hold fast, you must loose: and if I tell you to loose, you must hold fast." Just so, in the play of life. When we want people to "hold fast," they "loose;" and when we want them to loose, they hold fast.

Barbara, anxious, troubled, worn out with the suspense of watching for her brother, would have given her head for her father to go out. But no: things were going by the rules of contrary: there sat the stern justice in full view of the garden and the grove, his chair drawn precisely in front of the window, his wig awry, and a long pipe in his mouth.

“Are you not going out, Richard?” Mrs. Hare ventured to say.

“No.”

“Mamma, shall I ring for the shutters to be closed?” asked Barbara, by-and-by.

“Shutters closed!” said the justice. “Who’d shut out this bright moon? You have got the lamp at the far end of the room, young lady, and can go to it.”

Barbara ejaculated an inward prayer for patience—for safety for Richard, if he did come, and waited on, watching the grove in the distance. It came, the signal; her quick eye caught it; a movement as if some person or thing had stepped out beyond the trees and stepped back again. Barbara’s face turned white and her lips dry.

“I am so hot!” she ejaculated, in her confused eagerness for an excuse; “I must take a turn in the garden.”

She stole out, throwing a dark shawl over her shoulders, that it might render her less conspicuous to the justice, and her dress that evening was a dark silk. She did not dare to stand still when she reached the trees, or to penetrate them, but she caught glimpses of Richard’s face, and her heart ached at the change in it. It was white, thin, and full of care; and his hair, he told her, was turning grey.

“Oh, Richard, darling, I may not stop and talk to

you!" she wailed, in a deep whisper. "Papa is at home, you see, of all nights in the world."

"Can't I see my mother?"

"How can you? You must wait till to-morrow night."

"I don't like waiting a second night, Barbara. There's danger in every inch of ground that this neighbourhood contains."

"But you must wait, Richard; for reasons. That man who caused all the mischief, Thorn—"

"Hang him!" gloomily interrupted Richard.

"He is at West Lynne. At least, there is a Thorn here whom we, I and Mr. Carlyle, believe to be the same, and we want you to see him."

"Let me see him," panted Richard, whom the news appeared to agitate, "Let me see him! Barbara—I say—"

Barbara had passed on again, returning presently. "You know, Richard, I must keep moving, with papa's eyes there. He is a tall man, very good-looking, very fond of dress and ornaments, especially of diamonds."

"That's he," cried Richard, eagerly.

"Mr. Carlyle will contrive that you shall see him," she continued, stooping down as if to tie her shoe. "Should it prove to be the same, perhaps nothing can be immediately done towards clearing you, but it will be a great point ascertained. Are you sure you should know him again?"

"Sure! that I should know *him!*" uttered Richard Hare. "Should I know my own father? should I know you? And you are not engraven on my heart in letters of blood, as he is. How and when am I to see him, Barbara?"

“I can tell you nothing till I have consulted Mr. Carlyle. Be here to-morrow as soon as ever the dusk will permit you: perhaps Mr. Carlyle will contrive to bring him here. If—”

The window was thrown open, and the stentorian voice of Justice Hare was heard from it.

“Barbara, are you wandering about there to take cold? Come in. Come in, I say.”

“Oh, Richard, I am so sorry!” she lingered to whisper. “But papa is sure to be out to-morrow evening: he would not stay in two evenings running. Good night, dear.”

There must be no delay now, and the next day Barbara, braving comments, appeared once more at the office of Mr. Carlyle. Terribly did the rules of contrary seem in action just then: Mr. Carlyle was not in, and the clerks did not know when to expect him: he was gone out for some hours, they believed.

“Mr. Dill,” urged Barbara, as the old gentleman came to the door to greet her, “I *must* see him.”

“He will not be in till late in the afternoon, Miss Barbara. I expect him then. Is it anything I can do?”

“No, no,” sighed Barbara.

At that moment Lady Isabel and her little girl passed in the chariot. She saw Barbara at her husband’s door: what should she be doing there, unless paying him a visit? A slight, haughty bow to Barbara, a pleasant nod and smile to Mr. Dill, and the carriage bowled on.

It was four o’clock before Barbara could see Mr. Carlyle. She communicated her tidings, that Richard had arrived.

Mr. Carlyle held deceit and all underhanded doings

in especial abhorrence : yet he deemed that he was acting right, under the circumstances, in allowing Captain Thorn to be secretly seen by Richard Hare. In haste he arranged his plans. It was the evening of his own dinner engagement at Mrs. Jeafferson's ; but that he must give up. Telling Barbara to despatch Richard to his office as soon as he should make his appearance in the grove, and to urge him to come boldly, for that none would know him in his disguise, he wrote a hurried note to Thorn, requesting him also to be at his office at eight o'clock that evening, as he had something to communicate to him. The latter plea was no fiction, for he had received an important communication that morning relative to the business on which Captain Thorn had consulted him, and his own absence from the office had alone prevented his sending for him earlier.

Other matters were calling the attention of Mr. Carlyle, and it was five o'clock ere he departed for East Lynne : he would not have gone so early, but that he must inform his wife of his inability to keep the dinner engagement. Mr. Carlyle was one who never hesitated to sacrifice personal gratification to friendship or to business.

The chariot was at the door, and Lady Isabel was dressed and waiting for him in her dressing-room. "Did you forget that the Jeaffersons dine at six?" was her greeting.

"No, Isabel ; but it was impossible for me to get here before. And I should not have come so soon, but to tell you that I cannot accompany you. You must make my excuses to Mrs. Jeafferson."

A pause. Strange thoughts were running through Lady Isabel's mind. "Why so?" she inquired.

“Some business has arisen which I am compelled to attend to this evening. As soon as I have snatched my dinner at home I must hasten back to the office.”

Was he making this excuse to spend the hours of her absence with Barbara Hare? The idea that it was so took firm possession of her mind, and remained there. Her face expressed a variety of feelings, the most prominent that of resentment. Mr. Carlyle saw it.

“You must not be vexed, Isabel. I assure you it is no fault of mine. It is important private business which cannot be put off, and which I cannot delegate to Dill. I am sorry it should so have happened.”

“You never return to the office in an evening,” she remarked, with pale lips.

“No: because, if anything arises to take us there after hours, Dill officiates. But the business to-night must be done by myself.”

Another pause. Lady Isabel suddenly broke it. “Shall you join us later in the evening?”

“I believe I shall not be able to do so.”

She drew her light shawl round her shoulders, and swept down the staircase. Mr. Carlyle followed, to place her in the carriage. When he said farewell she never answered, but looked straight out before her with a stony look.

“What time, my lady?” inquired the footman, as she alighted at Mrs. Jeafferson’s.

“Early. Half-past nine.”

A little before eight o’clock, Richard Hare, in his smock frock, his slouching hat, and his false whiskers, rang dubiously at the outer door of Mr. Carlyle’s office. That gentleman instantly opened it. He was quite alone.

“Come in, Richard,” said he, grasping his hand. “Did you meet many whom you knew?”

“I never looked whom I met, sir,” was the reply. “I thought if I looked at people, they might look at me, so I came straight ahead with my eyes before me. How the place is altered! There’s a new brick house at the corner where old Morgan’s shop used to be.”

“That’s the new police station: West Lynne, I assure you, is becoming grand in public buildings. And how have you been, Richard?”

“Ailing and wretched,” answered Richard Hare. “How can I be otherwise, Mr. Carlyle, with so false an accusation attaching to me; and working like a slave, as I have to do.”

“You may take off that disfiguring hat, Richard. No one is here.”

Richard slowly heaved it from his brows, and his fair face, so like his mother’s, was disclosed. But the moment he was uncovered, he turned shrinkingly towards the entrance door. “If any one should come in, sir!”

“Impossible,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “The front door is fast, and the office is supposed to be empty at this hour.”

“For, if I should be seen and recognised, it might come to hanging, you know, sir. You are expecting that cursed Thorn here, Barbara told me.”

“Directly,” replied Mr. Carlyle, observing the mode of addressing him “sir.” It spoke plainly of the scale of society in which Richard must be mixing: that he was with those who said it habitually; that he used it habitually himself. “From your description of the Lieutenant Thorn who destroyed Halli-john, we believe this Captain Thorn to be the same

man," pursued Mr. Carlyle. "In person he appears to tally exactly; and I have ascertained that some years ago he was a great deal at Swainson, and got into some sort of scrape. He is in John Herbert's regiment, and is here with him on a visit."

"But what an idiot he must be to venture here!" uttered Richard. "Here, of all places in the world."

"He counts, no doubt, upon not being known. So far as I can find out, Richard, nobody here knew him, save you and Afy. I shall put you in Mr. Dill's room—you may remember the little window in it—and from thence you can take full view of Thorn, whom I shall keep in the front office. You are sure you would recognise him, at this distance of time?"

"I should know him if it were fifty years to come; I should know him if he were disguised as I am disguised. We cannot," Richard sank his voice, "forget a man who has been the object of our frenzied jealousy."

"What has brought you to West Lynne again, Richard? Any particular object?"

"Chiefly a hankering within me that I could not get rid of," replied Richard. "It was not so much to see my mother and Barbara—though I have longed to see them since my illness—but a feeling was within me that I could not rest away from it. So I said I'd risk it again, just for a day."

"I thought you might possibly want some assistance, as before."

"I do want that also," said Richard. "Not much. My illness has run me into debt, and if my mother can let me have a little I shall be thankful."

"I am sure she will," answered Mr. Carlyle.

“ You shall have it from me to-night. What has been the matter with you ? ”

“ The beginning of it was a kick from a horse, sir. That was last winter, and it laid me up for six weeks. Then, in the spring, after I had got well and was at work again, I caught some sort of fever, and down again I was for six weeks. I have not been to say well since.”

“ How is it you have never written, or sent me your address ? ”

“ Because I dare not,” answered Richard, timidly. “ I should always be in fear ; not of you, Mr. Carlyle, but of its becoming known in some way or other. The time is getting on, sir : is that Thorn sure to come ? ”

“ He sent me word that he would, in reply to my note. And—there he is ! ” said Mr. Carlyle, as a ring was heard at the bell. “ Now, Richard, come this way. Bring your hat.”

Richard complied by putting the hat on his head, pulling it so low down that it touched his nose. He felt himself safer in it. Mr. Carlyle showed him into Mr. Dill’s room, and then turned the key upon him, and put it in his pocket. Whether this precautionary measure was intended to prevent any possibility of Captain Thorn’s finding his way in, or of Richard finding his way out was best known to himself.

Mr. Carlyle went to the front door, opened it, and admitted Captain Thorn. He brought him into the clerk’s office, which was bright with gas, keeping him in conversation for a few minutes standing, and then asking him to be seated : all in full view of the little window.

“I must beg your pardon for being late,” Captain Thorn observed. “I am half an hour beyond the time you mentioned, but the Herberts had two or three friends at dinner, and I could not get away. I hope, Mr. Carlyle, you have not come to your office to-night purposely for me.”

“Business must be attended to,” somewhat evasively answered Mr. Carlyle: “I have been out myself nearly all day. We received a communication from London this morning relative to your affair, and I am sorry to say it is anything but satisfactory. They will not wait.”

“But I am not liable, Mr. Carlyle. Not liable in justice.”

“No—if what you tell me be correct. But justice and law are sometimes in opposition, Captain Thorn.”

Captain Thorn sat in perplexity. “They will not get me arrested here, will they?”

“They would have done it, beyond doubt; but I have caused a letter to be written and despatched to them, which must bring forth an answer before any violent proceedings are taken. That answer will be here the morning after to-morrow.”

“And what am I to do then?”

“I think it probable there may be a way then of checkmating them. But I am not sure, Captain Thorn, that I can give my attention further to this affair.”

“I hope and trust you will,” was the reply.

“You have not forgotten that I told you, at first, I could not promise to do so,” rejoined Mr. Carlyle. “You shall hear from me to-morrow. If I carry it on for you, I will then appoint an hour for you to

be here the following day: if not — why, I dare say you will find a solicitor as capable of assisting you as I am.”

“But why will you not? What is the reason?”

“I cannot always give reasons for what I do,” was the response. “You shall hear from me to-morrow.”

He rose as he spoke; Captain Thorn also rose. Mr. Carlyle detained him yet a few moments, and then saw him out at the front door and fastened it.

He returned and released Richard. The latter took off his hat as he advanced into the blaze of light.

“Well, Richard, is it the same man?”

“No, sir. Nor in the least like him.”

Mr. Carlyle felt a strange relief; relief for Captain Thorn’s sake. He had rarely seen one whom he could so little associate with the notion of a murderer as Captain Thorn, and he was a man who exceedingly won upon his regard. He could heartily help him out of his dilemma now.

“Excepting that they are both tall, with nearly the same coloured hair, there is no resemblance whatever between them,” proceeded Richard. “Their faces, their figures are as opposite as light is from dark. That other, in spite of his handsome features, has the expression at times of a demon; but the expression of this one is the best part of his face. Hallijohn’s murderer had a curious look here, sir.”

“Where?” questioned Mr. Carlyle, for Richard had only pointed to his face generally.

“Well—I cannot say precisely where it lay, whether in the eyebrows or the eyes: I could not tell when I used to have him before me: but it was in one of them. Ah, Mr. Carlyle, I thought when Barbara told me Thorn was here, it was too good news

to be true; depend on't he won't venture to West Lynne again. This man is no more like that other villain than you are like him."

"Then—as that is set at rest—we had better be going, Richard. You have to see your mother, and she must be waiting in anxiety. How much money do you want?"

"Twenty-five pounds would do, but—" Richard stopped in hesitation.

"But what?" asked Mr. Carlyle. "Speak out, Richard."

"Thirty would be more welcome. Thirty would put me at ease."

"You shall have thirty," said Mr. Carlyle, counting over the notes to him. "Now—will you walk with me to the Grove, or will you walk alone? I mean to see you there in safety."

Richard thought he would prefer to walk alone; everybody they met might bespeaking to Mr. Carlyle. The latter inquired why he chose moonlight nights for his visits.

"It is pleasanter for night travelling. And, had I chosen dark nights, Barbara could not have seen my signal from the trees," was the answer of Richard.

They went out, and proceeded unmolested to the house of Justice Hare. It was past nine then. "I am so much obliged to you, Mr. Carlyle," whispered Richard, as they walked up the path.

"I wish I could help you more effectually, Richard, and clear up the mystery. Is Barbara on the watch? Yes; the door is slowly opening."

Richard stole across the hall and into the parlour to his mother. Barbara approached and softly whispered Mr. Carlyle, standing just outside the portico:

her voice trembled with the suspense of what the answer might be.

“Is it the same man? The same Thorn?”

“No. Richard says this man bears no resemblance to the real one.”

“Oh!” uttered Barbara, in her surprise and disappointment. “Not the same! and for the best part of poor Richard’s evening to have been taken up for nothing.”

“Not quite for nothing,” said Mr. Carlyle. “The question is now set at rest.”

“Set at rest!” repeated Barbara. “It is left in more uncertainty than ever.”

“Set at rest as regards Captain Thorn. And whilst our suspicions were concentrated upon him, we did not look to other quarters.”

When they entered the sitting-room, Mrs. Hare was crying over Richard, and Richard was crying over her: but she seized the hand of Mr. Carlyle.

“You have been very kind: I don’t know what-ever we should do without you. And I want to tax your kindness yet further. Has Barbara mentioned it?”

“I could not talk in the hall, mamma: the servants might have overheard.”

“Mr. Hare is not well, and we terribly fear he will be home early in consequence: otherwise we should have been quite safe until ten, for he is gone to the Buck’s Head, and they never leave, you know, till that hour has struck. Should he come in and see Richard—the very thought sends me into a shiver. Barbara and I have been discussing it all the evening, and we can only think of one plan. It is, that you will kindly stay in the garden near the

gate; and, should he come in, stop him and keep him in conversation. Barbara will be with you, and will run in with the warning, and Richard can go inside the closet in the hall, till Mr. Hare has entered and is safe in this room, and then he can make his escape. Will you do this, Archibald?"

"Certainly I will."

"I cannot part with him before ten o'clock, unless I am obliged," she whispered, pressing Mr. Carlyle's hands in her earnest gratitude. "You don't know what it is, Archibald, to have a lost son home for an hour but once in seven years. At ten o'clock we will part."

Mr. Carlyle and Barbara began to pace the path, in compliance with the wishes of Mrs. Hare, keeping near the entrance gate. When they were turning the second time, Mr. Carlyle offered her his arm: it was an act of mere politeness. Barbara took it: and there they waited and waited, but the justice did not come.

Punctually to the minute half after nine, Lady Isabel's carriage arrived at Mrs. Jeafferson's, and she came out immediately, a headache being the plea for her early departure. She had not far to go to reach East Lynne, about two miles: it was a by-road nearly all the way. They could emerge into the open road if they pleased, but it was a trifle further. Suddenly a gentleman approached the carriage as it was bowling along, and waved his hand to the coachman to pull up. In spite of the glowing moonlight, Lady Isabel did not at first recognise him, for he wore a disfiguring fur cap, the ears of which were tied over his ears and cheeks. It was Francis Levison. She put down the window.

“I thought it must be your carriage. How early you are returning! Were you tired of your entertainers?”

“Why, he knew what time my lady was returning,” thought John to himself; “he asked me. A false sort of chap, that, I’ve a notion.”

“I came out for a stroll, and have tired myself,” he proceeded. “Will you take compassion on me and give me a seat home?”

She acquiesced; she could not well do otherwise. The footman sprang from behind, to open the door, and Francis Levison took his place beside Lady Isabel. “Take the high road,” he put out his head to say to the coachman, and the man touched his hat. Which high road would cause them to pass Mr. Hare’s.

“I did not know you,” she began, gathering herself into her own corner. “What ugly thing is that you have on? It is like a disguise.”

He was taking off the “ugly thing” as she spoke, and began to twirl it round on his hand. “Disguise? Oh no: I have no creditors in the immediate neighbourhood of East Lynne.”

False as ever. It *was* worn as a disguise, and he knew it.

“Is Mr. Carlyle at home?” she inquired.

“No.” Then, after a pause — “I expect he is more agreeably engaged.”

The tone brought the tingling blood to the cheeks of Lady Isabel. She wished to preserve a dignified silence; and did so for a few moments: but the jealous question broke out.

“Engaged in what manner?”

“As I came by Hare’s house just now, I saw two

people, a gentleman and a young lady, coupled lovingly together, enjoying a *tête-à-tête* by moonlight. They were your husband and Miss Hare."

Lady Isabel almost gnashed her teeth: the jealous doubts which had been tormenting her all the evening were confirmed. That the man whom she hated — yes, in her blind anger, she hated him then — should so impose upon her, should excuse himself by lies, lies base and false, from accompanying her, on purpose to pass the hours with Barbara Hare! Had she been alone in the carriage, a torrent of passion had probably escaped her.

She leaned back, panting in her emotion, but concealed it from Captain Levison. As they came opposite to Justice Hare's, she deliberately bent forward, and scanned the garden with eager eyes.

There, in the bright moonlight, all too bright and clear, slowly paced, arm in arm, and drawn close to each other, her husband and Barbara. With a choking sob that could no longer be controlled or hidden, Lady Isabel sank back again.

He, that bold bad man, dared to put his arm round her; to draw her to his side; to whisper that *his* love was left to her, if another's was withdrawn.

She was most assuredly out of her senses that night, or she never would have listened.

A jealous woman is mad; an outraged woman is doubly mad; and the ill-fated Lady Isabel truly believed that every sacred feeling which ought to exist between man and wife, was betrayed by Mr. Carlyle.

"Be avenged on that false hound, Isabel. He was never worthy of you. Leave your life of misery, and come to happiness."

In her bitter distress and wrath, she broke into a

storm of sobs. Were they caused by passion against her husband, or by these bold and shameless words? Alas! alas! Francis Levison applied himself to soothe her with all the sweet and dangerous sophistry of his crafty nature.

CHAPTER IX.

NEVER TO BE REDEEMED.

THE minutes flew on. A quarter to ten; ten; a quarter past ten; and still Richard Hare lingered on with his mother, and still Mr. Carlyle and Barbara paced patiently the garden path. At half-past ten Richard came forth, having taken his last farewell. Then came Barbara's tearful farewell, which Mr. Carlyle witnessed; then a hard grasp of that gentleman's hand, and Richard plunged amidst the trees, to depart the way he came.

"Good night, Barbara," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Will you not come in and say good night to mamma?"

"Not now; it is late. Tell her how glad I am things have gone off so well."

He set off at a rapid pace towards his home, and Barbara leaned on the gate to indulge her tears. Not a soul passed to interrupt her, and the justice did not come. What could have become of him? What could the Buck's Head be thinking of, to detain respectable elderly justices from their beds, who ought to go home early and set a good example to the parish? Barbara knew, the next day, that Justice Hare, with a few more gentlemen, had been seduced from the staid old inn to a friend's house, to an entertainment of supper, pipes, and whist, two tables, six-penny points, and it was between twelve

and one ere the party rose from the fascination. So far, well — as it happened.

Barbara knew not how long she lingered at that gate; ten minutes it may have been. Nobody summoned her; Mrs. Hare was indulging her grief indoors, giving no thought to Barbara, and the justice did not make his appearance. Exceedingly surprised was Barbara to hear fast footsteps, and to find that they were Mr. Carlyle's.

“The more haste, the less speed, Barbara,” he called out as he came up. “I had got half way home, and have had to come back again. When I went into your sitting-room, I left a small parcel, containing a parchment on the sideboard. Will you get it for me?”

Barbara ran in-doors and brought forth the parcel; and Mr. Carlyle, with a brief word of thanks, sped away with it.

She learned on the gate as before, the ready tears flowing again: her heart was aching for Richard: it was aching for the disappointment the night had brought forth respecting Captain Thorn. Still nobody passed; still the steps of her father were not heard, and Barbara stayed on. But — what was that figure, cowering under shade of the hedge at a distance, and, seemingly, watching her? Barbara strained her eyes, while her heart beat as if it would burst its bounds. Surely, surely, it was her brother! What had he ventured back for?

Richard Hare it was. When fully assured that Barbara was standing there, he knew the justice was still absent, and ventured to advance. He appeared to be in a strange state of emotion, his breath laboured, his whole frame trembling.

“ Barbara ! Barbara ! ” he ejaculated, “ I have seen Thorn.”

Barbara thought him demented. “ I know you saw him,” she slowly said ; “ but it was not the right Thorn.”

“ Not he,” breathed Richard ; “ not the gentleman I saw to-night in Carlyle’s office. I have seen the fellow himself. Why do you stare so at me, Barbara ? ”

Barbara was in truth scanning his face keenly. It appeared to her a strange tale that he was telling.

“ When I left here, I cut across into Bean-lane, which is more private for me than this road,” proceeded Richard. “ Just as I got to that clump of trees—you know it, Barbara—I saw somebody coming towards me, from a distance. I stepped back behind the trunks of the trees, into the shade of the hedge, for I don’t care to be met, though I am disguised. He came along the middle of the lane, going towards West Lynne, and I looked out upon him. I knew him long before he was abreast of me : it was Thorn.”

Barbara made no comment : she was digesting the news.

“ Every drop of blood within me began to tingle, and an impulse came upon me to spring upon him and accuse him of the murder of Hallijohn,” went on Richard, in the same excited manner. “ But I restrained it : or, perhaps, my courage failed. One of the reproaches against me, had used to be that I was a physical coward, you know, Barbara,” he added, his tone changing to bitterness. “ In a struggle, Thorn would have had the best of it : he is taller and more powerful than I, and might have battered me to

death. A man who can commit one murder, won't hesitate at a second."

"Richard, do you think you could have been deceived?" she urged. "You had been talking of Thorn, and your thoughts were, naturally, bearing upon him. Imagination—"

"Be still, Barbara!" he interrupted, in a tone of pain. "Imagination, indeed! did I not tell you he was stamped here?" touching his breast. "Do you take me for a child, or an imbecile, that I should fancy I see Thorn in every shadow, or meet people where I do not? He had his hat off as if he had been walking fast and had got hot—he was walking fast, and he carried the hat in one hand, and what looked like a small parcel. With the other hand he was pushing his hair from his brow—in this way, a peculiar way," added Richard, slightly lifting his own hat, and pushing back his hair. "By that action alone I should have known him, for he was always doing it in the old days. And there was his white hand, adorned with his diamond ring! Barbara, the diamond glittered in the moonlight."

Richard's voice and manner were singularly earnest, and a conviction of the truth of his assertion flashed over his sister.

"I saw his face as plainly as I ever saw it, every feature: he is scarcely altered, save for a haggardness in his cheeks now. Barbara, you need not doubt me: I swear it was Thorn."

She grew excited as he was; now that she believed the news, it was telling upon her: reason left its place, and impulse succeeded: Barbara did not wait to weigh her actions.

"Richard, Mr. Carlyle ought to know this. He

has but just gone: we may overtake him if we try."

Forgetting the strange appearance it would have, at that hour of the night, should she meet any one who knew her, forgetting what the consequences might be, did Justice Hare return and find her absent, Barbara set off with a fleet foot, Richard more stealthily following her, his eyes cast in all directions. Fortunately Barbara wore a bonnet and mantle, which she had put on to pace the garden with Mr. Carlyle; fortunately also, they met no one. She succeeded in reaching Mr. Carlyle before he turned into East Lynne gates.

"Barbara!" he exclaimed, in the extreme of astonishment. "Barbara?"

"Archibald! Archibald!" she panted, gasping for breath. "I am not out of my mind; but do come and speak to Richard! He has just seen the real Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle, amazed and wondering, turned back. They got over the field stile nearly opposite to the gates, drew behind the hedge, and there Richard told his tale. Mr. Carlyle did not appear to doubt it, as Barbara had done: perhaps he could not, in the face of Richard's agitated and intense earnestness.

"I am sure there is no one named Thorn in the neighbourhood, save the gentleman you saw in my office to-night, Richard," observed Mr. Carlyle, after some deliberation. "It is very strange."

"He may be staying here under a feigned name," replied Richard. "There can be no mistake that it is Thorn whom I have just met."

"How was he dressed? As a gentleman?"

"Catch him dressing as anything else," returned Richard. "He was in an evening suit of black, with

a sort of thin over-coat thrown on, but it was flung back at the shoulders, and I distinctly saw his clothes. A grey alpaca, it looked like. As I have told Barbara, I should have known him by this action of the hand," imitating it, "as he pushed his hair off his forehead: it was the delicate white hand of the days gone by, Mr. Carlyle; it was the flashing diamond ring."

Mr. Carlyle was silent; Barbara also; but the thoughts of both were busy. "Richard," observed the former, "I should advise you to remain a day or two in the neighbourhood, and look out for this man. You may see him again, and may track him home; it is very desirable to find out who he really is, if practicable."

"But the danger?" urged Richard.

"Your fears magnify that. I am quite certain that nobody would know you in broad daylight, disguised as you are now. So many years have flown since, that people have forgotten to think about you, Richard."

But Richard could not be persuaded; he was full of fears. He described the man as accurately as he could to Mr. Carlyle and Barbara, and told them *they* must look out. With some trouble Mr. Carlyle got from him an address in London to which he might write, in case anything turned up, and Richard's presence should be necessary. He then once more said farewell, and quitted them, his way lying past East Lynne.

"And now to see you back, Barbara," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Indeed you shall not do it, late as it is, and tired as you must be. I came here alone: Richard did not keep near me."

"I cannot help your having come here alone, but

you may rely upon it I do not suffer you to go back so. Nonsense, Barbara! Allow you to go along the high road by yourself at eleven o'clock at night! What are you thinking of?"

He gave Barbara his arm, and they pursued their way. "How late Lady Isabel will think you!" observed Barbara.

"I do not know that Lady Isabel has returned home yet. My being late once in a way is of no consequence."

Not another word was spoken, save by Barbara. "Whatever excuse can I make, should papa be come home?" Both were buried in their own reflections. "Thank you very greatly," she said as they reached the gate, and Mr. Carlyle finally turned away. Barbara stole in, and found the coast clear: her papa had not arrived.

Lady Isabel was in her dressing-room when Mr. Carlyle entered; she was seated at a table, writing. A few questions as to her evening's visit, which she answered in the briefest manner possible, and then he asked her if she was not going to bed.

"By-and-by. I am not sleepy."

"I must go at once, Isabel, for I am dead tired."

"You can go," was her answer.

He bent down to kiss her, but she dexterously turned her face away. He supposed she felt hurt that he had not gone with her to the party, and placed his hand on her shoulder with a pleasant smile.

"You foolish child, to be aggrieved at that! It was no fault of mine, Isabel: I could not help myself. I will talk to you in the morning: I am too tired to-night. I suppose you will not be long.

Her head was bent over her writing again, and she

made no reply. Mr. Carlyle went into the bedroom and shut the door. Some time after, Lady Isabel went softly up-stairs to Joyce's room. Joyce, in her first sleep, was suddenly aroused from it. There stood her mistress, a wax light in her hand. Joyce rubbed her eyes and collected her senses, and finally sat up in bed.

"My Lady! Are you ill?"

"Ill? Yes; ill and wretched," answered Lady Isabel: and ill she looked, for she was perfectly white. "Joyce, I want a promise from you. If anything should happen to me, stay at East Lynne with my children."

Joyce stared in amazement, too astonished to make any reply.

"Joyce, you promised it once before: promise it again. Whatever betide, you will stay with my children when I am gone."

"I will stay with them. But, oh, my lady, what can be the matter with you? Are you taken suddenly ill?"

"Good-bye, Joyce," murmured Lady Isabel, gliding from the chamber as softly as she had entered it. And Joyce, after an hour of perplexity, dropped asleep again.

Joyce was not the only one whose rest was disturbed that eventful night. Mr. Carlyle himself awoke, and to his surprise found that his wife had not come to bed. He wondered what the time was, and struck his repeater. A quarter-past three!

Rising, he made his way to the door of his wife's dressing-room. It was in darkness; and so far as he could judge by absence of sound, unoccupied.

"Isabel."

No reply. Nothing but the echo of his own voice in the silence of the night.

He struck a match and lighted a taper, partially dressed himself, and went out to look for her. He feared she might have been taken ill: or else that she had fallen asleep in one of the rooms. But nowhere could he find her, and, feeling perplexed, he proceeded to his sister's chamber door and knocked.

Miss Carlyle was a light sleeper, and rose up in bed at once, "Who's that?" called out she.

"It is only I, Cornelia," said Mr. Carlyle.

"You!" ejaculated Miss Corny, "what in the name of fortune do you want? You can come in."

Mr. Carlyle opened the door, and met the keen eyes of his sister, bent on him from the bed. Her head was surmounted by a remarkable night-cap, at least a foot high.

"Is anybody ill?" she demanded.

"I think Isabel must be. I cannot find her."

"Not find her!" echoed Miss Corny. "Why what's the time? Is she not in bed?"

"It is three o'clock. She has not been to bed. I cannot find her in the sitting-rooms; neither is she in the children's room."

"Then I'll tell you what it is, Archibald; she's gone worrying after Joyce. Perhaps the girl may be in pain to-night."

Mr. Carlyle was in full retreat towards Joyce's room, at this suggestion, when his sister called to him.

"If anything is amiss with Joyce, you come and tell me, Archibald, for I shall get up and see after her. The girl was my servant before she was your wife's."

He reached Joyce's room and softly unlatched the door, fully expecting to find a light there, and his wife sitting by the bedside. There was no light, however, save that which came from the taper he held, and he saw no signs of his wife. *Where* was she? Was it probable that Joyce could tell him? He stepped inside the room and called to her.

Joyce started up in a fright, which changed to astonishment when she recognised her master. He inquired whether Lady Isabel had been there, and for a few moments Joyce did not answer. She had been dreaming of Lady Isabel, and could not at first detach the dream from the visit which had probably given rise to it.

“What did you say, sir? Is my lady worse?”

“I ask if she has been here. I cannot find her.”

“Why yes,” said Joyce, now fully aroused. “She came here and woke me. That was just before twelve, for I heard the clock strike. She did not stay here a minute, sir.”

“Woke you!” repeated Mr. Carlyle. “What did she want? what did she come here for?”

Thoughts are quick; imagination is quicker; and Joyce was giving the reins to both. Her mistress's gloomy and ambiguous words were crowding on her brain. Three o'clock! and she had not been in bed, and was not to be found in the house! A nameless horror struggled to Joyce's face, her eyes were dilating with it: she seized and threw on a large flannel gown which lay on a chair by the bed, and forgetful of her ailing foot, forgetful of her master who stood there, out she sprang to the floor. All minor considerations faded to insignificance beside the terrible

dread which had taken possession of her. Clasp-
ing the flannel gown tight round her with one hand, she
laid the other on the arm of Mr. Carlyle.

“Oh master! oh master! she has destroyed her-
self! I see it all now.”

“Joyce!” sternly interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

“She has destroyed herself, master, as true as that
we two are living here!” persisted Joyce, her own
face livid with emotion. “I can understand her
words now; I could not before. She came here —
and her face was like a corpse as the light fell upon
it—saying she had come to get a promise from me
to stay with her children when she was gone. I
asked whether she was ill, and she answered, ‘Yes,
ill and wretched.’ Oh, sir, may heaven support you
under this dreadful trial!”

Mr. Carlyle felt bewildered; perplexed. Not a
syllable did he believe. He was not angry with
Joyce, for he thought she had lost her reason.

“It is so, sir, incredible as you may deem my
words,” pursued Joyce, wringing her hands. “My
lady has been miserably unhappy: and that has
driven her to it.”

“Joyce, are you in your senses or out of them?”
demanded Mr. Carlyle, a certain sternness in his tone.
“Your lady miserably unhappy! what do you mean
by such an assertion?”

Before Joyce could answer, an addition was re-
ceived to the company in the person of Miss Carlyle,
who appeared in black stockings and a shawl, and
the lofty nightcap. Hearing voices in Joyce’s room,
which was above her own, and full of curiosity, she
ascended, not choosing to be shut out from the con-
ference.

“Whatever’s up?” cried she. “Is Lady Isabel found?”

“She is not found, and she never will be found but in her winding-sheet,” returned Joyce, whose lamentable and unusual state of excitement completely overpowered her customary quiet respect and plain good sense. “And, ma’am, I am glad that you have come up; for what I was about to say to my master I would prefer to say in your presence. When my lady is brought into this house, and laid down before us, dead, what will your feelings be? My master has done his duty by her in love; but you — you have made her life a misery. Yes, ma’am, you have.”

“Highly tighty!” uttered Miss Carlyle, staring at Joyce in consternation. “What is all this? Where’s my lady?”

“She has gone and taken the life that was not hers to take,” sobbed Joyce, “and I say she has been driven to it. She has not been allowed to indulge a will of her own, poor thing, since she came to East Lynne: in her own house she has been less free than any one of her servants. You have curbed her, ma’am, and snapped at her, and made her feel that she was but a slave to your caprices and temper. All these years she has been crossed and put upon; everything, in short, but beaten — ma’am, you know she has! — and she has borne it all in silence, like a patient angel, never, as I believe complaining to master: he can say whether she has or not. We all loved her, we all felt for her, and my master’s heart would have bled, had he suspected what she had to put up with day after day, and year after year.”

Miss Carlyle’s tongue was glued to her mouth.

Her brother, confounded at the rapid words, could scarcely gather in their sense.

“What is it that you are saying, Joyce?” he asked, in a low tone. “I do not understand.”

“I have longed to say it to you many a hundred times, sir: but it is right that you should hear it, now things have come to this dreadful ending. Since the very night Lady Isabel came home here, your wife, she has been taunted with the cost she has brought to East Lynne and to you. If she wanted but the simplest thing, she was forbidden to have it, and told that she was bringing her husband to poverty. For this very dinner party that she went to to-night, she wished for a new dress, and your cruel words, ma’am, forbade her having it. She ordered a new frock for Miss Isabel, and you countermanded it. You have told her that master worked like a dog to support her extravagances: when you know that she never was extravagant: that none were less inclined to go beyond proper limits than she. I have seen her, ma’am, come away from your reproaches with the tears in her eyes, and her hands meekly clasped upon her bosom, as though life was heavy to bear. A gentle-spirited, high-born lady, as she was, could not fail to be driven to desperation; and I know that she has been.”

Mr. Carlyle turned to his sister. “Can this be true?” he inquired, in a tone of deep agitation.

She did not answer. Whether it was the shade cast by the nightcap or the reflection of the wax taper, her face looked of a green cast: and for the first time probably in Miss Carlyle’s life, her words failed.

“May God forgive you Cornelia!” he murmured, as he went out of the chamber.

He descended to his own. That his wife had laid violent hands upon himself, his reason utterly repudiated : she was one of the least likely to commit so great a sin. He believed that, in her unhappiness, she might have wandered out in the grounds, and was lingering there. By this time the house was aroused, and the servants were astir. Joyce—surely a supernatural strength was given her, for though she had been able to put her foot to the ground, she had not yet walked upon it—crept down stairs, and went into Lady Isabel's dressing-room. Mr. Carlyle was hastily assuming the articles of attire he had not yet put on, to go out and search the grounds, when Joyce limped in, holding out a note. Joyce did not stand on ceremony that night.

“ I found this in the dressing-glass drawer, sir. It is my lady's writing.”

“ He took it in his hand and looked at the address. “ Archibald Carlyle.” Though a calm man, one who had his emotions under his own control, he was no stoic, and his fingers shook as he broke the seal.

“ When years go on, and my children ask where their mother is, and why she left them, tell them that you, their father, goaded her to it. If they inquire *what* she is, tell them also, if so you will ; but tell them at the same time that you outraged and betrayed her, driving her to the very depth of desperation, ere she quitted them in her despair.”

The hand-writing, his wife's, swam before the eyes of Mr. Carlyle. All save the disgraceful fact that she had *flown*—and a horrible suspicion began to dawn upon him with whom—was totally incomprehensible. How had he outraged her ? in what manner had he goaded her to it ? The discomforts alluded to by Joyce,

as the work of his sister, had evidently no part in this; yet, what had *he* done? He read the letter again, more slowly. No, he could not comprehend it: he had not the clue.

At that moment the voices of the servants in the corridor outside penetrated to his ears: of course they were peering about, and making their own comments, Wilson, with her long tongue, the busiest. They were saying that Captain Levison was not in his room; that his bed had not been slept in.

Joyce sat on the edge of a chair—she could not stand—watching her master with a blanched face: never had she seen him betray agitation so powerful. Not the faintest suspicion of the dreadful truth had yet dawned upon her. He walked to the door, the open note in his hand, then turned, wavered, and stood still—as if he did not know what he was doing. Probably he did not. Then he took out his pocket-book, put the note inside it, and returned it to his pocket, his hands trembling equally with his livid lips.

“You need not mention this,” he said to Joyce, indicating the note. “It concerns myself alone.”

“Sir, does it say she’s dead?”

“She is not dead?” he answered. “Worse than that,” he added in his heart.

“Why—who is this?” uttered Joyce.

It was little Isabel, stealing in with a frightened face, in her white nightgown. The commotion had aroused her.

“What is the matter?” she asked. “Where’s mamma?”

“Child, you’ll catch your death of cold,” said Joyce. “Go back to bed.”

“But I want mamma.”

“In the morning, dear,” evasively returned Joyce, “Sir, please, must not Miss Isabel go back to bed?”

Mr. Carlyle made no reply to the question; most likely he never heard its import. But he touched Isabel’s shoulder to draw Joyce’s attention to the child.

“Joyce—*Miss Lucy*, in future.”

He left the room, and Joyce remained silent from amazement. She heard him go out at the hall door and bang it after him. Isabel—nay, we must say “Lucy” also—went and stood outside the chamber door: the servants, gathered in a group near, did not observe her. Presently she came running back, and disturbed Joyce from her reverie.

“Joyce, is it true?”

“Is what true, my dear?”

“They are saying that Captain Levison has taken away mamma.”

Joyce fell back in her chair, with a scream. It changed to a long, low moan of anguish.

“What has he taken her for?—to kill her? I thought it was only kidnappers who took people.”

“Child, child, go to bed!”

“Oh, Joyce, I want mamma! When will she come back?”

Joyce hid her face in her hands to conceal its emotion from the motherless child. And just then Miss Carlyle entered on tiptoe and humbly sat down on a low chair, her green face—green that night—in its grief, its remorse, and its horror, looking nearly as dark as her stockings.

She broke out into a subdued wail.

“God be merciful to this dishonoured house!”

Mr. Justice Hare turned into his gate between

twelve and one ; turned in with a jaunty air : for the justice was in spirits, he having won nine sixpences, and his friend's tap of ale having been unusually good. When he reached his bedroom, he told Mrs. Hare of a chaise and four which had gone tearing past at a furious pace as he was closing the gate, coming from the direction of East Lynne. He wondered where it could be going at that midnight hour, and whom it contained.

CHAPTER X.

CHARMING RESULTS.

NEARLY a year went by.

Lady Isabel Carlyle had spent it on the continent—that refuge for such fugitives—now removing about from place to place with her companion, now stationary and alone. Half the time—taking one absence with another—he had been away from her, chiefly in Paris, pursuing his own course and his own pleasure.

How fared it with Lady Isabel? Just as it must be expected to fare, and does fare, when a high-principled gentlewoman falls from her pedestal. Never had she experienced a moment's calm, or peace, or happiness, since the fatal night of quitting her home. She had taken a blind leap in a moment of wild passion; when, instead of the garden of roses it had been her persuader's pleasure to promise her, (but which, in truth, she had barely glanced at, for that had not been her moving motive), she had found herself plunged into an abyss of horror, from which there was never more any escape; never more, never more. The very hour of her departure she awoke to what she had done: the guilt, whose aspect had been shunned in the prospective, assumed at once its

true, frightful colour, the blackness of darkness; and a lively remorse, a never dying anguish, took possession of her soul for ever. Oh, reader, believe me! Lady—wife—mother! should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you awake. Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirit as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, *resolve* to bear them; fall down upon your knees and pray to be enabled to bear them: pray for patience; pray for strength to resist the demon that would urge you so to escape; bear unto death, rather than forfeit your fair name and your good conscience; for be assured that the alternative, if you rush on to it, will be found far worse than death.

Poor thing! poor Lady Isabel! She had sacrificed husband, children, reputation, home, all that makes life of value to woman; she had forfeited her duty to God, had deliberately broken His commandments, for the one poor miserable sake of flying with Francis Levison. But, the instant the step was irrevocable, the instant she had left the barrier behind, repentance set in. Even in the first days of her departure, in the fleeting moments of abandonment, when it may be supposed she might momentarily forget conscience, it was sharply wounding her with its adder stings: and she knew that her whole future existence, whether spent with that man or without him, would be one dark course of gnawing retribution.

It is possible remorse does not come to all erring wives so immediately as it came to Lady Isabel Carlyle—you need not be reminded that we speak of women in the better positions of life. Lady Isabel was endowed with sensitively refined delicacy, with

an innate, lively consciousness of right and wrong: a nature, such as hers, is one of the last that may be expected to err; and, but for that most fatal misapprehension regarding her husband, the jealous belief, fanned by Captain Levison, that his love was given to Barbara Hare, and that the two were uniting to deceive her, she would never have forgotten herself. The haunting skeleton of remorse had taken up his lodging within her; a skeleton of living fire, that must prey upon her heartstrings for ever. Every taunt to be cast upon her by the world, every slight that would henceforth be her portion, for she had earned it, must tell but too surely upon her crushed spirit.

Nearly a year went by; save some six or eight weeks; when one morning in July, Lady Isabel made her appearance in the breakfast-room. They were staying now at Grenoble. Taking that town on their way from Switzerland, through Savoy, it had been Captain Levison's pleasure to halt in it. He engaged apartments, furnished, in the vicinity of the Place Grenette; it was a windy old house, full of doors and windows, chimneys and cupboards; and he said he should remain there. Lady Isabel remonstrated; she wished to go farther on, where they might get quicker news from England; but her will now was as nothing. She was looking like the ghost of her former self—talk of her having looked ill when she took that voyage over the water with Mr. Carlyle, you should have seen her now: misery marks the countenance worse than sickness. Her face was white and worn, her hands were thin, her eyes were sunken and surrounded by a black circle; care was digging caves for them. A stranger might have attributed these signs to her state of health: *she*

knew better ; knew that they were the effects of her wretched mind and heart.

It was very late for breakfast : but why should she rise early, only to drag through another endless day ? Languidly she took her seat at the table, just as Captain Levison's servant, a Frenchman, whom he had engaged in Paris, entered the room with two letters.

" Point de gazette, Pierre ? " she asked.

" Non, miladi."

And all the while the sly fox had got the *Times* in his coat pocket ! But he was only obeying the orders of his master. It had been Captain Levison's recent pleasure that the newspapers should not be seen by Lady Isabel until he had overlooked them. You will speedily gather his motive.

Pierre departed towards Captain Levison's room, and Lady Isabel took up the letters and examined their superscription with interest. It was known to her that Mr. Carlyle had not lost a moment in seeking a divorce, and the announcement, that it was granted, was now daily expected. She was anxious for it ; anxious that Captain Levison should render her the only reparation in his power, before the birth of her child : she little knew that there was not the least intention on his part to make her reparation — any more than he had made it to others who had gone before her. She had become painfully aware of the fact that the man, for whom she had sacrificed herself, was bad ; but she had not learned all his badness yet.

Captain Levison, unwashed, unshaven, with a dressing gown loosely flung on, lounged in to breakfast : the decked-out dandies before the world are frequently the greatest slovens in domestic privacy.

He wished her good morning in a careless tone of apathy, and she as apathetically answered to it.

“Pierre says there are some letters,” he began. “What a precious hot day it is!”

“Two,” was her short reply, her tone sullen as his. For, if you think, my good reader, that the flattering words, the ardent expressions which usually attend the beginning of these promising unions, last out a whole ten months, you are in egregious error. Compliments, the very opposite to honey and sweetness, have generally supervened long before. Try it, if you don’t believe me.

“Two letters,” she continued, “and they are both in the same hand-writing: your solicitor’s, I believe.”

Up went his head at the last word, and he made a snatch at the letters; stalked to the farthest window, opened one, and glanced over its contents.

“Sir,—We beg to inform you that the suit, *Carlyle v. Carlyle*, is at an end: the divorce was pronounced without opposition. According to your request, we hasten to forward you the earliest intimation of the fact.

“We are, sir, faithfully yours,

“MOSS & GRAB.

“F. Levison, Esq.”

It was over, then. And all claim to the name of Carlyle was declared to have been forfeited by the Lady Isabel for ever. Captain Levison folded up the letter, and placed it securely in an inner pocket.

“Is there any news?” she asked.

“News!”

“Of the divorce, I mean.”

“Tush!” was the response of Captain Levison, as if wishing to imply that the divorce was yet a far-off affair: and he proceeded to open the other letter.

“Sir,—After sending off our last, dated to-day, we received tidings of the demise of Sir Peter Levison, your great-uncle. He expired this afternoon in town, where he had come for the benefit of medical advice. We have much pleasure in congratulating you upon your accession to the title and estates: and beg to state that should it not be convenient to you to visit England at present, we will be happy to transact all necessary matters for you, on your favouring us with instructions.

“And we remain, sir, most faithfully yours,

“MOSS & GRAB.

“Sir Francis Levison, Bart.”

The outside of this letter was superscribed as the other, “F. Levison, Esquire;” no doubt with a view to its more certain delivery.

“At last! thank the pigs!” was the gentleman’s euphonious expression, as he tossed the letter open upon the breakfast table.

“The divorce is granted!” feverishly uttered Lady Isabel.

He made no reply, but seated himself to breakfast.

“May I read the letter? Is it for me to read?”

“For what else should I have thrown it there?” he said.

“A few days ago, you put a letter, open, on the table, I thought for me: but when I took it up you swore at me. Do you remember it, Captain Levison?”

“You may drop that odious title, Isabel, which has stuck to me all too long. I own a better now.”

“What is it, pray?”

“You can look, and see.”

Lady Isabel took up the letter and read it. Sir Francis swallowed his coffee, and rang the table hand-bell—the only bell you generally meet with in France. Pierre answered it.

“Put me up a change of things,” said he, in French. “I start for England in an hour.”

“It was very well,” Pierre responded: and departed to do it. Lady Isabel waited till the man was gone, and then spoke, a faint flush of emotion appearing in her cheeks.

“You do not mean what you say? You will not leave me yet?”

“I cannot do otherwise,” he answered. “There’s a mountain of business to be attended to, now that I am come into power.”

“Moss and Grab say they will act for you. Had there been a necessity for your going, they would not have offered that.”

“Ay, they say so—with a nice eye to the feathering of their pockets! Go to England I must: it is absolutely essential. Besides, I should not choose the old man’s funeral to take place without me.”

“Then I must accompany you,” she urged.

“I wish you would not talk nonsense, Isabel. Are you in a state to travel night and day? Neither would England be agreeable to you at present.”

She felt the force of the objections: resuming, after a moment’s pause. “Were you to go to England, you might not be back in time.”

“In time for what?”

“Oh, how can you ask?” she rejoined, in a sharp tone of reproach; “you know too well. In time to make me your wife when the divorce shall appear.”

“I must chance it,” coolly observed Sir Francis.

“Chance it! *chance* the legitimacy of the child? You must assure that, before all things. More terrible to me than all the rest would it be, if—”

“Now, don’t put yourself in a fever, Isabel. How many times am I to be compelled to beg that of you? It does no good. Is it my fault, if I am called suddenly to England?”

“Have you no pity for your child?” she urged, in agitation. “Nothing can repair the injury, if you once suffer it to come upon him. He will be a by-word amidst men throughout his life.”

“You had better have written to the law lords to urge on the divorce,” he retorted. “I cannot help the delay.”

“There has been no delay: quite the contrary. But it may be expected hourly now.”

“You are worrying yourself for nothing, Isabel. I shall be back in time.”

He quitted the room as he spoke, and Lady Isabel remained in it the image of despair. Nearly an hour passed, when she remembered the breakfast things, and rang for them to be removed. A maid-servant entered to do it, and she thought how ill miladi looked.

“Where was Pierre?” miladi asked.

“Pierre was making himself ready to attend monsieur to England.”

Scarcely had she closed the door upon herself and her tray when Sir Francis Levison appeared, equipped for travelling. “Good bye, Isabel,” said he, without further circumlocution or ceremony.

Lady Isabel, excited beyond all self control, slipped the bolt of the door; and, half leaning against it, half kneeling at his feet, held up her hands in supplication.

“Francis, have you any consideration left for me—any in the world?”

“How can you be so absurd, Isabel? Of course I have,” he continued, in a peevish though kind tone, as he took hold of her hands to raise her.

“No, not yet. I will remain here until you say you will wait another day or two. You know that the French Protestant minister is prepared to marry us, the instant news of the divorce shall arrive: if you do care still for me, you will wait.”

“I cannot wait,” he replied, his tone changing to one of determination. “It is useless to urge it.”

“Say that you will not.”

“Well, then, I will not; if you would prefer to have it: anything to please you. Isabel, you are like a child. I shall be back in time.”

“Do not think I am urging it for my sake,” she panted, growing more agitated with every fleeting moment. You know that I am not. I do not care what becomes of me. No; you shall not go till you hear me! Oh, Francis, by all I have forfeited for your sake —”

“Get up, Isabel,” he interrupted.

“For the child’s sake! for the child’s sake. A whole long life before it; never to hold up its head, of right; the reproach everlastingly upon it that it was born in sin! Francis! Francis! if you have no pity for me, have pity upon it!”

“I think you are losing your senses, Isabel. There’s a month yet, and I promise you to be back

ere it shall have elapsed. Nay, ere half of it shall have elapsed: a week will accomplish all I want to do in London. Let me pass, you have my promise, and I will keep it."

She never moved. Only stood where she was, raising her supplicating hands. He grew impatient, and by some dexterous sleight of hand got the door open. She seized his arm.

"Not for my sake," she panted still, her dry lips drawn and livid.

"Nonsense about 'not for your sake.' It is for your sake that I will keep my promise. I *must* go. There: good bye, Isabel, and take care of yourself."

He broke from her and left the room, and in another minute had left the house, Pierre attending him. A feeling, amounting to a conviction, rushed over the unhappy lady, that she had seen him for the last time until it should be too late.

She was right. It was too late, by weeks and months.

CHAPTER XI.

MUTUAL COMPLIMENTS.

DECEMBER came in. The Alps were covered with snow; Grenoble borrowed the shade, and looked cold, and white, and sleety, and sloppy; the wide gutters which run through the middle of certain of the streets, were unusually black, and the people crept along, looking very dismal. Close to the fire, in the barn of a French bed-room, full of windows, and doors, and draughts, with its wide hearth, and its wide chimney, into which we could put four or five of our English ones, shivered Lady Isabel Vane. She wore an invalid cap, and a thick woollen invalid shawl, and she shook and shivered perpetually; though she had drawn so close to the wood fire that there was a danger of her petticoats igniting, and the attendant had frequently to spring up and interpose between them and the crackling logs. Little did it seem to matter to Lady Isabel: she sat in one position, her countenance the picture of stony despair.

So had she sat, so looked, since she began to get better. She had had a long illness, terminating in low fever; but the attendants whispered amongst themselves that *miladi* would soon get about if she would only rouse herself. She had so far got about as to sit up in the windy chamber; and it seemed to

be to her a matter of perfect indifference whether she ever got out of it.

This day she had partaken of her early dinner—such as it was, for appetite failed—and had dozed asleep in the arm-chair, when a noise arose from below, like a carriage driving into the court-yard through the porte cochère. It instantly aroused her. Had *he* come?

“Who is it?” she asked of the nurse.

“Miladi, it is monsieur: and Pierre is with him. I have begged miladi often and often not to fret, for that monsieur would surely come: and miladi sees I am right.”

A strangely firm expression, speaking of severe resolution, overspread the face of Lady Isabel. It would appear to say that she had not “fretted” much after him who had now arrived; or, at any rate, that she was not fretting after him now. “Patience and calmness!” she murmured to herself. “Oh, may they not desert me, now the time has come!”

“Monsieur looks so well!” proclaimed the maid, who had taken up her station at a window that overlooked the court-yard. “He has got out of the carriage: he is shaking himself and stamping his feet.”

“You may leave the room, Susanne,” said Lady Isabel.

“But if the baby wakes, miladi?”

“I will ring.”

The girl departed, closing the door, and Lady Isabel sat looking at it, schooling herself into patience. Another moment and it was flung open.

Sir Francis Levison approached to greet her as he came in. She waved him off, begging him, in a subdued, quiet tone, not to draw too near, as any little

excitement made her faint now. He took a seat opposite to her, and began pushing the logs together with his boot, as he explained that he really could not get away from town before.

“Why did you come now?” she quietly rejoined.

“Why did I come?” repeated he. “Are these all the thanks a fellow gets for travelling in this inclement weather? I thought you would at least have been glad to welcome me, Isabel.”

“Sir Francis,” she rejoined, speaking still with almost unnatural calmness, as she continued to do throughout the interview — though the frequent changes in her countenance, and the movement of her hands, when she laid them from time to time on her chest to keep down its beating, told what an effort the struggle cost her — “Sir Francis, I am glad, for one reason, to welcome you: we must come to an understanding, one with the other; and, so far, I am pleased that you are here. It was my intention to have communicated with you by letter as soon as I found myself capable of the necessary exertion, but your visit has removed the necessity. I wish to deal with you quite unreservedly, without concealment or deceit: I must request you so to deal with me.”

“What do you mean by ‘deal?’” he asked, settling the logs to his apparent satisfaction.

“To speak and act. Let there be plain truth between us at this interview, if there never has been before.”

“I don’t understand you.”

“Naked truth, unglossed over,” she pursued, bending her eyes determinately upon him. “It *must* be.”

“With all my heart,” returned Sir Francis. “It is you who have thrown out the challenge, mind.”

“When you left in July you gave me a sacred promise to come back in time for our marriage: you know what I mean when I say ‘in time:’ but—”

“Of course I meant to do so when I gave the promise,” he interrupted. “But no sooner had I set foot in London than I found myself overwhelmed with business, and away from it I could not get. Even now I can only remain with you a couple of days, for I must hasten back to town.”

“You are breaking faith already,” she said, after hearing him calmly to the end. “Your words are not words of truth, but of deceit. You did not intend to be back in time for the marriage; or, otherwise, you would have caused it to take place ere you went at all.”

“What fancies you take up!” uttered Francis Levison.

“Some time subsequent to your departure,” she quietly went on, “one of the maids was setting to rights the clothes in your dressing-closet, and she brought me a letter she found in one of the pockets. I saw, by the date, that it was one of those two which you received on the morning of your departure. It contained the information that the divorce was pronounced.”

She spoke so quietly, so apparently without feeling or passion, that Sir Francis was agreeably astonished. He should have less trouble in throwing off the mask. But he was an ill-tempered man; and, to hear that the letter had been found, to have the falseness of his fine protestations and promises so effectually laid

bare, did not improve his temper now. Lady Isabel continued:

“It had been better to have undeceived me then; to have told me that the hopes I was cherishing, for the sake of the unborn child, were worse than vain.”

“I did not judge so,” he replied “The excited state you then appeared to be in, would have precluded your listening to any sort of reason.”

Her heart beat a little quicker: but she stilled it.

“You deem that it was not in reason I should aspire to be made the wife of Sir Francis Levison?”

He rose and began kicking at the logs; with the heel of his boot this time. “Well, Isabel — you must be aware that it is an awful sacrifice for a man in my position to marry a divorced woman.”

The hectic flushed into her thin cheeks, but her voice sounded calm as before.

“When I expected, or wished, for the ‘sacrifice,’ it was not for my own sake: I told you so then. But it was not made: and the child’s inheritance is that of sin and shame. There he lies.”

Sir Francis half turned to where she pointed, and saw an infant’s cradle by the side of the bed. He did not take the trouble to go to look at it.

“I am the representative now of an ancient and respected baronetcy,” he resumed, in a tone as of apology for his previously heartless words, “and, to make you my wife would so offend all my family, that —”

“Stay,” interrupted Lady Isabel; “you need not trouble yourself to find needless excuses. Had you taken this journey for the purpose of making me

your wife, were you to propose to do so this day, and bring a clergyman into the room to perform the ceremony, it would be futile. The injury to the child can never be repaired: and, for myself, I cannot imagine any fate in life worse than the being compelled to pass it with you."

"If you have taken this aversion to me, it cannot be helped," he coolly said; inwardly congratulating himself at being spared the trouble he had anticipated. "You made commotion enough once, about my making you 'reparation.'"

She shook her head. "All the reparation in your power to make, all the reparation that the whole world can invent, could not undo my sin. It, and its effects, must lie upon me for ever."

"Oh — sin!" was the derisive exclamation. "You ladies should think of that beforehand."

"Yes," she sadly answered. "May heaven help all to do so, who may be tempted as I was."

"If you mean that, as a reproach to me, it's rather out of place," chafed Sir Francis, whose fits of ill temper were under no control, and who never, when in them, cared what he said to outrage the feelings of another. "The temptation to sin, as you call it, lay not in my persuasions, half so much as in your jealous anger towards your husband."

"Quite true," was her reply."

"And I believe you were on the wrong scent, Isabel — if it will be any satisfaction to you to hear it. Since we are mutually on this complimentary discourse, it is of no consequence to smooth over facts."

"I do not understand what you would imply," she said, drawing her shawl round her with a fresh shiver. "How 'on the wrong scent?'"

“With regard to your husband and that Hare girl. You were blindly, outrageously jealous of him.”

“Go on.”

“And I say I think you were on the wrong scent. I do not believe Carlyle ever thought of the girl—in that way.”

“What do you mean?” she gasped.

“They had a secret between them. Not of love. A secret of business: and those interviews they had together, her dancing attendance upon him perpetually, related to that; and to that alone.”

Her face was more flushed than it had been throughout the interview. He spoke quietly now, quite in an equable tone of reasoning: it was his way when his ill temper was upon him; and the calmer he spoke, the more cutting were his words. He *need* not have told her this.

“What was the secret?” she inquired in a low tone.

“Nay, I can’t explain all; they did not take me into their confidence. They did not even take you: better, perhaps, that they had, though, as things have turned out—or seem to be turning. There’s some disreputable secret attaching to the Hare family, and Carlyle was acting in it for Mrs. Hare. She could not seek out Carlyle herself, so she sent the young lady. That’s all I knew.”

“How did you know it?”

“I had reason to think so.”

“What reason? I must request you to tell me.”

“I overheard scraps of their conversation now and then in those meetings, and so gathered my conclusions.”

“You told a different tale to me, Sir Francis,” was

her remark, as she lifted her indignant eyes towards him.

Sir Francis laughed. "All stratagems are fair in love and war."

She dared not immediately trust herself to reply, and a silence ensued. Sir Francis broke it, pointing with his left thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the cradle.

"What have you named that young article there?"

"The name which ought to have been his by inheritance: 'Francis Levison,' " was her icy answer.

"Let's see—how old is he now?"

"He was born the last day of August."

Sir Francis threw up his arms and stretched himself, as if a fit of idleness had overtaken him; then advanced to the cradle and pulled down the clothes.

"Who is he like, Isabel? My handsome self?"

"Were he like you—in spirit—I would pray that he might die, ere he could speak or think," she burst forth. And then, remembering the resolution she had marked out for herself, subsided outwardly into calmness again.

"What else?" retorted Sir Francis. "You know my disposition pretty well by this time, Isabel, and may be sure that if you deal out small change to me, you will get it back again with interest."

She made no reply. Sir Francis put the clothes back over the sleeping child, returned to the fire and stood a few moments with his back to it.

"Is my room prepared for me, do you know?" he presently asked.

"No, it is not," she quietly rejoined. "These apartments are mine now: they have been transferred into my name, and they can never again afford

you accommodation. Will you be so obliging—I am not strong—as to hand me that writing-case?”

Sir Francis walked to the table she indicated, which was at the far end of the great barn of a room; and, taking the writing-case from it, gave it to her.

She reached her keys from the stand at her elbow, unlocked the case, and took from it some bank-notes.

“I received these from you a month ago,” she said. “They came by post.”

“And you never had the grace to acknowledge them,” he returned, in a sort of mock-reproachful tone.

“Forty pounds. That was the amount, was it not?”

“I believe so.”

“Allow me to return them to you. Count them.”

“Return them to me, why?” inquired Sir Francis, in amazement.

“I have no longer anything whatever to do with you, in any way. Do not make my arm ache, holding out the notes to you so long! Take them!”

Sir Francis took the notes from her hand and placed them on the stand near to her.

“If it be your wish that all relations should end between us, why let it be so,” he said. “I must confess I think it may be the wisest course, as things have come to this pass, for the cat-and-dog life, which would seemingly be ours, is not agreeable. Remember, that it is your doing; not mine. But you cannot think I am going to see you starve, Isabel. A sum—we will fix upon its amount amicably—shall be placed to your credit half yearly, and—”

“I beg of you to cease!” she passionately interrupted. “What do you take me for?”

“Take you for! Why, how can you live? You have no fortune: you must receive assistance from some one.”

“I will not receive it from you. If the whole world denied me, and I could find no help from strangers, or means of earning my own bread, and it was necessary that I should still exist, I would apply to my husband for means, rather than to you. This ought to convince you that the topic may cease.”

“Your husband?” sarcastically rejoined Sir Francis. “Generous man!”

A flush, deep and painful, dyed her cheeks. “I should have said my late husband. You need not have reminded me of the mistake.”

“If you will accept nothing for yourself, you must for the child. He, at any rate, falls to my share. I shall give you a few hundreds a year with him.”

She beat her hands before her, as if beating off the man and his words. “Not a farthing, now or ever: were you to attempt to send money for him, I would throw it into the nearest river. *Whom* do you take me for?—*what* do you take me for?” she repeated, rising in her bitter mortification; “if you have put me beyond the pale of the world, I am still Lord Mount Severn’s daughter.”

“You did as much towards putting yourself beyond its pale, as—”

“Don’t I know it? Have I not said so?” she sharply interrupted. And then she sat, striving to calm herself, clasping together her shaking hands.

“Well, if you will persist in this perverse resolution, I cannot mend it,” resumed Sir Francis. “In a little time you may probably wish to recall it: in

which case, a line, addressed to me at my bankers', will—"

Lady Isabel drew herself up. "Put away these notes, if you please," she interrupted, not allowing him to finish his sentence.

He took out his pocket-book, and placed the bank-notes within it.

"Your clothes—those you left here when you went to England—you will have the goodness to order Pierre to take away this afternoon. And now, Sir Francis, I believe that is all: we will part."

"To remain mortal enemies from henceforth?" he rejoined. "Is that to be it?"

"To be strangers," she replied, correcting him.

"I wish you a good day."

"So! you will not even shake hands with me, Isabel!"

"I would prefer not."

And thus they parted. Sir Francis left the room, but not immediately the house. He went into a distant apartment, and, calling the servants before him—there were but two—gave them each a year's wages in advance. "That they might not have to trouble miladi for money," he said to them. Then he paid a visit to the landlord, and handed him likewise a year's rent in advance, making the same remark. After that, he ordered dinner at an hotel, and the same night he and Pierre departed on their journey home again, Sir Francis thanking his lucky star that he had so easily got rid of a vexatious annoyance.

And Lady Isabel? She passed her evening alone, sitting in the same place, close to the fire and the sparks. The attendant remonstrated that miladi was remaining up too late for her strength; but miladi

ordered her and her remonstrance into an adjoining room.

Never had her remorseful repentance been more keenly vivid to her than it was that evening; never had her position, present and future, loomed out in blacker colours. The facts of her hideous case stood before her, naked and bare. She had wilfully abandoned her husband, her children, her home; she had cast away her good name and her position; and she had deliberately offended God. What had she gained in return? What was she? A poor outcast; one of those whom men pity, and whom women shrink from; a miserable, friendless creature, who had henceforth to earn the bread she, and the other life dependent on her, must eat, the clothes they must wear, the roof that must cover them, the fuel they must burn. She had a few valuable jewels, her mother's or her father's gifts, which she had brought away from East Lynne: she had brought no others, nothing given to her by Mr. Carlyle: and these she now intended to dispose of, and live upon until they were gone. The proceeds, with strict economy, might last her some twelve or eighteen months, she calculated: after that, she must find out some means of supply for the future. Put the child out to nurse, conceal her name, and go out as governess in a French or German family, was one of her visions in prospective.

A confused idea of revenge had been in her mind, urging her on to desperation, the night she quitted her home; of revenge on Mr. Carlyle for his supposed conduct to her. But what revenge had the step really brought to her heart? As her eyes opened to her folly and to the true character of Francis Levi-

son, so in proportion did they close to the fault by which her husband had offended her. She saw it in fainter colours; she began to suspect—nay, she knew — that her own excited feelings had magnified it in length, and breadth, and height — had made a mole-hill into a mountain; and, long before the scandal of her act had died away in the mouths of men, and Mr. Carlyle had legally put her from him, she had repented of the false step for her husband's sake, and longed — though it could never be — to be back again, his wife. She remembered his noble qualities; doubly noble did they appear to her, now that her interest in them must cease; she remembered how happy they had been together, save for her own self-torment touching Barbara Hare; and, worse than all, her esteem, her admiration, her affection for him, had returned to her fourfold. We never know the full value of a thing until we lose it. Health, prosperity, happiness, a peaceful conscience; what think we of these blessings while they are ours? But, when we lose them! why, we look back in surprise at our ungrateful apathy. A friend may be very dear; but we don't know how dear until he is gone: let him go for ever, and the sorrow is almost greater than we can bear. *She* had lost Mr. Carlyle, and by her own act: she had thrown him from her; and now she must make the best of her work, spending her whole future life probably in one long yearning for him and for her children. The hint, thrown out by Sir Francis that afternoon, that her suspicions had been mistaken, that her jealousy had had no foundation, did not tend to mitigate her repentance. Whether he was right or wrong in his opinion, she did not know; but she dwelt upon it much: it was

possible Sir Francis had merely said it to provoke her, for she knew his temper, and that he would be capable of it: but, if right, what an utterly blind fool she had been!

Her recent and depressing illness, the conviction of Sir Francis Levison's complete worthlessness, the terrible position in which she found herself, had brought to Lady Isabel *reflection*. Not the reflection, so called, that may come to us who yet live in, and for, the world, but that which must, almost of necessity, attend one, whose part in the world is over, who has no interest left between this and the next. A conviction of her sin ever oppressed her: not only of the one act of it, patent to the scandal-mongers, but of the long, sinful life she had led from childhood; sinful, insomuch as that it had been carelessly indifferent. When thoughts of the future life and the necessity of preparing for it, had occasionally come over her—there are odd moments when they come over even the worst of us—she had been content to leave it to an indefinite future; possibly to a death-bed repentance. But now the truth had begun to dawn upon her, and was growing more clear day by day.

She leaned her aching head this night and dwelt upon these thoughts. She stretched out her wasted hand for a book, which she had rarely used to look into, save at stated times and periods, and more as a forced duty than with any other feeling. Opening it at a certain chapter, she read some verses at its commencement; she had read them often lately; for she had begun to hope that the same merciful tidings might be vouchsafed to her troubled spirit: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

There was much to be blotted out; a whole life of apathy and errors and sinfulness. Her future days, spent in repentance, could they atone for the past? She hunted out some other words, though she did not know in what part they might be: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me." What a cross was hers to take up! But she must do it; she would do it, by God's blessing—ah! had she got so far as to ask *that*? She would take it up from henceforth daily and hourly, and bear it as she best might: she had fully earned all its weight and its sharp pain, and must not shrink from her burden. That night, for the first time, a momentary vision floated before her mind's eye, a far off, far off, indistinct vision of the shame and remorse and sorrow of her breaking heart, giving place to something like peace.

Susanne was called at last. Susanne was sleepy and cross. Miladi surely could not know that the clock of Notre-Dame had gone midnight: and—well! if there wasn't miladi's arrowroot cold as ice and good for nothing! Miladi wanted to go into her grave, that was a fact.

Miladi replied that she only wanted at present to go into her bed, if Susanne would undress her. Susanne applied herself to the task, indulging in sundry scraps of gossip the while: Susanne and her fellow-servant having had their curiosity uncommonly whetted that day.

A very miserable affair it must be, that monsieur should have had to go back as soon as he came! All those many miles, over those cold wretched roads, behind a shrieking and dangerous steam-engine, and across that abominable sea! She, once upon a time,

when she was living with a family in Paris, had had leave to go down by one of those Sunday pleasure excursions to Dieppe, and she was asked to go upon the sea when she got there, and the wicked Fates put it into her poor ignorant heart to say Yes. Ah, dame! she should never forget it! it spoiled still the best supper ever put before her, when she thought of it. Let it be fromage de cochon and a glass of vin de Bordeaux, or any other choice luxuries miladi might please to picture, not a bit of appetite had she, if those dreadful three hours on the pitching sea rose up in her mind: and she could hear yet her own groans, and see the state of her lovely green robe when she got back to land; and oh! the trimmings in her cap! And monsieur had undergone all that, with the travelling besides, only to stop an hour and to go again. Pauline said he must have had bad news, to call him home, at the last post town, and would no doubt soon be here again, When would miladi be expecting him?

Miladi replied by desiring her not to talk so fast, and Susanne shrugged her shoulders in an ecstasy of disappointment. She had boasted to Pauline that *she* should learn all, for certain: though Pauline, entombed in the lower regions amidst her casseroles and marmites, could not of course expect to be enlightened, unless at second hand.

When Lady Isabel lay down to rest, she sank into somewhat calmer sleep than she had known of late; also into a dream. She thought she was back at East Lynne—not *back*, in one sense but that she seemed never to have gone away from it—walking in the flower garden with Mr. Carlyle, while the three children played on the lawn. Her arm was within her

husband's, and he was relating something to her : what the news was she could not remember afterwards, excepting that it was connected with the office and old Mr. Dill, and that Mr. Carlyle laughed when he told it. They appeared to be interrupted by the crying of Archibald : and, in turning to the lawn to ask what was the matter, she awoke. Alas ! it was the actual crying of her own child which awoke her ; this last child ; the ill-fated little being in the cradle beside her. But, for a single instant, she forgot recent events and doings ; she believed she was indeed in her happy home at East Lynne, a proud mother, an honoured wife. As recollection flashed across her with its piercing stings, she gave vent to a sharp cry of agony, of unavailing despair.

CHAPTER XII.

ALONE FOR EVERMORE.

A SURPRISE awaited Lady Isabel Vane. It was on a windy day in the following March that a traveller arrived at Grenoble, and inquired his way, of a porter, to the best hotel in the place, his French being such that only an Englishman can produce.

“Hôtel? let’s see,” returned the man, politely, but with native indifference, “there are two good hotels nearly contiguous to each other, and monsieur would find himself comfortable at either. There is the *Trois Dauphins*; and there is the *Ambassadeurs*.”

“Monsieur” chose, haphazard, the *Hôtel des Ambassadeurs*, and was conducted to it. Shortly after his arrival there, he inquired his road to the *Place Grenette*, a guide was offered, but he preferred to go alone. The *Place* was found, and he thence turned to the apartments of Lady Isabel Vane.

Lady Isabel was sitting where you saw her the previous December, in the precise spot courting the warmth of the fire and—it seemed—courting the sparks also, for they appeared as fond of her as formerly: the marvel was, how she had escaped combustion. You might think but a night had passed when you looked at the room; for it wore precisely the same aspect now as then; everything was the same, even to the

child's cradle in the remote corner, partially hidden by the bed-curtains, and the sleeping child in it. Lady Isabel's progress towards recovery had been lingering: as is frequently the case when mind and body are both diseased. She was sitting when Susanne entered the room, and said that a "Monsieur Anglais" had arrived in the town to see her, and was waiting below, in the salon.

Lady Isabel was startled. An English gentleman—to see *her*!

"English for certain," was Susanne's answer, for she had difficulty to comprehend his French.

Who could be desirous to see her? one out of the world and forgotten! "Susanne," she suddenly cried aloud, a thought striking her, "it is never Sir Fran—it is not monsieur?"

"Not in the least like monsieur," complacently answered Susanne. "It was a tall, brave English gentleman, proud and noble, looking like a prince."

Every pulse within Lady Isabel's body throbbed rebelliously; her heart bounded till it was like to burst her side, and she turned sick with excitement. "Tall, brave, noble!" could that description apply to any but Mr. Carlyle? Strange that so unnatural an idea should have occurred to her: it could not have done so in a calmer moment. She rose, tottered across the chamber, and prepared to descend. Susanne's tongue was let loose at the proceeding.

Was miladi out of her senses? To attempt going down stairs would be a pretty ending, for she'd surely fall by the way. Miladi knew that the bottom step was of lead, and that no head could pitch down upon that, without ever being a head any more, except in the hospitals. Let miladi sit still in her place and

she'd bring the monsieur up. What did it signify? He was not a young petit maître, he was fifty, if he was a day; his hair already turned to a fine grey."

This set the question, touching Mr. Carlyle, at rest, and her heart stilled again. The next moment she was inwardly laughing in bitter mockery at her insensate folly. Mr. Carlyle come to see her! *Her!* Francis Levison might be sending over some man of business, regarding the money question, was her next thought; if so, she should certainly not see him.

"Go down to the gentleman and ask his name, Susanne. Ask also from whence he comes."

Susanne disappeared, and returned, and the gentleman behind her. Whether she had invited him, or whether he had chosen to come uninvited, there he was. Lady Isabel caught a glimpse, and flung her hands over her burning cheeks of shame. It was Lord Mount Severn.

"How did you find out where I was?" she gasped, when some painful words had been uttered on both sides.

"I went to Sir Francis Levison and demanded your address. Certain recent events implied that he and you must have parted, and I therefore deemed it time to inquire what he had done with you."

"Since last July," she interrupted, lifting her wan face, now colourless again. "Do not think worse of me than I am. He was here in December for an hour's recriminating interview, and we then parted for life."

"What have you heard of him lately?"

"Not anything. I never know what is passing in the world at home; I have no newspaper, no corre-

spondence; and he would scarcely be so bold as to write to me again."

"I shall not shock you, then, by some tidings I bring you regarding him," returned Lord Mount Severn.

"The greatest shock to me, would be, to hear that I should ever again be subjected to see him," she answered.

"He is married."

"Heaven have pity on his poor wife!" was all the comment of Lady Isabel.

"He has married Alice Challoner."

She lifted her head then, in simple surprise.

"Alice? Not Blanche?"

"The story runs that he has played Blanche very false. That he had been with her much, leading on her expectations; and then he suddenly proposed for her young sister. I know nothing of the details myself: it is not likely: and I had heard nothing, until one evening at the club I saw the announcement of the marriage for the following day at Saint George's. I was at the church the next morning before he was."

"Not to stop it! not to intercept the marriage!" breathlessly uttered Lady Isabel.

"Certainly not. I had no power to attempt anything of the sort. I went to demand an answer to my question — what he had done with you, and where you were? He gave me this address, but said he knew nothing of your movements since December."

There was a long silence. The earl appeared to be alternately ruminating and taking a survey of the room. Isabel sat with her head hanging down.

"Why did you seek me out?" she presently broke

forth. "I am not worth it. I have brought enough disgrace upon your name."

"And upon your husband's and upon your children's," he rejoined in his most severe manner, for it was not the nature of the Earl of Mount Severn to gloss over guilt. "Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me, as your nearest blood relative, to see after you, now that you are alone again, and to take care—so far as I can—that you do not lapse lower."

He might have spared her that stab. But she scarcely understood him. She looked at him, wondering whether she did understand.

"You have not a shilling in the world," he resumed. "How do you purpose to live?"

"I have some money yet. When—"

"*His* money?" sharply and haughtily interposed the earl.

"No," she indignantly replied. "I am selling my trinkets. Before they are all gone, I shall try to earn a livelihood in some way: by teaching, probably."

"Trinkets!" repeated Lord Mount Severn. "Mr. Carlyle told me that you carried nothing away with you from East Lynne."

"Nothing that he had given me. These were mine before I married. You have seen Mr. Carlyle, then?" she faltered.

"Seen him!" echoed the indignant earl. "When such a blow was dealt him by a member of my family, could I do less than hasten to East Lynne to tender my sympathies? I went with another object, also—to try to discover what could have been the moving springs of your conduct: for I protest, when the black tidings reached me, I believed that you must

have gone mad. You were one of the last whom I should have feared to trust. But I learned nothing, and Carlyle was ignorant as I. How could you strike him such a blow?"

Lower and lower drooped her head, brighter shone the shame on her hectic cheek. An awful blow to Mr. Carlyle it must indeed have been: she was feeling it in all its bitter intensity. Lord Mount Severn read her repentant looks.

"Isabel," he said, in a tone which had lost something of its harshness—and it was the first time he had called her by her Christian name, "I see that you are reaping the fruits. Tell me how it happened. What demon prompted you to sell yourself to that bad man?"

"He is a bad man," she exclaimed. "A base, heartless, bad man."

"I warned you at the commencement of your married life, to avoid him; to shun all association with him; not to admit him to your house."

"His coming to East Lynne was not my doing," she whispered. "Mr. Carlyle invited him."

"I know he did. Invited him in his unsuspecting confidence, believing his wife to *be* his wife, a trustworthy woman of honour," was the severe remark.

She did not reply; she could not gainsay it: she only sat with her meek face of shame, and her eyelids drooping.

"If ever a woman had a good husband, in every sense of the word, you had, in Carlyle: if ever man loved his wife, he loved you. *How* could you so requite him?"

She rolled, in a confused manner, the corners of her shawl over her unconscious fingers.

“I read the note you left for your husband. He showed it me; the only one, I believe, to whom he did show it. It was to him entirely inexplicable; it was so to me. A notion had been suggested to him, after your departure, that his sister had somewhat marred your peace at East Lynne; and he blamed you much—if it were so—for not giving him your full confidence on the point, that he might have set matters on the right footing. But it was impossible (and there was the evidence in the note besides) that the presence of Miss Carlyle at East Lynne could be any excuse for your disgracing us all, and ruining yourself.”

“Do not let us speak of these things,” said Lady Isabel, faintly. “It cannot redeem the past.”

“But I must speak of them; I am come to speak of them,” persisted the earl: “I could not do so whilst that man was here. When these inexplicable events take place in the career of a woman, it is a father’s duty to look into motives and causes and actions; although the events in themselves may be, as in this case, irreparable. Your father is gone, but I stand in his place: there is no one else to stand in it.”

Her tears began to fall. And she let them fall—in silence. The earl resumed.

“But for that extraordinary letter, I should have supposed you had been solely actuated by a mad infatuation for the cur, Levison: its tenor gave the affair a different aspect. To what did you allude when you asserted that your husband had driven you to it?”

“He knew,” she answered, scarcely above her breath.

“He did not know,” sternly replied the earl. “A

more truthful, honourable man than Carlyle does not exist on the face of the earth. When he told me then, in his agony of grief, that he was unable to form even a suspicion of your meaning, I could have staked my earldom on his veracity. I would stake it still."

"I believed," she began, in a low, nervous voice, for she knew that there was no evading the questions of Lord Mount Severn, when he was resolved to have an answer, and, indeed, she was too weak, both in body and spirit, to resist—"I believed that his love was no longer mine; and that he had deserted me for another."

The earl stared at her. "What can you mean by 'deserted'?" He was with you."

"There is a desertion of the heart," was her murmured answer.

"Desertion of a fiddlestick!" retorted his lordship. "The interpretation we gave to the note, I and Carlyle, was that you had been actuated by motives of jealousy; had penned it in a jealous mood. I put the question to Carlyle—as between man and man—do you listen, Isabel?—whether he had given you cause; and he answered me as with God over us. He had never given you cause: he had been faithful to you in thought, word, and deed: he had never, so far as he could call to mind, even looked upon another woman with covetous feelings, since the hour that he made you his wife: his whole thoughts had been of you, and of you alone. It is more than many a husband can say," significantly coughed Lord Mount Severn.

Her pulses were beating wildly. A powerful conviction, that the words were true; that her own blind

jealousy had been utterly mistaken and unfounded, was forcing its way to her brain.

“After that, I could only set your letter down as a subterfuge,” resumed the earl: “a false, barefaced plea, put forth to conceal your real motive: and I told Carlyle so. I inquired how it was he had never detected any secret understanding between you and that—that beast; located, as the fellow was, in the house. He replied, that no such suspicion had ever occurred to him. He placed the most implicit confidence in you, and would have trusted you with the man round the world; or with any one else.”

She entwined her hands one within the other, pressing them to pain. It could not deaden the pain at her heart.

“Carlyle told me he had been unusually occupied during the stay of that man. Besides his customary office work, his time was taken up with some secret business for a family in the neighbourhood, and he had repeatedly to see them after office hours. Very old acquaintances of his, he said, relatives of the Carlyle family, and he was as anxious about the secret as they were. This, I observed to him, may have rendered him unobservant to what was passing at home. He told me, I remember, that on the evening of the—the catastrophe, he ought to have gone with you to a dinner party, but most important circumstances arose, in connection with the affair, which obliged him to meet two gentlemen at his office, and to receive them in secret, unknown to his clerks.”

“Did he—mention the name of the family?” inquired Lady Isabel, with white lips.

“Yes he did. I forget it, though. Rabbit? Rabbit? some such name as that.”

“ Was it Hare ? ”

“ That was it. Hare. He said you appeared vexed that he did not accompany you to the dinner ; perceiving this, he intended to go in afterwards, but was prevented. When the interview was over in his office, he was again detained at Mrs. Hare’s house ; and by business as impossible to avoid as the other.”

“ Important business ! ” she echoed, giving way for a moment to the bitterness of former feelings. “ He was promenading in their garden by moonlight with Barbara—Miss Hare. I saw them as my carriage passed.”

“ And you were jealous ! ” exclaimed Lord Mount Severn, with mocking reproach, as he detected her mood. “ Listen ! ” he whispered, bending his head towards her. “ Whilst you thought, as your present tone would seem to intimate, that they were pacing there to enjoy each other’s society, know that they—Carlyle, at any rate—was pacing the walk to keep guard. There was one within that house—for a short interview with his poor mother—one who lives in danger of the scaffold ; to which his own father would be the first to deliver him up. They were keeping the path against that father, Carlyle and the young lady. Of all the nights in the previous seven years, that one only saw the unhappy son at home, for a half-hour’s meeting with his mother and sister. Carlyle, in the grief and excitement caused by your conduct, confided so much to me, when mentioning what kept him from the dinner-party.”

Her face had become crimson ; crimson at her past lamentable folly. And there was no redemption !

“ But he was always with Barbara Hare ! ” she murmured, by way of some faint excuse.

“She had to see him upon this affair: her mother could not, for it was obliged to be kept from the father. And so, you construed business interviews into assassinations!” continued Lord Mount Severn, with cutting derision. “I had given you credit for better sense. But was this enough to hurl you on to the step you took? Surely not! You must have yielded to the persuasions of that wicked man.”

“It is all over now,” she wailed.

“Carlyle was true and faithful to you, and to you alone. Few women have the chance of happiness, in their married life, in the degree that you had. He is an upright and good man; one of nature’s gentlemen; one that England may be proud of, as having grown upon her soil. The more I see of him, the greater becomes my admiration of him, and of his thorough honour. Do you know what he did in the matter of the damages?”

She shook her head.

“He did not wish to proceed for damages; or, only for the trifling sum demanded by law; but the jury, feeling for his wrongs, gave unprecedently heavy ones. Since the fellow came into his baronetcy, they have been paid: Carlyle immediately handed them over to the county hospital. He holds the apparently obsolete opinion, that money cannot wipe out a wife’s dishonour.”

“Let us close these topics,” implored the poor invalid. “I acted wickedly and madly: and I have the consequence to bear for ever. More I cannot say.”

“Where do you intend to fix your future residence?” inquired the earl.

“I am unable to tell. I shall leave this town as soon as I am well enough.”

“Ay. It cannot be pleasant for you to remain under the eyes of its inhabitants. You were here with him, were you not?”

“They think I am his wife,” she murmured. “The servants think it.”

“That’s well; so far. How many servants have you?”

“Two. I am not strong enough yet to do much myself, so am obliged to keep two,” she continued, as if in apology for the extravagance, under her reduced circumstances. “As soon as ever the baby can walk, I shall manage to do with one.”

The earl looked confounded. “The baby!” he uttered, in a tone of astonishment and grief, painful to her to hear. “Isabel! is there a child?”

Not less painful was her own emotion as she hid her face. Lord Mount Severn rose, and paced the room with striding steps.

“I did not know it! I did not know it! Wicked, heartless villian! He ought to have married you before its birth. Was the divorce out previously?” he added, stopping short in his strides to ask it.

“Yes.”

“Coward! sneak! May good men shun him, from henceforth! may his Queen refuse to receive him! You, an earl’s daughter! Oh, Isabel! How utterly you have lost yourself!”

Lady Isabel started from her chair, in a burst of hysterical sobs, her hands extended beseechingly towards the earl. “Spare me! spare me! You have been rending my heart ever since you came: indeed I am too weak to bear it.”

The earl, in truth, had been betrayed into show-

ing more of his sentiments than he intended. He recalled his recollection.

“Well, well, sit down again, Isabel,” he said, putting her into her chair. “We will go to the point I chiefly came here to settle. What sum will it take you to live upon? Quietly: as of course you would now wish to live; but comfortably.”

“I will not accept anything,” she replied. “I will get my own living;” and the earl’s irascibility again rose at the speech. He spoke in a sharp tone:

“Absurd, Isabel! do not add romantic folly to your other mistakes. Get your own living, indeed! As much as is necessary for you to live upon, I shall supply. No remonstrance: I tell you I am acting as for your father. Do you suppose he would have abandoned you, to starve or to work?”

The allusion touched every chord within her bosom, and the tears fell fast. “I thought I could get my living by teaching,” she sobbed.

“And how much did you anticipate the teaching would bring you in?”

“Not very much,” she listlessly said. “A hundred a year, perhaps: I am very clever at music and singing. That sum might keep us, I fancy, even if I only went out by day.”

“And a fine ‘keep’ it would be! You shall have that sum every quarter!”

“No, no! oh no! I do not deserve it; I could not accept it. I have forfeited all claim to assistance.”

“Not to mine. Now, it is of no use to excite yourself, for my mind is made up. I never willingly forego a duty, and I look upon this not only as a duty, but an imperative one. Upon my return, I

shall immediately settle four hundred a year upon you, and you can draw it quarterly."

"Then half the sum," she reiterated, knowing how useless it was to contend with Lord Mount Severn when he got upon the stilts of "duty." "Indeed, two hundred a year will be ample; it will seem like riches to me."

"I have named the sum, Isabel, and I shall not make it less. A hundred pounds every three months shall be paid to you, dating from this day. This does not count," he continued, laying down some notes upon the table.

"Indeed I have some ready money by me," she urged, her cheeks flushing at what she looked upon as unmerited kindness: for none could think worse of her than she did of herself. "Pray take it back: you are too good to me."

"I don't know what you call 'ready money,'" returned the earl, "but you have just informed me you were selling your trinkets to live upon. Put up the notes, Isabel: they are only a small amount, just to go on with. Are you in debt?"

"Oh no."

"And mind you don't get into it," advised the earl, as he rose to depart. "You can let me hear of you from time to time, Isabel."

"What does the world say of me?" she took courage to whisper. It was a question often in her own mind. Lord Mount Severn paused before he replied, marvelling, probably, that she could ask it.

"Just what you may have said in the days now over, at any who had gone the way that you have done. What did you expect that it would say?"

What indeed! She stood there with her humble

face and her beating heart. The earl took her hand within his in token of farewell: turned, and was gone.

Lord Mount Severn, stern and uncompromising as he was, had yet a large share of kindness and conscientiousness. From the moment he heard of the false step taken by Lady Isabel, and that it was with Francis Levison she had flown, he cast more blame than he had ever done upon the conduct of his wife, in having forced her — so he regarded it — upon Mr. Carlyle. In short, he considered his wife as the primary, though remote, cause of the present ill: not that he in the slightest degree underrated Lady Isabel's own share in it; quite the contrary. From this motive, no less than that he was her blood relative, he deemed it his duty to see after her in her shame and sadness.

Susanne attended Lord Mount Severn to the door and watched him down the street, thinking what a "brave Monsieur Anglais," he was, and how delighted miladi must be at seeing a friend, to break the monotony of her sick and lonely existence. Susanne made no doubt that the visit must so far have aroused miladi as to set her thinking about getting out her smart dresses once more, and that the first words she should hear, on entering miladi's presence, would touch on that attractive point.

The Earl of Mount Severn returned to the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, dined, and slept there, and the following morning quitted it on his return to the pleasures and bustle of civilised life. And Lady Isabel remained in her chamber, alone.

Alone: alone! *Alone* for evermore.

CHAPTER XIII.

BARBARA'S MISDOINGS.

A SUNNY afternoon in summer. More correctly speaking, it may be said a summer's evening, for the bright beams were already slanting athwart the substantial garden of Mr. Justice Hare, and the tea hour, seven, was passing. Mr. and Mrs. Hare and Barbara were seated at the meal: somehow, meals always did seem in process at Justice Hare's: if it was not breakfast, it was luncheon; if it was not luncheon, it was dinner; if it was not dinner, it was tea. Barbara sat in tears, for the justice was giving her a "piece of his mind," and poor Mrs. Hare, agreeing with her husband (as she would have done had he proposed to set the house on fire and burn her up in it) yet sympathising with Barbara, moved uneasily in her chair.

Barbara had been giving mortal offence. Barbara had been giving the same offence occasionally for some years past: she had just refused an eligible offer of marriage, and the justice was storming over it. In the abstract, it was of no moment whatever to Mr. Justice Hare whether his daughters pined and withered out their days as fading maidens, or whether they raced through life bustling matrons. Neither, in the abstract, did the justice want Barbara

away from the paternal home, or deem her an incumbrance within it: on the contrary, were Barbara absent, he might be at fault for a target at which to shoot the arrows of his hard words. Neither had money anything to do with it: whether Barbara married or whether she remained single, she had an ample fortune. No: the anger of Justice Hare at Barbara's refusing the offers made to her, had nothing to do with ordinary causes.

How the world would get on without gossip, I'll leave the world to judge. That West Lynne could not have got on without it, and without interfering in everybody's business but it's own, is enough for me. West Lynne had chosen to make a wonder of the fact that Barbara Hare should remain Barbara Hare. Of all the damsels indigenious to the soil, she, with her beauty, her attractive manners, and her good fortune, had appeared the most likely one to be appropriated. And yet she was still Barbara Hare! The gossips set their heads together to discover why she was neglected. *Neglected* they considered her, for Barbara was not one to talk of opportunities refused. The conclusion they came to was, that the unhappy crime attaching to her brother was the sole cause; and, by some mishap, this nonsense reached the ears of Justice Hare. If the justice was sensitive upon one point, it was upon what related to that dark and dreadful deed; if he was bitter against any living being, it was against his miserable son. To have it said that Barbara remained single because no one would have her on account of her brother, was gall and wormwood to Justice Hare, for the disgrace seemed then to be reflecting home on *him* and his. The justice would have liked to lift his foot and toss

West Lynne into the nearest, and greenest, and muddiest of ponds, there to struggle together and cool their tongues; he would have liked to pounce on Richard, and hand him over to the mercies of the county assize; and he would have liked to marry Barbara off hand, that *that* part of the scandal at any rate might be refuted. Therefore, when Barbara refused offer after offer (four she had refused now), it may readily be credited how greatly it aroused the ire of the justice.

“You do it for the purpose; you do it to anger me,” thundered the justice, bringing down his hand on the tea-table and causing the cups to rattle.

“No I don’t, papa,” sobbed Barbara.

“Then why *do* you do it?”

Barbara was silent.

“No; you can’t answer: you have nothing to urge. What is the matter, pray, with Major Thorn. Come, I will be answered.”

“I don’t like him,” faltered Barbara.

“You do like him; you are telling me an untruth. You have liked him well enough whenever he has been here.”

“I like him as an acquaintance, papa. Not as a husband.”

“Not as a husband!” repeated the exasperated justice. “Why, bless my heart and body, the girl’s going mad! Not as a husband! Who asked you to like him as a husband before he became such? Did you ever hear that it was necessary, or expedient, or becoming for a young lady to set on and begin to ‘like’ a gentleman as ‘her husband’?”

Barbara felt a little bewildered.

“Here’s the whole parish saying that Barbara

Hare can't be married, that nobody will have her on account of—of—of that cursed stain left by—I won't trust myself to name him, I should go too far. Now don't you think that's a pretty disgrace, a fine state of things?"

"But it is not true," said Barbara; "people do propose for me."

"But what's the use of their proposing when you say No?" raved the justice. "Is that the way to let the parish know that they propose? you are an ungrateful, rebellious, self-willed daughter, and you'll never be otherwise."

Barbara's tears flowed freely. The justice gave a dash at the bell-handle, to order the tea-things carried away; and after their removal the subject was renewed, together with Barbara's grief. That was the worst of Justice Hare. Let him seize hold of a grievance (it was not often he got upon a real one) and he kept on at it, like a blacksmith hammering at his forge. In the midst of a stormy oration, tongue and hands going together, Mr. Carlyle came in.

Not much altered; not much. A year and three-quarters had gone by, and they had served to silver his hair upon the temples. His manner too would never again be careless and light as it once had been. He was the same keen man of business, the same pleasant, intelligent companion: the generality of people saw no change in him. Barbara rose to escape.

"No," said Justice Hare, planting himself between her and the door; "that's the way you like to get out of my reach when I am talking to you. You won't go; so sit down again. I'll tell you of all your ill-conduct before Mr. Carlyle, and see if that will shame you."

Barbara resumed her seat, a rush of crimson dyeing her cheeks. And Mr. Carlyle looked inquiringly, seeming to ask an explanation of her distress. The justice gave it after his own fashion.

“You know, Carlyle, that horrible blow that fell upon us, that shameful disgrace. Well, because the parish can’t clack enough about the fact itself, it must begin upon Barbara. Saying that the disgrace and humiliation are reflected upon her, and that nobody will come near her to ask her to be his wife. One would think, rather than lie under the stigma and afford the parish room to talk, she’d marry the first man that came, if it was the parish beadle—anybody else would. But now, what are the facts? You’ll stare when you know them. She has received a bushel of good offers, a bushel of them,” repeated the justice, dashing his hand down on his knee, “and she says No to all. The last was to-day, from Major Thorn, and my young lady takes and puts the stopper upon it, as usual, without reference to me or her mother, without saying with your leave or by your leave. She wants to be kept in her room for a week upon bread-and-water, to bring her to her senses.”

Mr. Carlyle glanced at Barbara. She was sitting meekly under the infliction, her wet eyelashes falling on her flushed cheeks and shading her eyes. The justice was heated enough, and had pushed his flaxen wig wrong side before in the warmth of his argument.

“What do you say to her?” snapped the justice.

“Matrimony may not have charms for Barbara,” replied Mr. Carlyle half jokingly.

“Nothing has charms for her that ought to have,”

growled Justice Hare. "She's one of the contrary ones. By the way, though," hastily resumed the justice, leaving the objectionable subject, as another flashed across his memory, "they were coupling your name and matrimony together, Carlyle, last night at the Buck's Head."

A very perceptible tinge of red rose to the face of Mr. Carlyle, telling of inward emotion, but his voice and manner betrayed none.

"Indeed," he carelessly said.

"Ah, you are a sly one; you are, Carlyle: remember how sly you were with your first—" marriage, Justice Hare was going to bring out, but it suddenly occurred to him that, all circumstances considered, it was not precisely the topic to recall to Mr. Carlyle. So he stopped himself in the utterance, coughed and went on again. "There you go, over to Sir John Dobede's, *not* to see Sir John, but paying court to Miss Dobede."

"So the Buck's Head was amusing itself with that!" good-humouredly observed Mr. Carlyle. "Well, Miss Dobede is going to be married, and I am drawing up the settlements."

"It's not she; she marries young Somerset; everybody knows that. It's the other one, Louisa. A nice girl, Carlyle."

"Very," responded Mr. Carlyle, and it was all the answer he gave. The justice, tired of sitting in doors, tired, perhaps, of extracting nothing satisfactory from Mr. Carlyle, rose, set his wig aright before the chimney-glass, and quitted the house on his customary evening visit to the Buck's Head. Barbara, who watched him down the path, saw that he encountered some one who happened to be passing the

gate. She could not at first distinguish who it might be, nothing but an arm and shoulder, cased in velveteen, met her view, but as their positions changed in conversation, she saw that it was Locksley, who had been the chief witness (not a vindictive one; he could not help himself) against her brother Richard, touching the murder of Hallijohn.

“What can be the matter with papa?” exclaimed Barbara. “Locksley must have said something to anger him. He is coming in in the greatest passion, mamma: his face crimson, and his hands and arms working.”

“Oh dear, Barbara!” was all poor Mrs. Hare’s reply. The justice’s great gusts of passion frightened her.

In he came, closed the door, and stood in the middle of the room, looking alternately at Mrs. Hare and Barbara.

“What is this cursed report that’s being whispered in the place?” quoth he, in a tone of suppressed rage, but not unmixed with awe.

“What report?” asked Mr. Carlyle, for the justice waited for an answer, and Mrs. Hare seemed unable to speak. Barbara took care to keep silence: she had some misgiving that the justice’s words might be referring to herself, to the recent grievance.

“A report that *he*—*he*—has been here, disguised as a labourer! has dared to show himself in the place, where he’ll come yet to the gibbet.”

Mrs. Hare’s face turned as white as death. Mr. Carlyle rose, and dexterously contrived to stand before her, so that it should not be seen. Barbara silently locked her hands, one within the other, and turned to the window.

“Of whom do you speak?” asked Mr. Carlyle, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if he were putting the most matter-of-fact question. He knew too well; but he sought to temporise for the sake of Mrs. Hare.

“Of whom do I speak!” uttered the exasperated justice, nearly beside himself with passion: “of whom should I speak, but the bastard Dick? Who else in West Lynne is likely to come to a felon’s death?”

“Oh, Richard!” sobbed forth Mrs. Hare, as she sank back in her chair, “be merciful! He is our own true son.”

“Never a true son of the Hares,” raved the justice. “A true son of wickedness, and cowardice, and blight, and evil. If he has dared to show his face at West Lynne, I’ll set the whole police of England upon his track, that he may be brought here as he ought, if he must come. When Locksley told me of it, just now, I raised my hand to knock him down, so infamously false did I deem the report. Do *you* know anything of his having been here?” continued the justice to his wife, in a pointed, resolute tone.

How Mrs. Hare would have extricated herself, or what she would have answered, cannot even be imagined, but Mr. Carlyle interposed.

“You are frightening Mrs. Hare, sir. Don’t you see that the very report of such a thing is alarming her into illness? But—allow me to inquire what it may be that Locksley said.”

“I met him at the gate,” returned justice Hare, turning his attention upon Mr. Carlyle. “He was going by as I reached it. ‘Oh, justice,’ he began, ‘I am glad I met you. There’s a nasty report in the place, that Richard has been seen here. I’d see what I could do towards hushing it up, sir, if I were you, for

it may only serve to put the police in mind of bygone things, which it may be better they should forget.' Carlyle, I went, as I tell you, to knock him down: I asked him how he could have the hardihood to repeat such slander to my face. He was on the high horse directly: said the parish spoke the slander, not he; and I got out of him what it was he had heard."

"And what was it?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle, more eagerly than he generally spoke.

"Why, they say that the fellow showed himself here some time ago, a year or so, disguised as a farm labourer—confounded fools! Not but what he'd have been the fool, had he done it."

"To be sure he would," repeated Mr. Carlyle, "and he is not fool enough for that, sir. Let West Lynne talk, Mr. Hare: but do not you put faith in a word of its gossip. I never do. Poor Richard, wherever he may be—"

"I won't have him pitied in my presence," burst forth the justice. "Poor Richard, indeed! Villain Richard, if you please."

"I was about to observe that wherever he may be, whether in the backwoods of America, or digging for gold in California, or wandering about the United Kingdom, there is little fear that he will quit his place of safety, to dare the dangerous ground of West Lynne. Had I been you, sir, I should have laughed at Locksley and his words."

"Why does West Lynne invent such lies?"

"Ah, there's the rub. I dare say West Lynne could not tell why, if it were paid for doing it. But it seems to have been a lame story it has got up this time. If they must have concocted a report that Richard had been seen at West Lynne, why put it

back to a year ago; why not have fixed it for to-day or yesterday? If I heard anything more, I would treat it with the silence and contempt it deserves, justice."

Silence and contempt were not greatly in the justice's line; noise and explosion were more so. But he had a high opinion of the judgment of Mr. Carlyle; and, growling a sort of assent, he once more set forth to pay his evening visit.

"Oh, Archibald!" uttered Mrs. Hare, when her husband was half way down the path, "what a mercy that you were here! I should inevitably have betrayed myself."

Barbara turned round from the window. "But what could have possessed Locksley to say what he did?" she exclaimed.

"I have no doubt Locksley spoke with a good motive," said Mr. Carlyle. "He is not unfriendly to Richard, and thought, probably, that by telling Mr. Hare of the report, he might get it stopped. The rumour has been mentioned to me."

Barbara turned cold all over. "How can it have come to light?" she breathed.

"I am at a loss to know," said Mr. Carlyle. "The person to mention it to me was Tom Herbert. He met me yesterday, and said, 'What's this row about Dick Hare?' 'What row?' I asked him. 'Why, that Dick was at West Lynne some time back, disguised as a farm labourer.'—Just what Locksley said to Mr. Hare. I laughed at Tom Herbert," continued Mr. Carlyle; "turned his report into ridicule, and made him turn it into ridicule also, before I had done with him."

"Will it be the means of causing Richard's detec-

tion?" murmured Mrs. Hare from between her dry lips.

"No, no," warmly responded Mr. Carlyle. "Had the report arisen immediately after he was really here, it might not have been so pleasant: but nearly two years have elapsed since the period. Be under no uneasiness, dear Mrs. Hare, for rely upon it there is no cause."

But how *could* it have come out, Archibald?" she urged. "And at this distant period of time!"

"I assure you I am quite at a loss to imagine. Had anybody at West Lynne seen and recognised Richard, they would have spoken of it at the time. Do not let it trouble you: the rumour will die away."

Mrs. Hare sighed deeply, and left the room to proceed to her chamber. Barbara and Mr. Carlyle were alone.

"Oh, that the real murderer could be discovered!" she aspirated, clasping her hands. "To be subjected to these shocks of fear is dreadful. Mamma will not be herself for days to come."

"I wish the right man could be found; but it seems as far off as ever," remarked Mr. Carlyle.

Barbara sat ruminating. It seemed that she had something to say to Mr. Carlyle, but a feeling caused her to hesitate. When she did at length speak, it was in a low, timid voice.

"You remember the description Richard gave, that last night — of the person he had met — the true Thorn?"

"Yes."

"Did it strike you then — has it ever occurred to you to think — that it accorded with — with some one?"

“In what way, Barbara?” he asked after a pause. “It accorded with the description Richard always gave of the man Thorn.”

“Richard spoke of the peculiar movement of throwing off the hair from the forehead—in this way. Did that strike you as being familiar—in connexion with the white hand and the diamond ring?”

“Many have a habit of pushing off their hair: I think I do it myself sometimes. Barbara, what do you mean? Have you a suspicion of any one?”

“Have you?” she returned, answering the question by asking another.

“I have not. Since Captain Thorn was disposed of, my suspicions have not pointed anywhere.”

This sealed Barbara’s lips. She had hers; certain vague doubts, bringing wonder more than anything else. At times she had thought the same doubts might have occurred to Mr. Carlyle, she now found that they had not. The terrible domestic calamity which had happened to Mr. Carlyle the same night that Richard protested he had seen Thorn, had prevented Barbara discussing the matter with him then; and she had never done so since. Richard had not been further heard of, and the affair had remained in abeyance.

“I begin to despair of its ever being discovered,” she observed. “What will become of poor Richard?”

“The discovery that Thorn was not the Thorn completely checkmated us,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“It would have done so, had Richard not seen the other.”

“I have had my doubts whether that was not, after all, a flight of Richard’s imagination. It is so

extraordinary that he should meet the man by moonlight, and that nothing should have been seen of him at any other time; before or after. Richard's mind was imbued with the thought and image of Thorn, and fancy may have conjured up his appearance in some ordinary passer-by."

"That it never did!" cried Barbara. "I wish I was as sure of heaven, as that Richard saw Thorn that night. You believed it yourself at the time."

"I did. His earnestness impressed me. But I had not had time to reflect upon the facts. There was no one at West Lynne then, neither has there been since, to whom Richard's description could apply, Captain Thorn excepted."

"At West Lynne—no," said Barbara.

"We can but wait, and hope that time may bring forth its own elucidation," concluded Mr. Carlyle.

"Ah," sighed Barbara, "but it is weary waiting; weary, weary!"

"How is it you contrive to get under the paternal displeasure?" he resumed, in a gayer tone. She blushed vividly, and it was her only answer.

"The Major Thorn, alluded to by your papa, is our old friend, I presume?"

Barbara inclined her head.

"He is a very pleasant man, Barbara. Many a young lady would be proud to have him."

"Yes, he is a pleasant man," quietly answered Barbara, but she spoke in a tone that did not invite further discussion.

Captain Thorn, in visiting the Herberts in time gone by, had been much struck with Barbara. Had his circumstances allowed, he would have solicited her to become his wife then. Recently, he had

acquired some property by inheritance, and had also been promoted a step in his profession. The first use he made of his ease was to write both to Barbara and her father. Barbara declined his offer, as you have seen, and the justice would be quite sure not to let her hear the last of it for some time to come.

“You will do all you can to quell this rumour touching Richard,” she said to Mr. Carlyle.

“Depend upon that. The less Richard’s name is heard in West Lynne, the better. It puzzles me to know how it can have arisen.”

There was a pause. Barbara broke it: but she did not look at Mr. Carlyle as she spoke. “The other rumour: is it a correct one?”

“What other rumour?”

“That you are to marry Louisa Dobede.”

“It is not. I have no intention of marrying any one. Nay, I will say it more strongly: it is my intention not to marry any one; to remain as I am.”

Barbara lifted her eyes to his in the surprise of the moment.

“You look amazed, Barbara. No. She—who was my wife—lives.”

“What of that?” uttered Barbara, in simplicity.

He did not answer for a moment, and when he did, it was in a low tone, as he stood by the table at which Barbara sat, and looked down upon her.

“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery.”

And before Barbara could answer—if, indeed, she had found any answer to make—or had recovered her surprise, he had taken his hat and was gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ACCIDENT.

TO return for a short while to Lady Isabel. As the year advanced she grew stronger, and in the latter part of the summer made preparations for quitting Grenoble. Where she would fix her residence, or what she would do, she knew not. She was miserable and restless, and cared little what became of her. The remotest spot on earth, one unpenetrated by the steps of civilised man, appeared the most desirable to her. Where was she to find this?

She set out on her search — she, the child, and a young peasant woman whom she had engaged as *bonne*; for Susanne having a lover at Grenoble entirely declined to leave the place. All her luggage, except the things absolutely requisite, Lady Isabel had forwarded to Paris, there to be warehoused until she sent further directions. It was a lovely day when she quitted Grenoble. The train travelled safely until in the dusk of the evening they approached a place called Cammère, where Lady Isabel proposed to rest for a day or two. Railway accidents are less frequent in France than they are with us, but when they do occur they are wholesale catastrophes, the memory of which lasts for a lifetime. The train was within a short distance of the station when there came a

sudden shock and crash as of the day of doom ; and engine, carriages, and passengers lay in one confused mass at the foot of a steep embankment. The gathering darkness added to the awful confusion.

The carriage, in which Lady Isabel with her child and *bonne* travelled, lay beneath a superincumbent mass of ruins : they were amongst the last passengers to be extricated. The *bonne* and the poor baby were quite dead. Lady Isabel was alive and conscious, but so severely injured that the medical men who had been brought to the spot in all haste turned from her to give their attention to other sufferers whose case seemed less desperate—she heard them say that she would not survive amputation, and that nothing else could be done, that she must die whether there was an operation or not. The injuries lay in one leg, and the lower part of her face. She had not counted upon dying in this manner, and death in the guise of horrible suffering was not the abstract thing of release and escape which it had seemed, when she had wished for it as the end of all her wretchedness. She was unable to move, but the shock had deadened sensation, she was not yet in pain, and her mind was for a short interval preternaturally clear and lucid. A Sister of Charity approached the stretcher on which she had been laid, and offered her some water. Isabel drank eagerly.

“ Is there aught else I can do ? ” asked the sister.

“ My baby and its nurse were with me in the carriage—tell me, have they been found ? is my child killed ? ” asked Isabel.

The sister turned to gain intelligence if she could, but the confusion and noise were so great that she could scarcely hope to ascertain anything with certainty. A poor little child quite dead, but not much

disfigured, had been carried into the railway shed, and laid down not far from Lady Isabel. The sister took it tenderly up.

“Was this your child?” said she, turning to Lady Isabel. “It is a little angel, and is beholding the face of its Father in heaven.”

It was the ill-starred child of Lady Isabel: she pressed its little face to her bosom, and her first feeling was a deep thankfulness that it had been so soon taken away from the evil to come. She believed she was to die also in the space of a few hours, or less; and the dull, apathetic indifference to all belonging to this life, which generally sets in with the approach of death, was stealing over her. She motioned to the sister to remove it, saying softly,

“It is thus I would have wished it to be.”

“Have you no message or instructions for your friends? If you will trust me I will fulfil your wishes. Whilst your mind is preserved clear, it will be well to settle your duties towards those you are leaving behind.” The sister had heard what the doctor said of Lady Isabel’s condition.

“All who ever knew me will rejoice to hear that I am no more,” said Isabel. “My death will be the only reparation I can offer, for the grief and shame my life has brought on all who had the evil fortune to belong to me. You understand I have been a great sinner.”

“Try to accept death as a just recompense for your sins—make in this last moment an act of faith and obedience, by uniting your own will with His who sends this suffering; it is then changed from the nature of punishment into a blessing. Our sorrows are the gifts of Almighty God, no less than our joys.”

“I will, I have taken up my cross,” said Lady Isabel faintly, for the pain of her injuries was beginning to make itself felt.

“Can I write to anyone for you?” asked the sister, “tell me now, whilst you can think of it.”

“Have you paper and writing things at hand? write then—direct the letter first, to the Earl of Mount—stay!” she interrupted, feeling how undesirable it was to make known her private affairs, even in that stange place. Besides, from the injury to her face, she could only speak with the greatest difficulty. “Could I not write a line myself? I think I could, if you will hold the paper before me: my hands are not injured; my intellect is clear.”

The compassionate sister complied: and Lady Isabel contrived to scrawl a few words as she lay, first directing the letter to the earl’s town house. They were to the effect that she was dying from the fatal injuries of the railway accident: that her baby was killed, and its nurse. She thanked Lord Mount Severn for all his goodness to her; she said she was glad to die, to deliver him and all who belonged to her from the disgrace and shame she had been to them. “Go to Mr. Carlyle,” she continued; “say that I humbly beg him to forgive me; that I also beg the forgiveness of his children when they shall be old enough to know the crime I have committed against them: tell him I repent, and have repented bitterly—there are no words to express that bitterness.” She had written so far, when the torture of pain, which had begun to make itself more and more felt, was becoming intolerable. Gathering her strength for a last effort, she wrote in characters, like those with which one on the rack might have signed his confession, “Forgive; Isabel,” and whispered, “Send

it when I am dead ; not before : and add a few words of confirmation.”

When at length the surgeons came up to Lady Isabel, to examine more minutely the injuries she had sustained, she was quite insensible, and they thought she was dead. They said so to the sister, who was then kneeling beside her, repeating the prayers appointed for the passing soul. She finished them and retired to a distance, other sufferers claiming her services. She did not return to Lady Isabel, whom she fully believed to be dead ; and she despatched the letter, writing in it, as requested, some words of confirmation. The dead were buried, and a special mass was said for them. The survivors were sent to the hospital ; all that could be done for them was done ; neither skill nor kindness being wanted.

Lady Isabel recovered her consciousness, and found herself lying on a pallet in a ward in the hospital. It was long before she could recall what had happened, or understood that she had not died. The surgeons, on further inspection, had found life still lingering in her shattered frame. The injuries were terrible enough, but not of necessity fatal, though the prospect of recovery was faint. It would have been cruel to resort to an operation with such slender chances of success, and they tried other means, which to the honour and glory of their skill, promised to succeed. Lady Isabel was still fluctuating between life and death ; but the tide began at length slowly to set in towards life. She remained three months in the hospital before she could be removed. The change that had passed over her in those three months was little less than death itself ; no one could have recognised in the pale, thin, shat-

tered, crippled invalid, she who had been known as Lady Isabel Vane.

The letter was duly delivered at the town house of Lord Mount Severn, as addressed. The countess was sojourning there for a few days: she had quitted it after the season, but some business, or pleasure, had called her again to town. Lord Vane was with her, but the earl was in Scotland. They were at breakfast, she and her son, when the letter was brought in: eightpence to pay. Its strangely written address; its foreign aspect; its appearance, altogether, excited her curiosity: in her own mind she believed she had dropped upon a nice little conjugal mare's nest.

"I shall open this," cried she.

"Why, it is addressed to papa!" exclaimed Lord Vane, who possessed all his father's notions of honour.

"But such an odd letter! It may require an immediate answer: or is some begging petition, perhaps. Go on with your breakfast."

Lady Mount Severn opened the letter, and with some difficulty spelt through its contents. They shocked even her.

"How dreadful!" she uttered, in the impulse of the moment.

"What is dreadful?" asked Lord Vane, looking up from his breakfast.

"Lady Isabel—Isabel Vane—you have not forgotten her?"

"Forgotten her!" he echoed. "Why, mamma, I must possess a funny memory to have forgotten her already."

"She is dead. She has been killed in a railway accident in France."

His large eyes, honest and true as they had been

in childhood, filled, and his face flushed. He said nothing, for emotion was strong within him.

“But, shocking as it is, it is better for her,” went on the countess; “for, poor creature, what could her future life have been!”

“Oh, don’t say it!” impetuously broke out the young viscount. “Killed in a railway accident, and for you to say that it is better for her!”

“So it is better,” said the countess. “Don’t go into heroics, William. You are quite old enough to know that she had brought misery upon herself, and disgrace upon all connected with her. No one could ever have taken notice of her again.”

“I would,” said the boy, stoutly.

Lady Mount Severn smiled derisively.

“I would. I never liked anybody in the world half so much as I liked Isabel.”

“That’s past and gone. You could not have continued to like her, after the disgrace she wrought.”

“Somebody else wrought more of the disgrace than she did; and, had I been a man, I would have shot him dead,” flashed the viscount.

“You don’t know anything about it.”

“Don’t I,” he returned, not over dutifully. But Lady Mount Severn had not brought him up to be dutiful.

“May I read the letter, mamma?” he demanded, after a pause.

“If you can read it,” she replied, tossing it to him. “She dictated it when she was dying.”

Lord Vane took the letter to a window and stayed looking over it for some time; the countess ate an egg and a plate of ham meanwhile. Presently he came back with it folded, and laid it on the table.

“You will forward it to papa to-day?” he observed.

“I shall forward it to him. But there’s no hurry ; and I don’t exactly know where your papa may be. I shall send the notice of her death to the papers ; and am glad to do it : it is a blight removed from the family.”

“Mamma, I do think you are the unkindest woman that ever breathed !”

“I’ll give you something to call me unkind for, if you don’t mind,” retorted the countess, her colour rising. “Dock you of your holiday, and pack you back to school to-day.”

A few mornings after this, Mr. Carlyle left East Lynne, and proceeded to his office as usual. Scarcely was he seated, when Mr. Dill entered, and Mr. Carlyle looked at him inquiringly, for it was not Mr. Carlyle’s custom to be intruded upon by any person until he had opened his letters : then he would ring for Mr. Dill. The letters and the *Times* newspaper lay on his table before him. The old gentleman came up in a covert, timid sort of way, which made Mr. Carlyle look all the more.

“I beg your pardon, sir ; will you let me ask if you have heard any particular news?”

“Yes, I have heard it,” replied Mr. Carlyle.

“Then, sir, I beg your pardon a thousand times over. It occurred to me that you probably had not, Mr. Archibald ; and I thought I would have said a word to prepare you, before you came upon it suddenly in the paper.”

“To prepare me !” echoed Mr. Carlyle, as old Dill was turning away. “Why, what has come to you, Dill ? Are you afraid my nerves are growing delicate, or that I shall faint over the loss of a hundred pounds ? At the very most, we shall not suffer above that extent.”

Old Dill turned back again. "If I don't believe you are speaking of the failure of Kent and Green! It's not *that*, Mr. Archibald. They won't affect us much: and there'll be a dividend, report runs."

"What is it, then?"

"Then you have not heard it, sir! I am glad that I'm in time. It might not be well for you to have seen it without a word of preparation, Mr. Archibald."

"If you have not gone demented, you will tell me what you mean, Dill, and leave me to my letters," cried Mr. Carlyle, wondering excessively at his sober, matter-of-fact clerk's words and manner.

Old Dill laid his hand upon the *Times* newspaper. "It's here, Mr. Archibald, in the column of the deaths: the first on the list. Please prepare yourself a little, before you look at it."

He shuffled out quickly, and Mr. Carlyle as quickly unfolded the paper. It was, as old Dill said, the first on the list of deaths.

"At Cammère, in France, on the 18th inst., Isabel Mary, only child of William, late Earl of Mount Severn."

Clients called; Mr. Carlyle's bell did not ring; an hour or two passed, and old Dill protested that Mr. Carlyle was engaged, until he could protest no longer. He went in deprecatingly. Mr. Carlyle sat yet with the newspaper before him, and the letters unopened at his elbow.

"There's one or two who *will* come in, Mr. Archibald, who *will* see you: what am I to say?"

Mr. Carlyle stared at him for a moment, as if his wits had been in the next world. Then he swept the newspaper from before him, and was the calm, collected man of business again.

As the news of Lady Isabel's marriage had first come to the knowledge of Lord Mount Severn through the newspapers, so, singular to say, did the tidings of her death. The next post brought him the letter which his wife had tardily forwarded. But, unlike Lady Mount Severn, he did not take her death so entirely upon trust: he knew what mistakes are often made in these reports from a distance, and he deemed it incumbent on him to make inquiries. He wrote immediately to the authorities of the town (in the best French he could muster), asking for particulars, and whether she was really dead.

He received, in due course, a satisfactory answer; satisfactory in so far as that it set his doubts entirely at rest. He had inquired after her by her proper name and title, "La Dame Isabelle Vane," and as the authorities could find none of the survivors owning that name, they took it for granted she was dead. They wrote him word that the child and nurse whom he mentioned were killed on the spot; two ladies, who had occupied the same compartment of the carriage, had since died, one of whom was no doubt the mother, the lady he inquired for. She was dead and buried, sufficient money having been found upon her person to defray the few necessary expenses. It will easily be comprehended that the lady of whom they spoke was one of those who had been in the same carriage as Lady Isabel, and who had died.

Thus, through no intention of Lady Isabel, news of her death went forth to Lord Mount Severn and to the world. Her first intimation that she was regarded as dead, was through a copy of that very day's *Times* seen by Mr. Carlyle, seen by Lord Mount Severn. An English traveller, who had been amongst the sufferers, and lay in the hospital, received the English

newspapers, and sometimes lent them her to read. She was not travelling under her own name; she left that behind her when she left Grenoble; she had rendered her own too notorious to risk the chance recognition of travellers: and the authorities did not suspect that the quiet, unobtrusive Madame Vine, slowly recovering at the hospital, was the Dame Isabelle Vane, respecting whom the grand English Comte wrote.

Lady Isabel understood it at once: that the despatching her letter had been the foundation of the misapprehension: and she began to ask herself now, why she should undeceive Lord Mount Severn and the world. She longed, none knew with what intense longing, to be unknown, obscure, totally unrecognised by all: none can know it, till they have put a barrier between themselves and the world as she had done. She had no longer the child to support, she had only herself; and surely she could with ease earn enough for that: or she could starve: it mattered little which. No, there was no necessity for her continuing to accept the bounty of Lord Mount Severn, and she would let him and everybody else continue to believe she was dead, and be henceforth only Madame Vine. A resolution she adhered to.

Thus the unhappy Lady Isabel's career was looked upon as run. Lord Mount Severn forwarded her letter to Mr. Carlyle, with the confirmation of her death, which he had obtained from the French authorities. It was a nine days' wonder: "That poor, erring Lady Isabel was dead"—people did not call her names in the very teeth of her fate—and then it was over.

It was over. Lady Isabel Vane was as one forgotten.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR AT EAST LYNNE.

THERE went, sailing up the avenue to East Lynne, a lady one windy afternoon. If not a lady, she was attired as one: a flounced dress, and a stylish looking shawl, and a white veil. A very pretty woman, tall and slender was she, and she minced as she walked, and coquetted with her head, and, altogether, contrived to show that she had quite as much vanity as brains. She went boldly up to the front entrance of the house, and boldly rang at it, drawing her white veil over her face as she did so.

One of the men-servants answered it, not Peter; and, seeing somebody very smart before him, bowed deferentially.

“Miss Hallijohn is residing here, I believe. Is she within?”

“Who, ma’am?”

“Miss Hallijohn; Miss Joyce Hallijohn,” somewhat sharply repeated the lady, as if impatient of any delay. “I wish to see her.”

The man was rather taken aback. He had deemed it a visitor to the house, and was prepared to usher her to the drawing-room, at least; but it seemed it was only a visitor to Joyce. He showed her into a small parlour, and went up stairs to the nursery,

where Joyce was sitting with Wilson—for there had been no change in the domestic department of East Lynne. Joyce remained as upper maid, partially superintending the servants, attending upon Lucy, and making Miss Carlyle's dresses as usual. Wilson was nurse still. Miss Carlyle had once or twice begun upon the point of the extravagance of keeping both Wilson and Joyce; but Mr. Carlyle had wholly declined discussion upon the subject; and somehow Miss Carlyle did not find him bend to her will as he once had done.

“Mrs. Joyce, there's a lady asking for you,” said the man. “I have shown her into the grey parlour.”

“A lady for me?” repeated Joyce. “Who is it? Some one to see the children, perhaps?”

“It's for yourself, I think. She asked for Miss Hallijohn.”

Joyce looked at the man; but she put down her work and proceeded to the grey parlour. A pretty woman, vain and dashing, threw up her white veil at her entrance.

“Well, Joyce! How are you?”

Joyce, always pale, turned paler still, as she gazed in blank consternation. Was it really *Afy* who stood before her?—*Afy* the erring.

Afy it was. And she stood there, holding out her hand to Joyce with, what Wilson would have called, all the brass in the world. Joyce could not reconcile her mind to link her own with it.

“Excuse me, *Afy*, but I cannot take your hand. I cannot welcome you here. What could have induced you to come?”

“If you are going to be upon the high ropes, it

seems I might as well have stayed away," was Afy's reply, given in the pert but good-humoured manner she had ever used to Joyce. "My hand won't damage yours. I am not poison."

"You are looked upon in the neighbourhood as worse than poison, Afy," returned Joyce, in a tone, not of anger but of sorrow. "Where's Richard Hare?"

Afy tossed her head. "Where's who?" asked she.

"Richard Hare. My question was plain enough."

"How should I know where he is? It's like your impudence to mention him to me. Why don't you ask me where Old Nick is, and how he does? I'd rather own acquaintance with him, than with Richard Hare, if I'd only my choice between the two."

"Then you have left Richard Hare! How long since?"

"I have left — what do you say?" broke off Afy, whose lips were quivering ominously with suppressed passion. "Perhaps you'll condescend to explain. I don't understand."

"When you left here, Afy, did you not go after Richard Hare? — did you not join him?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Joyce," flashed Afy, her face indignant and her voice passionate, "I have put up with some things from you in my time, but human nature has its limits of endurance, and I won't bear *that*. I have never set eyes on Richard Hare since that night of horror. I wish I could: I'd help to hang him."

Joyce paused. The belief that Afy was with him had been long and deeply imbued within her; it was the long-continued and firm conviction of all West Lynne: and a settled belief, such as that, is not easily

shaken. Was Afy telling her the truth? She knew her propensity for making false statements when they served to excuse herself.

"Afy," she said at length, "let me understand you. When you left this place, was it not to share Richard Hare's flight? Have you not been living with him?"

"No!" burst forth Afy, with kindling eyes. "Living with *him!* with our father's murderer! Shame upon you, Joyce Hallijohn! you must be precious wicked yourself to suppose it."

"If I have judged you wrongly, Afy, I sincerely beg your pardon. Not only myself, but the whole of West Lynne believed you were with him; and the thought has caused me pain night and day."

"What a cannibal-minded set you must all be, then!" was Afy's indignant rejoinder.

"Not one in the place but thought so, with the exception of Mr. Carlyle," proceeded Joyce. "He has said two or three times to me that he should not think you went to Richard Hare, or were living with him."

"Mr. Carlyle has more sense than all the rest of West Lynne put together," complacently observed Afy. "Living with Richard Hare! why, I'd rather go and live with a scalped red Indian who goes about with his body tatoed in place of clothes, and keeps sixteen wives."

"But, Afy, where did you go, then? Why did you leave at all?"

"Never mind why. It was not to be supposed that I could stop at home in the cottagewith ghosts and dreams and all those sort of things, that attend a place where murder has been."

“What have you been doing ever since? Where have you been?”

“Never mind, I say,” repeated Afy. “West Lynne has not been so complimentary to me, it appears, that I need put myself out of my way to satisfy its curiosity. I was knocking about a bit at first, but I soon settled down as steady as Old Time; as steady as you.”

“Are you married?” inquired Joyce, noting the word “settled.”

“Catch me marrying,” retorted Afy; “I like my liberty too well. Not but what I might be induced to change my condition, if anything out of the way eligible occurred: it must be very eligible, though, to tempt me. I am what I suppose you call yourself—a lady’s maid.”

“Indeed!” said Joyce, much relieved. “And are you comfortable, Afy?—are you in a good service?”

“Middling for that. The pay’s not amiss, but there’s a great deal to do, and her ladyship’s a Tartar. I had a good one with an old lady; a sort of companion I was to her, and stopped there till she died. What do you think? She made me go in to prayers with her, and read the Bible night and morning.”

“How very glad I am to hear this!” exclaimed Joyce. “It must have been so good for you.”

“Very,” assented Afy; and Joyce failed to detect the irony of her tone. “She’d used to read a chapter, and I’d used to read a chapter, and then we went to prayers. Edifying, wasn’t it?”

“Delightfully so, Afy. I am sure you must have profited by it.”

Law, yes: never doubt that. She left me thirty

pounds when she died, over and above my salary. I used to like the Psalms best, because they were short and comforting."

"So comforting!" echoed Joyce. "Afy, I shall love you and be proud of you again, like I was when you first came home to us.

Afy laughed, a ringing laugh. "You and West Lynne always set me down for worse than I was. Though it poses me to imagine what on earth could have induced you to fancy I should go off with that Dick Hare," she added, for she could not forget the grievance.

"Look at the circumstances," argued Joyce. "You both disappeared."

"But not together!"

"Nearly together. There were only a few days intervening. And you had neither money nor friends."

"You don't know what I had. But I would rather have died of want on my father's grave, than have shared his means," continued Afy, growing passionate again. "And you and the West Lynne idiots ought to have made sure of that."

"If you had but dropped me a single line, Afy, it would have put a different aspect upon the whole affair. Your silence helped to misjudge you."

"Misjudge me, indeed! Why, I never cared for Dick Hare. He was only half baked."

"You encouraged him to the house."

"Well—I don't deny it. He used to speak to me of marriage: and one would put up with a man not^{so} baked at all, to be made a real lady. Had I known he was to turn out what he did, I would have seen his coffin walk, before I'd ever have spoken to

him. Where is he? Not hung, or I should have heard of it."

"He has never been seen since that night, Afy."

"Nor heard of?"

"Nor heard of. Most people think he is in Australia, or some other foreign land."

"The best place for him; the more distance he puts between him and home, the better. If he ever does come back, I hope he'll get his deserts—which is a rope's end. I'd go to his hanging."

"You are as bitter against him as Mr. Justice Hare. He would bring his son back to suffer, if he could."

"A cross-grained old camel!" remarked Afy, in allusion to the qualities, social and amiable, of the revered justice. "I don't defend Dick Hare, I hate him too much for that, but if his father had treated him differently, Dick might have been different. Well, let's talk of something else; the subject invariably gives me the shivers. Who is mistress here?"

"Miss Carlyle."

"Oh. I might have guessed that. Is she as fierce as ever?"

"There is little alteration in her."

"And there won't be on this side the grave. I say, Joyce, I don't want to encounter her: she might set on at me, like she has done many a time in the old days. Little love was there lost between me and Corny Carlyle."

"You need not fear meeting her. She is away: gone to Lynneborough for a week's visit."

"That's good news for a rainy day! Then, who acts as mistress while she's absent?"

"I give the orders," said Joyce. "Master interferes very little."

"Will he marry again?" went on Afy.

"How can I tell? There appears no probability of it at present. A few weeks or months ago, a rumour arose that he was to marry Miss Louisa Dobede; but it died away again."

"Louisa Dobede! one of that ugly old baronet's daughters?"

"Yes. But Sir John Dobede is not ugly."

"Not ugly! Why, he has got a nose as long as a foundry chimney. Well, one would think Mr. Carlyle had had enough of marrying."

"Lady Isabel is dead," interrupted Joyce, hastily.

"So is Queen Anne. What's the good of telling me news that all the world knows?"

"I reminded you that she was dead that you might not speak against her," said Joyce. "Whatever may have been Lady Isabel's failings, they are buried in her grave."

"Buried or not, their remembrance lasts," cried Afy, "and you may as well try to stop the sun's shining, as to stop folks giving their opinions. East Lynne must have been well rid of her—such a canker as that!"

Joyce put up her hand. "Afy, be silent! You have no right so to speak of Lady Isabel: you know nothing of the facts."

"I know all the facts by heart," imperturbably rejoined Afy. "You may take your oath they were conned over and over by us at Lady Mount Severn's."

Joyce looked at her in surprise. "What have you to do with Lady Mount Severn's?"

“Well, that’s good! It’s where I am in service.”

“At Lady Mount Severn’s?”

“Why not! I have been there two years. It is not a great deal longer I shall stop, though; she has got too much vinegar in her for me. It happened just after I went there, and she had a cousin visiting her, a Miss Levison, and the two were forever talking of it.”

“But not in your presence?”

“I heard,” significantly nodded Afy. “Heard just as much as they had to tell.”

“You must have listened at key-holes.”

“Perhaps I did,” was Afy’s cool response. “I had a fancy to hear the particulars; and when I do make up my mind to know a thing, I don’t let trifles stand in my way. Tell me about her, Joyce.”

Joyce shook her head. “There’s nothing much to tell. She was one of the sweetest ladies, one of the kindest mistresses—”

“Oh, I see,” interrupted Afy, with ineffable disdain. “She was one of your angels.”

“Almost she was. Until that serpent came here to cross her path.”

“Manners! manners!” laughed Afy. “It’s not polite to call names.”

“I could call him names for ever,” warmly answered Joyce. “And so I would, if it could bring him punishment. It will come home to him: mark my words.”

“Lady Mount Severn throws all the blame on her.”

“It is more than Lord Mount Severn does,” angrily returned Joyce.

“I could have told you that. He casts some

share of it to Lady Mount Severn. Sir Francis is her cousin, you know. Was she good-looking, Joyce?"

"Beautiful."

"Better looking than I am?" cried vain Afy, glancing at herself in an opposite mirror.

"Oh, Afy! how absurd you are!"

"Many thanks. Because she was the Lady Isabel, and I am plain Afy Hallijohn, of course I can't be compared to her! Everybody thinks they may lance shafts at my back: but lady angels go wrong sometimes, you see; they are not universally immaculate. She must have been a queer angel, rather, to leave her children."

"Afy, do you understand that this conversation is particularly disagreeable to me?" cried Joyce with spirit.

"It's a very disagreeable topic indeed, I should say," equably replied Afy. "She should not have acted so as to give rise to it. He soon tired of her, with all her beauty: he has tired — as it is said — of others. He is married now."

"Yes," indignantly spoke Joyce, and the wonder is, how any young lady, with a spark of delicacy or good feeling, could bring herself to marry so notorious a man."

"Ladies don't dislike that sort of notoriety," said Afy, laughing at Joyce's reproofing face. "That is, when the offenders are handsome, as he is."

"You have seen him at Lady Mount Severn's?"

"Not I. I have seen him, but not there. Since the Carlyle affair, he dared not show his face within their doors: my lord would kick him out. What an awful thing that railway accident must have been!"

Joyce shuddered. "Ay, it was an awful death."

"And quite a judgment upon her, I should say," went on Afy, probably seeing that the style of conversation aggravated Joyce.

Joyce would stand it no longer. "Listen, Afy: I loved my mistress, and I love her memory still, in spite of what has taken place. If you are to speak against her, it must be in some other house, for it shall not be in Mr. Carlyle's, where she was once so honoured."

"Have it your own way," indifferently rejoined Afy. "She's gone to kingdom come, so it's not worth while disputing over it. Is Mr. Carlyle at home?"

"He will be home to dinner. I dare say you would like some tea: you shall come and take it with me and Wilson in the nursery."

"I was thinking you might have the grace to offer me something," cried Afy. "I intend to stop till to-morrow in the neighbourhood: my lady gave me two days' holiday — for she was going to see her dreadful old grandmother, where she can't take a maid — and I thought I'd use it in coming to have a look at the old place again. Don't stare at me in that blank way, as if you feared I should ask the grand loan of sleeping here. I shall sleep at the Mount Severn Arms."

"I was not glancing at such a thought, Afy. Come and take your bonnet off."

"Is the nursery full of children?"

"There's only one child in it. Miss Lucy and Master William are with the governess."

Wilson received Afy with lofty condescension, having Richard Hare in her thoughts. But Joyce

explained that it was all a misapprehension — that her sister had not been near Richard Hare, but was as indignant against him as they were. Upon which Wilson grew cordial and chatty, rejoicing in the delightful recreation her tongue would enjoy that evening.

Afy's account of herself, as to past proceedings, was certainly not the most satisfactory in the world, but altogether, taking in the present, it was so vast an improvement upon Joyce's conclusions, that she had not felt so elated for many a day. When Mr. Carlyle returned home Joyce sought him, and acquainted him with what had happened; that Afy was come; was maid to Lady Mount Severn; and, above all, that she had never been with Richard Hare.

“ Ah! you remember what I said, Joyce,” he remarked. “ That I did not believe Afy was with Richard Hare.”

“ I have been telling Afy so, sir, and she says you have got more sense than all West Lynne put together.”

Mr. Carlyle laughed.

“ A terrible way she was in, to be sure, when I informed her what people had believed,” continued Joyce. “ She nearly went into one of her old passions.”

“ Does she seem steady, Joyce?”

“ I think so, sir — steady for her. Before she took Lady Mount Severn's service, she was with an old lady, where she read her Bible and joined in prayers night and morning.”

“ Afy at prayers!” exclaimed Mr. Carlyle, a smile crossing his lips. “ I hope they were genuine.”

“I was thinking, sir, that as she appears to have turned out so respectable, and is with Lady Mount Severn, you perhaps might see no objection to her sleeping here for to-night. It would be better than for her to go to an inn, as she talks of doing.”

“None at all,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “Let her remain.”

As Joyce returned to the nursery, Afy and Wilson were in the full flowing tide of talk, trying whose tongue could go the fastest. An unlucky sentence of Afy’s caught Joyce’s ears.

“It’s as true as you are there, Wilson. She bothered me all day long with her religion. I had used to pick out the shortest psalm I could find, and when she asked me why, I said I did it that I might remember them. There’s one with two verses in it; I chose that as often as I dared. And then, down I had to go on my marrow-bones, and put up my hands! I had used to wish my mistress and her prayers somewhere.”

Joyce groaned in spirit, and thought of the words just spoken by Mr. Carlyle—he had hoped the prayers were genuine!

Later in the evening, after Mr. Carlyle’s dinner, a message came that Afy was to go to him. Accordingly she proceeded to his presence.

“So Afy, you have returned to let West Lynne know that you are alive. Sit down.”

“West Lynne may go a-walking in future, sir, for all the heed I shall take of it,” retorted Afy. “A set of wicked-minded scandal-mongers, to take and say I had gone off after Richard Hare!”

“You should not have gone off at all, Afy.”

“Well, sir, that was my business, and I chose to

go. I could not stop in the cottage after that night's work."

"There is a mystery attaching to that night's work, Afy," observed Mr. Carlyle; "a mystery that I cannot fathom. Perhaps you can help me out."

"What mystery, sir?" returned Afy.

Mr. Carlyle leaned forward, his arms on the table; Afy had taken a chair at the other end of it. "Who was it that committed the murder?" he demanded, in a grave and somewhat imperative tone.

Afy stared some moments before she replied, evidently astonished at the question. "Who committed the murder, sir?" she uttered at length. "Richard Hare committed it. Everybody knows that."

"Did you see it done?"

"No," replied Afy. "If I had seen it, the fright and horror would have killed me. Richard Hare quarrelled with my father, and drew the gun upon him in his passion."

"You assume this to have been the case, Afy; as others have assumed it. I do not think it was Richard Hare who killed your father."

"Not Richard Hare!" exclaimed Afy, after a pause. "Then who do you think did it, sir? I?"

"Nonsense, Afy."

"I know he did it," proceeded Afy. "It is true that I did not see it done, but I know it, for all that. I *know* it, sir."

"You cannot know it, Afy."

"I do know it, sir; I would not assert it to you if I did not. If Richard Hare were here present before us, and swore till he was black in the face that it was not he, I could convict him."

"By what means?"

“I had rather not say, sir. But you may believe me, for I am speaking truth.”

“There was another friend of yours present that evening, Afy. Lieutenant Thorn.”

Afy's face turned crimson: she was evidently confused. But Mr. Carlyle's speech and manner were authoritative, and she saw that it would be useless to attempt to trifle with him.

“I know he was, sir. A young chap, who used to ride over some evenings to see me. He had nothing to do with what occurred.”

“Where did he ride from?”

“He was stopping with some friends at Swainson. He was nobody, sir.”

“What was his name?” questioned Mr. Carlyle.

“Thorn,” said Afy.

“I mean his real name. Thorn was an assumed one!”

“Oh, dear no,” returned Afy. “Thorn was his name.”

Mr. Carlyle paused and looked at her.

“Afy, I have reason to believe that Thorn was only an assumed name. Now, I have a motive for wishing to know his real one, and you would very much oblige me by confiding it to me. What was it?”

“I don't know that he had any other name, sir; I am sure he had no other,” persisted Afy. “He was Lieutenant Thorn then, and he was Captain Thorn afterwards.”

“You have seen him since?”

“Once in a way we have met.”

“Where is he now?”

“Now! Oh my goodness, I don't know anything about him now!” said Afy. “I have not heard of

him or seen him for a long while. I think I heard something about his going to India with his regiment."

"What regiment is he in?"

"I'm sure I don't know about that," said Afy. "Is not one regiment the same as another; they are all in the army, aren't they, sir?"

"Afy I must find this Captain Thorn. Do you know anything of his family?"

Afy shook her head. "I don't think he had any. I never heard him mention so much as a brother or a sister."

"And you persist in saying his name was Thorn!"

"I persist in it because it was his name. I am positive it was his name."

"Afy, shall I tell you why I want to find him? I believe that it was he who murdered your father: not Richard Hare."

Afy's mouth and eyes gradually opened, and her face turned hot and cold alternately. Then passion mastered her, and she burst forth.

"It's a lie? I beg your pardon, sir, but whoever told you that, told you a lie. Thorn had no more to do with it than I had: I'll swear it."

"I tell you, Afy, I believe Thorn to have been the man. You were not present: you cannot know who actually did it."

"Yes, I can, and do know," said Afy, bursting into tears of hysterical passion. "Thorn was with me when it happened, so it could not have been Thorn. It was that wicked Richard Hare. Sir! have I not said that I'll swear it?"

"Thorn was with you!—at the moment of the murder?" repeated Mr. Carlyle.

“Yes; he was,” shrieked Afy, nearly beside herself with emotion. “Whoever has been trying to put it off Richard Hare, and on to him, is a wicked, false-hearted wretch. It was Richard Hare and nobody else, and I hope he’ll be hung for it yet.”

“You are telling me the truth, Afy?” gravely spoke Mr. Carlyle.

“Truth!” echoed Afy, flinging up her hands. “Would I tell a lie over my poor father’s death? If Thorn had done it, would I screen him, or shuffle it off to Richard Hare? No, no.”

Mr. Carlyle felt uncertain and bewildered. That Afy was sincere in what she said was but too apparent. He spoke again, but Afy had risen from her chair to leave.

“Locksley was in the wood that evening: Otway Bethel was in it. Could either of them have been the culprit?”

“No, sir,” firmly retorted Afy, “the culprit was Richard Hare; and I’d say it with my latest breath. I’d say it because I know it—though I don’t choose to say how I know it; time enough when he gets taken.”

She quitted the room, leaving Mr. Carlyle in a state of puzzled bewilderment. Was he to believe Afy? or was he to believe the bygone assertion of Richard Hare.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT INVASION OF EAST LYNNE.

IN one of the comfortable sitting-rooms of East Lynne sat Mr. Carlyle and his sister one inclement January night. The contrast within and without was great. The warm, blazing fire, the handsome carpet on which it flickered, the exceedingly comfortable arrangement of the furniture, of the room altogether, and the light of the chandelir which fell on all, presented a picture of home peace, though it may not have deserved the name of luxury. Without, heavy flakes of snow were falling thickly, flakes as large and nearly as heavy as a crown piece, rendering the atmosphere so dense and obscure, that a man could not see a yard before him. Mr. Carlyle had driven home in the pony carriage, and the snow had so settled upon him, even in that short journey, that Lucy, who happened to see him as he entered the hall, screamed out laughingly that her papa had turned into a white man. It was now later in the evening; the children were in bed, the governess was in her own sitting-room—it was not often that Miss Carlyle invited her to theirs in an evening—and the house was quiet. Mr. Carlyle was deep in the pages of one of the monthly periodicals; and Miss Carlyle sat on the other side of the fire, grumbling, and grunting, and sniffing, and choking.

Miss Carlyle was one of your strong-minded ladies, who never condescend to be ill. Of course, had she been attacked with scarlet fever, or paralysis, or St. Vitus's dance, she must have given in to the enemy; but trifling ailments, such as headache, influenza, sore-throat, which other people get, passed her by. Imagine, therefore, her exasperation at finding her head stuffed up, her chest sore, and her voice going: in short, at having, for once in her life, caught a cold like ordinary mortals.

"It was that ale," she groaned.

"Ale!" echoed Mr. Carlyle, lifting his eyes from his book.

"Yes, the ale," she tartly proceeded. "Dear me, Archibald, you need not stare as if I had said it was the moon gave it me."

"But how could ale give it you? Unless you drank a great draught of it cold, when you were in a perspiration."

Miss Carlyle lifted her hands in pitying contempt for his ignorance.

"You'll be a baby in common sense to the end of your life, Archibald. When do I drink great draughts of ale? Pray, the last two barrels that we have had in tap, has there not been, throughout, a complaint that the taps leaked?"

"Well?" said he.

"Well, I knew that the fault lay in the putting in the taps in the first instance, servants are such incapables; so, when Peter came to me after breakfast this morning and said there had better be another barrel of ale tapped, for that the one in hand was stoooped yesterday, 'Very well,' said I, 'I'll come and see to it myself.' And down I went, out of these

warm rooms, and the cellar struck like an ice-house, and I stopped in it for twenty minutes, good."

"Does it take all that time to tap a barrel of ale?"

"No, it doesn't take it when things are in order, but it does when you have to bother over the taps, rejecting one, rejecting another," responded Miss Carlyle, in a tone of exasperation. And a pretty state that cellar was in! not a thing in place. I had the cook down, and a sharp dressing I gave her: if her hams had been turned for three days, I'll eat them, raw as they are! That's how I must have caught this cold, stopping down there."

Mr. Carlyle made no observation; had he told her that there was no need whatever for her interference, that Peter was perfectly competent to his duties, she would only have flown at him. He became absorbed in his book again, while Miss Carlyle fretted and grunted, and drew her chair into the fire and pushed it back again, and made violent starts with her hands and feet: in short, performed all the antics of a middle-aged gentlewoman suffering under an attack of fidgets.

"What's the time, I wonder?" she exclaimed by-and-by.

Mr. Carlyle looked at his watch. "It is just nine, Cornelia."

"Then I think I shall go to bed. I'll have a basin of arrowroot or gruel, or some slop of that sort, after I'm in it: I'm sure I have been free enough all my life from requiring such sick dishes!"

"Do so," said Mr. Carlyle. "It may do you good."

"There's one thing excellent for a cold in the head, I know. It's to double your flannel petticoat cross-

ways, or any other large piece of flannel you may conveniently have at hand, and put it on over your nightcap: Ill try it."

"I would," said Mr. Carlyle, smothering an irreverent laugh.

She sat on five minutes longer, and then left, wishing Mr. Carlyle good night. He resumed his reading. But, another page or two concluded the article; upon which Mr. Carlyle threw the book on the table, rose, and stretched himself, as if tired of sitting.

He stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and stood on the hearth-rug. "I wonder if it snows still?" he exclaimed to himself.

Proceeding to the window, one of those opening to the ground, he drew aside the half of the warm crimson curtain. It all looked dull and dark outside; Mr. Carlyle could see little what the weather was, and he opened the window and stepped half out.

The snow was falling faster and thicker than ever. Not at that did Mr. Carlyle start with surprise, if not with a more unpleasant sensation; but, at feeling a man's hand touch his, and finding a man's face nearly in contact with his own.

"Let me come in, Mr. Carlyle, for the love of life! I see you are alone. I'm dead beat: and I don't know, but I am dodged also."

The tones struck familiarly on Mr. Carlyle's ear. He drew back mechanically; a thousand perplexing sensations overwhelmed him; and the man followed him into the room. A white man, as Lucy had called her father. Ay, for he had been hours and hours on foot in the snow: his hat, his clothes, his eyebrows,

his large whiskers, all were white. "Lock the door, sir," were his first words. Need you be told that it was Richard Hare?

Mr. Carlyle fastened the window, drew the heavy curtain across it, and turned rapidly to lock the two doors. For there were two to the room, one of them leading into the adjoining one. Richard, meanwhile, took off his wet smock-frock—the old smock-frock of former memory—his hat, and his false black whiskers, wiping the snow from the latter with his hand.

"Richard," uttered Mr. Carlyle, "I am thunder-struck. I fear you have done wrong to come here."

"I cut off from London at a moment's notice," replied Richard, who was literally shivering with the cold. "I'm dodged, Mr. Carlyle; I am indeed; the police are after me, set on by that wretch, Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle turned to the sideboard and poured out a wine glass of brandy. "Drink it, Richard: it will warm you."

"I'd rather have it in some hot water, sir."

"But how am I to get the hot water brought in? Drink this for now. Why, how you tremble!"

"Ah. A few hours outside in that cold snow is enough to make the strongest man tremble, sir. And it lies so deep in some places that you have to come along at snail's pace. But I'll tell you about this business. A fortnight ago, I was at a cab-stand at the West-end, talking to a cab-driver, when some drops of rain came down. A gentleman and lady were passing at the time, but I had not paid any attention to them. 'By Jove!' I heard him exclaim to her, 'I think we are going to have pepper. We

had better take a cab, my dear.' With that, the man I was talking to swung open the door of his cab, and she got in—such a fair young girl! I turned to look at him, and you might just have knocked me down with astonishment. Mr. Carlyle it was the man Thorn."

"Indeed!"

You thought I might be mistaken in him that moonlight night; but there was no mistaking him in broad daylight. I looked him full in the face, and he looked me. He turned as white as a cloth: perhaps I did; I don't know."

"Was he well dressed?"

"Very. Oh, there's no mistaking his position. That he moves in the higher circles, there's no doubt. The cab drove away and I got up behind it. The driver thought boys were there, and turned his head and his whip, but I made him a sign. We didn't go much more than the length of a street. I was on the pavement before Thorn was, and looked at him again; and again he went white. I marked the house, thinking it was where he lived, and, and—"

"Why did you not give him into custody, Richard?"

Richard shook his head. "And my proofs of his guilt, Mr. Carlyle? I could bring none against him: no positive ones. No, I must wait till I can get proofs, to do that. He would turn round upon me now, and swear my life away, to render his secure: perhaps testify that he saw me commit the murder. Well, I thought I'd ascertain for certain what his name was, and that night I went to the house and got into conversation with one of the servants, who was standing at the door. 'Does Captain

Thorn live here?" I asked him. 'Mr. Westleby lives here,' said he; 'I don't know any Captain Thorn.' Then that's his name, thought I to myself. 'A youngish man, isn't he?' 'very smart, with a pretty wife?' 'I don't know what you call youngish,' he laughed, 'my master's turned sixty, and his wife's as old.' That checked me. 'Perhaps he has sons?' I asked. 'Not any,' the man answered; 'there's nobody but their two selves.' So, with that, I told him what I wanted—that a lady and gentleman had alighted there in a cab that day, and I wished to know his name. Well, Mr. Carlyle, I could get at nothing satisfactory; the fellow said a great many had called there that day, for his master was just up from a long illness, and people came to see him."

"Is this all, Richard?"

"All! I wish it had been all. I kept looking about for him in all the best streets: I was half mad—"

"Do you not wonder, if he is in this position of life and resides in London, that you have never dropped upon him previously?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"No, sir: and I'll tell you why. I have been afraid to show myself in those better parts of the town, fearing I might meet with some I used to know at home who would recognise me, so I have kept mostly in obscure places; stables, and such-like. I had gone up to the West-end this day on a matter of business."

"Well, go on with your story."

"In a week's time I came upon him again. It was at night. He was coming out of one of the theatres,

and I went up and stood before him. 'What do you want, fellow?' he asked. 'I have seen you watching me before this.' 'I want to know your name,' I said, 'that's enough for me at present.' He flew into a fierce passion, and swore that if he ever caught sight of me near him again, he would hand me over into custody. 'And, remember, men are not given into custody for *watching* others,' he significantly added. 'I know you, and if you have any regard for yourself, you'll keep out of my way.' He got into a private carriage as he spoke, and it drove away: I could see that it had a great coat-of-arms upon it."

"When do you say this happened?"

"A week ago. Well, I could not rest; I was half mad, I say, and I went about still, trying if I could not discover his name and who he was. I did come upon him once: but he was walking quickly, arm-in-arm with—another gentleman. Again I saw him standing at the entrance to Tattersall's, talking to the same gentleman; and his face, turned savage—I believe with fear as much as anger—when he saw me. He seemed to hesitate, and then—as if he acted in a passion—suddenly beckoned a policeman, pointed me out, and said something to him in a fast tone. That frightened me, and I slipped away. Two hours later, when I was in quite a different part of the town, in turning my head, I saw the same policeman following me. I bolted under the horses of a passing vehicle, cut into some turnings and passages, through into another street, and got up beside a cabman who was on his box, driving a fare past. I reached my lodgings in safety, as I thought; but, happening to glance into the street, there I saw the man again, standing opposite, and reconnoitring the house. I had gone

home hungry, but this took all my hunger away from me. I opened the box where I kept my disguise, put it on, and got out by a back way. I have been pretty nearly ever since on my feet coming here; I only got a lift now and then."

"But, Richard, do you know that West Lynne is the very worst place you could have flown to? It has come to light that you were here before, disguised as a farm labourer."

"Who the deuce betrayed that?" ejaculated Richard.

"I am unable to tell; I cannot even imagine. The rumour was rife in the place, and it reached your father's ears. That rumour may make people's wits sharper to know you in your disguise, than they otherwise might have been."

"But what was I to do? I was forced to come here first, to get a little money. I shall fix myself in some other big town, far away from London; Liverpool, or Manchester perhaps; and see what employment I can get into, but I must have something to live upon till I can get it. I don't possess a penny piece," drawing out his trousers-pockets for the inspection of Mr. Carlyle. "The last coppers I had, threepence, I spent in bread-and-cheese and half a pint of beer at mid-day. I have been outside that window for more than an hour, sir."

"Indeed!"

"As I neared West Lynne, I began to think what I should do. It was of no use trying to catch Barbara's attention on such a night as this; I had no money to pay for a lodging; so I turned off here, hoping I might by good luck, drop upon you. There

was a little partition in this window curtain; it had not been drawn close; and through it I could see you and Miss Carlyle. I saw her leave the room; I saw you come to the window and open it, and then I spoke. Mr. Carlyle," he added, after a pause, "is this sort of life to go on with me for ever?"

"I am deeply sorry for you, Richard," was the sympathising answer. "I wish I could remedy it."

Before another word was spoken, the room door was tried, and then gently knocked at. Mr. Carlyle placed his hand on Richard, who was looking scared out of his wits.

"Be still; be at ease, Richard: no one shall come in. It is only Peter."

Not Peter's voice, however, but Joyce's was heard, in response to Mr. Carlyle's demand of who was there.

"Miss Carlyle has left her handkerchief down stairs, sir, and has sent me for it."

"You cannot come in; I am busy," was the answer, delivered in a clear and most decisive tone.

"Who was it?" quivered Richard, as Joyce was heard going away.

"It was Joyce."

"What, is she here still? Has anything ever been heard of Afy, sir?"

"Afy was here herself, two or three months ago."

"Was she?" said Richard, beguiled for an instant from the thought of his own danger. "What is she doing?"

"She is in service as a lady's-maid. Richard, I questioned Afy about Thorn. She protested solemnly to me that it was not Thorn who committed the deed; that it could not have been he, for Thorn was with her at the moment of it's being done."

“It’s not true,” said Richard. “It was Thorn.”

“Richard, you cannot tell: you did not *see* it done.”

“I know that no man could have rushed out in that frantic manner, with those signs of guilt and fear about him, unless he had been engaged in a bad deed,” was Richard Hare’s answer. “It could have been no one else.”

“Afy declares he was with her,” repeated Mr. Carlyle.

“Look here, sir: you are a sharp man, and folks say I am not, but I can see things, and draw my reasonings as well as they can, perhaps. If Thorn were not Hallijohn’s murderer, why should he be persecuting me?—what would he care about me? And why should his face turn livid, as it has done, each time he has seen my eyes upon him? Whether he committed the murder or whether he didn’t, he must know that I did not, because he came upon me, waiting, as he was tearing from the cottage.”

Dick’s reasoning was not bad.

“Another thing,” he resumed. “Afy swore at the inquest that she was *alone* when the deed was done: that she was alone in the wood at the back of the cottage, and knew nothing about it till afterwards. How could she have sworn she was alone, if Thorn was with her?”

The fact had entirely escaped Mr. Carlyle’s memory in his conversation with Afy, or he would not have failed to point out the discrepancy, and to inquire how she could reconcile it. Yet her assertion to him had been most positive and solemn. There were difficulties in the matter which he could not reconcile.

“Now that I have overgot my passion for Afy, I can see her faults, Mr. Carlyle. She'd no more stick at an untruth, than she'd stick—”

A most awful thundering at the room door: loud enough to bring the very house down. No officers of justice, searching for a fugitive, ever made a louder. Richard Hare, his face turned to chalk, his eyes starting, and his own light hair bristling up with horror, struggled into his wet smock frock after a fashion, the tails up about his ears, and the sleeves hanging, forced on his hat and its false whiskers, looked round in a bewildered manner for some cupboard or mouse-hole into which he might creep, and, seeing none, rushed to the fireplace and placed his foot on the fender. That he purposed an attempt at chimney climbing was evident, though how the fire would have agreed with his pantaloons, not to speak of what they contained, poor Dick appeared completely to ignore. Mr. Carlyle drew him back, keeping his calm, powerful hand upon his shoulder, while certain sounds in an angry voice were jerked through the keyhole.

“Richard, be a man; put aside this weakness, this fear. Have I not told you that harm shall not come near you in my house?”

“It may be that officer man from London; he may have brought half a dozen more with him,” gasped the unhappy Richard. “I said they might have dodged me all the way here.”

“Nonsense. Sit down, and be at rest. It is only Cornelia: and she will be as anxious to shield you from danger as I can be.”

“Is it?” cried the relieved Richard. “Can't you

make her keep out?" he continued, his teeth still chattering.

"No, that I cannot; if she has a mind to come in," was the candid answer. "You remember what she was, Richard: she is not altered."

Knowing that to speak on this side the door to his sister, when she was in one of her resolute moods, would be of no manner or use, Mr. Carlyle opened the door dexterously swung himself through it, and shut it after him. There she stood; in a towering passion, too.

But, just a word of interlude, as to what brought her there. Miss Carlyle had gone up to bed, taking her cold with her, ordered her gruel, and forthwith proceeded to attire herself for the night, beginning with her head. Her day-cap off, and her night-cap on, of the remarkable form of the reader had once the opportunity of taking the pattern of, she next considered about the flannel. Finding a piece convenient, some three yards square, she contrived to muffle that over all: but the process was long and difficult, her skill not accustomed to it, and the flannel perverse. The result was such that I only wish her picture could have been taken, and placed in the British Museum. A conical pyramid rose on the crown of her head, and a couple of small flannel corners flapped over her forehead; the sides resembled nothing but a judge's wig.

Now, during this ceremony—previous to the settling on of the flannel ornament, or she could not have heard—it had struck Miss Carlyle that certain sounds, as of talking, proceeded from the room beneath, which she had just quitted. She possessed a remarkably keen sense of hearing: though, indeed, none of her faculties lacked the quality of keenness. The servants,

Joyce and Peter excepted, would not be convinced but that she must "listen:" but, in that, they did her injustice. At first she believed her brother must be reading aloud to himself; but she soon decided otherwise. "Who on earth has he got in there with him?" said Miss Carlyle aloud.

The head-dress arranged, she rang her bell. Joyce answered it.

"Who is it that is with your master?"

"Nobody, ma'am."

"But I say there is. I can hear him talking."

"I don't think anybody can be with him," persisted Joyce. "And the walls of this house are too well built ma'am, for sounds from the down stairs rooms to penetrate here."

"That's all you know about it," cried Miss Carlyle. "When talking goes on in that room, there's a certain sound given out which does penetrate here, and which my ears have grown accustomed to. Go and see who it is. I believe I left my handkerchief on the table: you can bring it up."

Joyce departed, and Miss Carlyle proceeded to take off her things: her dress first, her silk petticoat next. She had arrived as far as the flannel petticoat when Joyce returned.

"Yes, ma'am, some one is talking with master. I could not go in for the door was bolted, and master called out that he was busy."

Food for Miss Carlyle. She, feeling sure that no visitor had come to the house, ran her thoughts rapidly over the members of the household, and came to the conclusion that it must be the governess, Miss Manning, who had dared to closet herself with Mr. Carlyle. This unlucky governess was pretty, and

Miss Carlyle had been cautious to keep her and her prettiness very much out of her brother's sight: she knew the attraction he would present to her visions, or to those of any other unprovided-for governess. Oh yes; it was Miss Manning; she had stolen in, believing she, Miss Carlyle, was safe for the night; but she'd just unearth my lady. And what in the world could possess Archibald? — to lock the door!

Looking round for something warm to throw over her shoulders, and catching up an article that looked as much like a green baize table-cover as anything else, and throwing it on, down stalked Miss Carlyle. And in this trim Mr. Carlyle beheld her when he came out.

“Who have you got in that room?” she curtly asked.

“It is some one on business,” was his prompt reply. “Cornelia, you cannot go in.”

She very nearly laughed. Not go in!

“Indeed it is much better that you should not. Pray go back. You will make your cold worse, standing here.”

“Now I want to know whether you are not ashamed of yourself?” she deliberately pursued. “You! a married man, with children in your house! I'd rather have believed anything downright wicked of myself, than of you, Archibald.”

Mr. Carlyle stared considerably.

“Come; I'll have her out. And out of this house she tramps to-morrow morning. A couple of audacious ones, to be in there with the door locked, the moment you thought you had got rid of me! Stand aside, I say, Archibald: I *will* enter.”

Mr. Carlyle never felt more inclined to laugh.

And to Miss Carlyle's exceeding discomposure, she, at this juncture, saw the governess emerge from the grey parlour, glance at the hall clock, and retire again.

"Why! she's there!" she uttered. "I thought she was with you."

"Miss Manning locked in with me! Is that the mare's nest, Cornelia? I think your cold must have obscured your reason."

"Well, I shall go in all the same. I tell you, Archibald, that I will see who is there."

"If you persist in going in, you must go. But allow me to warn you that you will find tragedy in that room, not comedy. There is no woman in it; but there is a man; a man who came in through the window, like a hunted stag; a man upon whom a ban is set, and who fears the police are upon his track. Can you guess his name?"

It was Miss Carlyle's turn to stare now. She opened her dry lips to speak, but they closed again.

"It is Richard Hare, your kinsman. There's not a roof in the wide world open to him this bitter night."

She said nothing. A long pause of dismay, and then she motioned to have the door opened.

"You will not show yourself in—in that guise?"

"Not show myself in this guise to Richard Hare?—whom I have whipped—when he was a child—ten times in a day! stand on ceremony with *him*! I dare say he looks no better than I do. But it's nothing short of madness, Archibald, for him to come here."

He left her to enter, telling her to lock the door as soon as she got inside, and went into the adjoining room, which, by another door, opened to the one

Richard was in. There he rang the bell. It was answered by a footman.

“Send Peter to me.”

“Lay supper here, Peter, for two,” began Mr. Carlyle, when the old servant appeared. “A person is with me on business. What have you in the house?”

“There’s the spiced beef, sir: and some home-made raised pork-pies.”

“That will do,” said Mr. Carlyle. “Put a jug of ale on the table, and everything likely to be wanted. And then the household can go to bed: we may be late, and the things can be removed in the morning. Oh—and Peter—none of you must come near the rooms, this or the next, under any pretence whatever, unless I ring, for I shall be too busy to be disturbed.”

“Very well, sir. Shall I serve the ham also?”

“The ham?”

“I beg pardon, sir; I guessed it might be Mr. Dill, and he is so fond of our hams.”

“Ah, you were always a shrewd guesser, Peter,” smiled his master. “He is fond of ham, I know: yes, you may put it on the table. Don’t forget the small kettle.”

The consequence of which little finesse on Mr. Carlyle’s part was, that Peter announced in the kitchen that Mr. Dill had arrived, and supper was to be served for two. “But what a night for the old gentleman to have trudged through on foot!” ejaculated he.

“And what a trudge he’ll have of it back again, for it’ll be worse then!” chimed in one of the maids.

When Mr. Carlyle got back to the other room, his sister and Richard Hare had scarcely finished staring

at each other. Richard had no doubt seen many a fancifully-attired lady in the class amidst whom he had recently lived, but he could scarcely have had the luck to meet one who beat Miss Carlyle. Sure two such Guys never stood face to face! She: black shoes; black stockings: a flannel petticoat that reached to the calf; the nondescript shawl, which, to crown its other virtues, was finished off with jagged fringe; and the unsightly head-dress that was like nothing on earth! He: fustian clothes underneath, somewhat short of buttons; the smock frock still on, tails up and sleeves down; the battered hat and the bushy whiskers; with the trembling hands and the scared white face of terror! I have been at many a carnival abroad, but I assure you I never saw in the maskers a couple equal to the spectacle those two would have presented, borne along in a triumphal carnival car.

“Please lock the door, Miss Cornelia,” began poor shivering Dick, when he had feasted his eyes.

“The door’s locked,” snapped she. “But what on earth brought you here, Richard? You must be worse than mad.”

“The Bow-street officers were after me in London,” he meekly responded, unconsciously using a term which had been familiar to his boyish years. “I had to cut away without a thing belonging to me; without so much as a clean shirt.”

“They must be polite officers, not to have been after you before,” was the consolatory remark of Miss Carlyle. “Are you going to dance a hornpipe through the streets of West Lynne to-morrow, and show yourself openly?”

“Not if I can help it,” replied Richard.

“You might just as well do that, if you come to West Lynne at all, for you can’t be here now without being found out. There was a bother about you having been here before: I should like to know how it got abroad.”

“The life I lead is dreadful,” cried Richard. “I might make up my mind to the toil, though that’s hard, after being reared a gentleman; but to be in exile, banned, disgraced, afraid to show my face in broad daylight amidst my fellow-men, in dread every hour that the sword may fall! I would almost as soon be dead, as continue to live it.”

“Well, you have got nobody to grumble at: you brought it upon yourself,” philosophically returned Miss Carlyle, as she opened the door to admit her brother. “You would go hunting after that brazen hussy, Afy, you know, in defiance of all that could be said to you.”

“That would not have brought it upon me,” said Richard. It was through that fiend’s having killed Hallijohn: that was what brought the ban upon me.”

“It’s a most extraordinary thing, if anybody else *did* kill him, that the facts can’t be brought to light,” retorted Miss Carlyle. “Here you tell a cock-and-bull story of some man having done it, some Thorn; but nobody ever saw or heard of him: at the time or since. It looks like a made-up story, Mr. Dick to whiten yourself.”

“Made up!” panted Richard, in agitation, for it seemed cruel to him, especially in his present frame of mind, to have a doubt cast upon his tale. “It is Thorn who is setting the officers upon me. I have seen him three or four times within the last fortnight.”

“And why did you not turn the tables, and set the officers upon him?” demanded Miss Carlyle.

“Because it would lead to no good. Where’s the proof, save my bare word, that he committed the murder?”

Miss Carlyle rubbed her nose. “Dick Hare,” said she.

“Well?”

“You know you always were the greatest natural that ever was let loose out of leading-strings.”

“I know I was always told so.”

“And it’s what you always will be. If I were accused of committing a crime, which I knew another had committed, and not myself, should I be such an idiot as not to give that other into custody, if I got the chance? If you were not in such a cold, shivery, shaky state, I would treat you to a bit of my mind; you may rely upon that.”

“He was in league with Afy at that period,” pursued Richard; “a deceitful, bad man; and he carries it in his countenance. And he must be in league with her still, if she asserts that he was in her company at the moment the murder was committed. Mr. Carlyle says she does; that she told him so the other day when she was here. He never was; and it was he, and no other, who did the murder.”

“Yes,” burst forth Miss Carlyle, for the topic was sure to agitate her, “that Jezebel of Brass did presume to come here! She chose her time well: and may thank her lucky stars I was not at home. Archibald—he’s a fool, too, quite as bad as you are, Dick Hare, in some things—actually suffered her to lodge here for two days! A vain, ill-conducted hussy given to nothing but finery and folly!”

“Afy said that she knew nothing of Thorn’s movements now, Richard, and had not for some time,” interposed Mr. Carlyle, allowing his sister’s compliment to pass in silence. “She heard a rumour, she thought, that he had gone abroad with his regiment.”

“So much the better for her, if it is true that she knows nothing of him,” was Richard’s comment. “I can answer for it that he is not abroad, but in England.”

“And where are you going to lodge to-night?” abruptly spoke Miss Carlyle, confronting Richard.

“I don’t know,” was the broken-spirited answer sighed forth. “If I lie myself down in a snow-drift and am found frozen in the morning, it won’t be of much moment.”

“Was that what you thought of doing?” returned Miss Carlyle.

“No,” he mildly said. “What I had thought of doing was to ask Mr. Carlyle for the loan of a few shillings, and then I can get a bed. I know a place where I shall be in safety, two or three miles from this.”

“Richard, I would not turn a dog out, to go two or three miles, on such a night,” impulsively uttered Mr. Carlyle. “You must stop here.”

“Indeed I don’t see how he is to get up to a bedroom; or how a room is to be made ready for him, for the matter of that, without betraying his presence to the servants,” snapped Miss Carlyle. And poor Richard Hare laid his aching head upon his hands.

But now, Miss Carlyle’s manner was more in fault than her heart. Will it be believed that, before speaking the above ungracious words, before Mr. Carlyle had touched upon the subject, she had been

casting about in her busy mind for the best plan of sleeping Richard—how it could be accomplished.

“One thing is certain,” she resumed. “That it will be impossible for you to sleep here without its being known to Joyce. And I suppose you and Joyce are upon the friendly terms of drawn daggers, for she believes you were the murderer of her father.”

“Let me disabuse her,” interrupted Richard, his pale lips working as he started up. “Allow me to see her and convince her. Mr. Carlyle, why did you not tell Joyce better.”

“There’s that small room at the back of mine,” said Miss Carlyle, returning to the practical part of the subject. “He might sleep there. But Joyce must be taken into confidence.”

“Joyce had better come in,” said Mr. Carlyle. “I will say a word to her first.”

He unlocked the door and quitted the room, Miss Carlyle as jealously locking it again; called to Joyce, and beckoning her into the adjoining apartment. He knew that Joyce’s belief of the guilt of Richard Hare was confirmed and strong: but he must uproot that belief, if Richard was to be lodged in his house that night.

“Joyce,” he began, “you remember how thoroughly imbued with the persuasion you were, that Afy went off after Richard Hare, and was living with him. I several times expressed my doubts upon the point: the fact was, I had positive information that she was not with him, and never had been, though I considered it expedient to keep my information to myself. You are convinced now that she was not with him?”

“Of course I am, sir.”

“Well, you see, Joyce, that my opinion would have been worth listening to. Now I am going to try to shake your belief upon another point, and if I assure you that I have equally good grounds for doing so, you will believe me.”

“I am quite certain, sir, that you would state nothing but what is true; and I know that your judgment is sound,” was Joyce’s answer.

“Then I must tell you that I do not believe it was Richard Hare who murdered your father.”

“*Sir!*” uttered Joyce, amazed out of her senses.

“I believe Richard Hare to be as innocent of the murder as you or I,” he deliberately repeated. “I have held grounds for this opinion, Joyce, for many years.”

“Then, sir, who did do it?”

“Afy’s other lover. That dandy fellow, Thorn, as I truly believe.”

“And you say you have grounds, sir?” Joyce asked, after a pause.

“Good grounds: and I tell you I have been in possession of them for years. I should be glad for you to think as I do.”

“But, sir—if Richard Hare was innocent, why did he run away, and keep away?”

“Ah, why indeed! it is that which has done the mischief. His own weak cowardice was in fault; he feared to come back; and he felt that he could not remove the odium of circumstances. Joyce, I should like you to see him, and hear his story.”

“There is not much chance of that, sir. I dare say he will never venture here again.”

“He is here now.”

Joyce looked up, considerably startled.

“Here, in this house,” repeated Mr. Carlyle. “He has taken shelter in it, and for the few hours that he will remain, we must extend our hospitality and protection to him, concealing him in the best manner we can. I thought it well that this confidence should be reposed in you, Joyce. Come now, and see him.”

Considering that it was a subdued interview—the voices subdued, I mean—it was a confused one. Richard talking vehemently, Joyce asking question after question, Miss Carlyle’s tongue going as fast as theirs. The only silent one was Mr. Carlyle. Joyce could not refuse to believe protestations so solemn, and her suspicion veered round upon Captain Thorn.

“And now about the bed,” interjected Miss Carlye, impatiently. “Where’s he to sleep, Joyce? The only safe room, that I know of, will be the one through mine.”

“He can’t sleep there, ma’am. Don’t you know that the key of the door was lost last week, and we cannot open it.”

“So much the better. He’ll be all the safer.”

“But how is he to get in?”

“To get in? Why, through my room, of course. Does not mine open to it, stupid?”

“Oh, well, ma’am, if you would like him to go through yours, that’s different.”

“Why shouldn’t he go through? Do you suppose I mind young Dick Hare? Not I, indeed,” she irascibly continued. “I only wish he was young enough for me to flog him as I used to, that’s all: he deserves it as much as anybody ever did, playing the fool as he has done, in all ways. I shall be in bed

with the curtains drawn, and his passing through won't harm me, and my lying there won't harm him. Stand on ceremony with Dick Hare! what next, I wonder?"

This point being settled, Joyce went to put sheets upon the bed, and Miss Carlyle returned to her own. Mr. Carlyle meanwhile took Richard in to supper, and fed him plentifully and made him comfortable. Under the influence of the good cheer, the good fire, and the hot glass of brandy-and-water, which wound up the entertainment, Richard fell asleep in his chair. Not five minutes had he slept, however, when he started up, wild and haggard, beating off, as it were, some imaginary assailant.

"It was not I!" he uttered, fearfully and passionately. "It is of no use to take me, for it was not I. It was another; he who —"

"Richard, Richard!" soothingly said Mr. Carlyle.

Richard cast his bewildered eyes on the supper-table, the fire, on Mr. Carlyle, all re-assuring objects to look upon. "I declare, sir, I dreamt that they had grabbed me. What stupid things dreams are!"

At this moment there came a gentle knock at the door, and Mr. Carlyle opened it. It was Joyce.

"The room is ready, sir," she whispered, "and all the household are in bed."

"Then now is your time, Richard. Good night."

He stole up-stairs after Joyce, who piloted him through the room of Miss Carlyle. Nothing could be seen of that lady, though something might be heard: one, given to truth more than politeness, might have called it snoring. Joyce showed Richard his chamber, gave him the candle, and closed the door upon him.

Poor hunted Richard! good night to you!

CHAPTER XVII.

BARBARA'S HEART AT REST.

MORNING dawned. The same dull weather, the same heavy fall of snow. Miss Carlyle took her breakfast in bed, an indulgence she had not favoured for ever so many years. Richard Hare rose, but remained in his chamber, and Joyce carried his breakfast into him.

Mr. Carlyle entered whilst he was taking it. "How did you sleep, Richard?"

"I slept well. I was so dead tired. What am I to do next, Mr. Carlyle? The sooner I get away from this, the better. I can't feel safe."

"You must not think of it before evening. I am aware that you cannot remain here, save for a few temporary hours, as it would inevitably become known to the servants. You say you think of going to Liverpool or Manchester?"

"To any large town: they are all alike to me; but one, pursued as I am, is safer in a large place than a small one."

"I am inclined to think that this man, Thorn, only made a show of threatening you, Richard. If he be really the guilty party, his policy must be to keep all in quietness. The very worst thing that could happen for him, would be your arrest."

“Then why molest me? Why send an officer to dodge me?”

“He did not like your molesting him, and he thought he would frighten you. After that day, you would probably have seen no more of the officer. You may depend upon one thing, Richard: had the policeman’s object been to take you, he would have done so: he would not have contented himself with following you about from place to place. Besides, when a detective officer is employed to watch a party, he takes care not to allow himself to be seen: now this man showed himself to you more than once.”

“Yes, there’s a good deal in that,” observed Richard. “For, to one in his class of life, the bare suspicion of such a crime, brought against him, would crush him for ever in the eyes of his compeers.”

“It is difficult to me, Richard, to believe that he is in the class of life you speak of,” observed Mr. Carlyle.

“There’s no doubt about it; there’s none indeed. But that I did not much like to mention the name, for it can’t be a pleasant name to you, I should have said last night who I have seen him walking with,” continued simple-hearted Richard.

Mr. Carlyle looked inquiringly. “Say on, Richard.”

“I have seen him, sir, with Sir Francis Levison: twice. Once he was talking to him at the door of the betting-rooms, and once they were walking arm-in-arm. They are apparently upon intimate terms.”

At this moment, a loud, flustering, angry voice

was heard calling from the stairs, and Richard leaped up as if he had been shot. His door — not the one leading to the room of Miss Carlyle — opened upon the corridor, and the voice sounded close, just as if its owner were coming in with a bound. It was the voice of Mr. Justice Hare.

“Carlyle, where are you? Here’s a pretty thing happened! Come down.”

Mr. Carlyle for once in his life lost his calm equanimity, and sprang to the door, to keep it against invasion, as eagerly as Richard could have done. He forgot that Joyce had said the door was safely locked and the key mislaid. As to Richard, he rushed on his hat and his black whiskers, and hesitated between under the bed and inside the wardrobe.

“Don’t agitate yourself, Richard,” whispered Mr. Carlyle: “there is no real danger. I will go and keep him safely.”

But when Mr. Carlyle got through his sister’s bedroom, he found that lady had taken the initiative, and was leaning over the balustrades, having been arrested in the process of dressing. Her clothes were on, but her night-cap was not off: little cared she, however, who saw her night-cap.

“What on earth brings you up in this weather?” began she, in a tone of exasperation.

“I want to see Carlyle. Nice news I have had!”

“What about? Anything concerning Anne, or her family?”

“Anne be bothered!” replied the justice, who was certainly, from some cause, in a furious temper. “It concerns that precious rascal, whom I am forced to call son. I am told he is here.”

Down the stairs leaped Mr. Carlyle, four at a time, wound his arm within Mr. Hare's, and led him to a sitting-room.

“Good morning, justice. You had courage to venture up through the snow! What is the matter? you seem excited.”

“Excited!” raved the justice, dancing about the room, first on one leg, then on the other, like a cat upon hot bricks, “so would you be excited, if your life were worried out, as mine is, over a wicked scamp of a son. Why can't folks trouble their heads about their own business, and let my affairs alone? A pity but what he were hanged, and the thing done with!”

“But what has happened?” questioned Mr. Carlyle.

“Why, this has happened,” retorted the justice, throwing a letter on the table. “The post brought me this, just now—and pleasant information it gives!”

Mr. Carlyle took up the note and read it. It purported to be from “a friend” to Justice Hare, informing that gentleman that his “criminal son” was likely to have arrived at West Lynne, or would arrive in the course of a day or so: and it recommended Mr. Hare to speed his departure from it, lest he should be “pounced upon.”

“This letter is anonymous!” exclaimed Mr. Carlyle.

“Of course it is,” stamped the justice.

“The only notice *I* should ever take of an anonymous letter would be to put it in the fire,” cried Mr. Carlyle, his lip curling with scorn.

“But who has written it?” danced Justice Hare. “And is Dick at West Lynne?—that's the question!”

“Now, is it likely that he would come to West Lynne?” remonstrated Mr. Carlyle. “Justice, will you pardon me, if I venture to give you my candid opinion?”

“The fool at West Lynne! running into the very jaws of death. By Jupiter! if I can drop upon him, I’ll retain him in custody, and make out a warrant for his committal! I’ll have this everlasting bother over.”

“I was going to give you my opinion,” quietly put Mr. Carlyle. “I fear, justice, you bring these annoyances upon yourself.”

“Bring them upon myself!” ranted the indignant justice. “I? Did I murder Hallijohn? did I fly away from the law? Am I in hiding, Beelzebub knows where? Do I take starts, right down into my native parish disguised as a labourer, on purpose to worry my own father? Do I write anonymous letters? Bring them upon myself, do I? That cobs all, Carlyle.”

“You will not hear me out. It is known that you are much exasperated against Richard—”

“And if your son serves you the same when he is grown up, shan’t you be exasperated, pray?” fired Justice Hare.

“Do hear me. It is known that you are much exasperated, and that any allusion to him excites and annoys you. Now, my opinion is, justice, that some busybody is raising these reports, and writing these letters on purpose to annoy you. It may be somebody at West Lynne, very near us, for all we know.”

“That’s all rubbish,” peevishly responded the justice, after a pause. “It’s not likely. Who’d do it?”

“It is very likely : but you may be sure they will not give us a clue as to the ‘who.’ I should put that letter in the fire, and think no more about it. That’s the only way to serve them. A pretty laugh they have had in their sleeve, if it is anybody near, at seeing you wade up here through the snow this morning! They would know you were bringing the letter, to consult me.”

The justice—in spite of his obstinacy, he was somewhat easily persuaded to different views of things, especially by Mr. Carlyle—let fall his coat-tails, which had been gathered in his arms, as he stood with his back to the fire, and brought both his hands upon the table with a force enough to break it. “If I thought that,” he spluttered, “if I could think it, I’d have the whole parish of West Lynne before me to-day, and commit them for trial.”

“It’s a pity but what you could,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“Well, it may be, or it may not be, that that villain is coming here,” he resumed. “I shall call in at the police station, and tell them to keep a sharp look out.”

“You will do nothing of the sort, justice,” exclaimed Mr. Carlyle, almost in agitation. “Richard is not likely to make his appearance at West Lynne; but if he did, would you, his own father, turn the flood upon him? Not a man living, but would cry shame upon you. Yes, Mr. Hare, they would: if other people shrink from telling you the truth, I do not. You have boasted that you would deliver Richard up, if he ever threw himself in your path; and your unnatural harshness has been commented upon in no measured terms: it has, I give you my word. But

of course nobody believed that you would really *do it*. You might take leave of your friends if you did, for you would find none willing to own you for one afterwards."

"I took an oath I'd do it," said the justice.

"You did not take an oath to go open-mouthed to the police-station, upon the receipt of any despicable anonymous letter, or any foolish report, and say, 'I have news that my son will be here to-day: look after him.' Nonsense, justice! let the police look out for themselves; but don't *you* set them on."

The justice growled, whether in assent or dissent, did not appear, and Mr. Carlyle resumed.

"Have you shown this letter to Mrs. Hare? or mentioned it to her?"

"Not I. I didn't give myself time. I had gone down to the front gate, to see how deep the snow lay in the road, when the postman came up; so I read it as I stood there. I went in for my coat and umbrella to come off to you, and Mrs. Hare wanted to know where I was going to in such a hurry; but I did not satisfy her."

"I am truly glad to hear it," said Mr. Carlyle. "Such information, as this, could not fail to have a dangerous effect upon Mrs. Hare. Do not suffer a hint of it to escape you, justice: consider how much anxiety she has already suffered."

"It's partly her own fault. Why can't she drive the ill-doing boy from her mind?"

"If she could," said Mr. Carlyle, "she would be acting against human nature. There is one phase of the question which you may possibly not have glanced at, justice. You speak of delivering your

son up to to the law: has it ever struck you that you would be delivering up at the same time your wife's life?"

"Stuff!" said the justice.

"You would find it no 'stuff.' So sure as Richard is brought to trial, whether through your means or through any other, so sure will it kill your wife."

Mr. Hare took up the letter, which had laid open on the table, folded it, and put it in its envelope. "I suppose you don't know the writing?" he asked of Mr. Carlyle.

"I never saw it before, that I remember. Are you returning home?"

"No. I shall go on to Beauchamp's and show him this, and hear what he says. It's not much farther."

"Tell him not to speak of it, then. Beauchamp's safe, for his sympathies are with Richard—oh yes, they are, justice: ask him the question plainly if you like, and he will confess to it. I can tell you more sympathy goes with Richard than is acknowledged to you. But I would not show the letter to any one but Beauchamp," added Mr. Carlyle: "neither would I speak of it.

"Who can have written it?" repeated the justice.

"It bears, you see, the London post-mark."

"It is too wide a speculation to enter upon. And no satisfactory conclusion could come of it."

Justice Hare departed. Mr. Carlyle watched him down the avenue, striding under his umbrella, and then went up to Richard. Miss Carlyle was sitting with the latter then.

"I thought I should have died," spoke poor Dick.

I declare, Mr. Carlyle, my very blood seemed turned to water, and I thought I should have died with fright. Is he gone away, all safe?"

"He is gone, and it is all safe."

"And what did he want? What was it he had heard of me?"

Mr. Carlyle gave a brief explanation, and Richard immediately set down the letter as the work of Thorn. "Will it be possible for me to see my mother this time?" he demanded of Mr. Carlyle.

"I think it would be highly injudicious to let your mother know that you are here, or have been here," was the answer of Mr. Carlyle. "She would naturally be inquiring into particulars, and when she came to hear that you were pursued, she would never have another minute's peace. You must forego the pleasure of seeing her this time, Richard."

"And Barbara?"

"Barbara might come and stay the day with you. Only—"

"Only what, sir?" cried Richard, for Mr. Carlyle had hesitated.

"I was thinking what a wretched morning it is for her to come out in."

"She would go through an avalanche, she'd wade through mountains of snow, to see me," cried Richard eagerly. "And be delighted to do it."

"She always was a little fool," put in Miss Carlyle, jerking some stitches out of her knitting.

"I know she would," observed Mr. Carlyle, in answer to Richard. "We will try and get her here."

"She can arrange about the money I am to have, just as well as my mother could, you know, sir."

“Yes. For Barbara is in receipt of money of her own now, and I know she would wish for nothing better than to apply some of it to you. Cornelia, as an excuse for getting her here, I must say to Mrs. Hare that you are ill, and wish Barbara to come for the day and bear you company. Shall I?”

“Say I am dead, if you like,” responded Miss Corny, who was in one of her cross moods.

Mr. Carlyle ordered the pony-carriage, and drove forth with John. He drew in at the Grove. Barbara and Mrs. Hare were seated together, and looked surprised at the early visit.

“Did you want Mr. Hare, Archibald? He is out. He went while the breakfast was on the table, apparently in a desperate hurry.”

“I don’t want Mr. Hare. I want Barbara. I have come to carry her off.”

“To carry off Barbara!” echoed Mrs. Hare.

“Cornelia is not well: she has caught a violent cold, and wishes Barbara to spend the day with her.”

“Oh, Mr. Carlyle, I cannot leave mamma to-day. She is not well herself, and she would be so dull without me.”

“Neither can I spare her, Archibald. It is not a day for Barbara to go out.”

How could he get to say a word to Barbara alone? Whilst he deliberated, talking on all the while to Mrs. Hare, a servant arrived at the sitting-room door.

“The fishmonger’s boy is come up, ma’am. His master has sent him to say that he fears there’ll be no fish in to-day in anything like time. The trains cannot get up, with this weather.”

Mrs. Hare rose from her seat to hold a conference

at the door with her maid; and Mr. Carlyle seized his opportunity.

“Barbara,” he whispered, “make no opposition. You *must* come. What I really want you for is connected with Richard.”

She looked up at him, a startled glance, and the crimson flew to her face. Mrs. Hare returned to her seat. “Oh, such a day!” she shivered. “I am sure Cornelia cannot expect Barbara.”

“But Cornelia does. And there is my pony-carriage waiting to take her before I go to the office. Not a flake of snow can come near her, Mrs. Hare. The large warm apron will be up, and an umbrella will shield her bonnet and face. Get your things on, Barbara.”

“Mamma, if you would not very much mind being left, I should like to go,” said Barbara, with almost trembling eagerness.

“But you would be sure to take cold, child.”

“Oh dear no. I can wrap up well.”

“And I will see that she comes home all right this evening,” added Mr. Carlyle.

In a few minutes they were seated in the pony-carriage. Barbara’s tongue was burning to ask questions, but John sat behind them, and would have overheard. When they arrived at East Lynne, Mr. Carlyle gave her his arm up the steps, and took her into the breakfast room.

“Will you prepare yourself for a surprise, Barbara?”

Suspense — fear — had turned her very pale. “Something has happened to Richard!” she uttered.

“Nothing that need agitate you. He is here?”

“Here! Where?”

“Here. Under this roof. He slept here last night.”

“Oh, Archibald!”

“Only fancy, Barbara! I opened the window at nine last night, to look at the weather, and in burst Richard. We could not let him go out again in the snow, so he slept here, in that room next Cornelia’s.”

“Does she know of it?”

“Of course. And Joyce also: we were obliged to tell Joyce. Imagine Richard’s fear! Your father came this morning, calling up the stairs after me, saying he heard Richard was here. He meant at West Lynne. I thought Richard would have gone out of his mind with fright.”

A few more explanations, and Mr. Carlyle took Barbara into the room, Miss Carlyle and her knitting still keeping Richard company. In fact, that was to be the general sitting-room of the day, and a hot lunch, Richard’s dinner, would be served in Miss Carlyle’s chamber at one o’clock, Joyce only admitted to wait on them.

“And now I must go,” said Mr. Carlyle, after chatting a few minutes. “The office is waiting for me, and my poor ponies are in the snow.”

“But you’ll be sure to be home early, Mr. Carlyle!” said Richard. “I dare not stop here: I must be off not a moment later than six or seven o’clock.”

“I will be home, Richard.”

Anxiously did Richard and Barbara consult that day, Miss Carlyle of course putting in her word. Over and over again did Barbara ask the particulars of the slight interviews Richard had had with Thorn: over and over again did she openly speculate upon

what his name really was. "If you could but discover some one whom he knows, and inquire it!" she exclaimed.

"I have seen him with one person, but I can't inquire of him. They are too thick together, he and Thorn, and are birds of a feather also, I suspect. Great swells, both."

"Oh, Richard, don't use those expressions. They are unsuited to a gentleman."

Richard laughed bitterly. "A gentleman!"

"Who is it you have seen Thorn with?" inquired Barbara.

"Sir Francis Levison," replied Richard, glancing at Miss Carlyle, who drew in her lips ominously.

"With whom?" uttered Barbara, betraying complete astonishment. "Do you know Sir Francis Levison?"

"Oh yes, I know *him*. Nearly the only man about town that I do know."

Barbara seemed lost in a puzzled reverie, and it was some time before she roused herself from it.

"Are they at all alike?" she asked.

"Very much so, I suspect. Both bad men."

"But I meant in person."

"Not in the least. Except that they are both tall."

Again Barbara sank into thought. Richard's words had surprised her. She was aroused from it by hearing a child's voice in the next room. She ran into it, and Miss Carlyle immediately fastened the intervening door.

It was little Archibald Carlyle. Joyce had come in with the tray to lay the luncheon, and before she

could lock the door, Archibald ran in after her. Barbara lifted him in her arms to carry him back to the nursery.

“Oh, you heavy boy!” she exclaimed.

Archie laughed. “Wilson says that,” he lisped, “if ever she has to carry me.”

“I have brought you a truant, Wilson,” cried Barbara.

“Oh, is it you, Miss Barbara? How are you, miss? Naughty boy!—yes; he ran away without my noticing him—he can open the door now.”

“You must be so kind as to keep him strictly in, for to-day,” continued Barbara, authoritatively. “Miss Carlyle is not well, and cannot be subjected to the annoyance of his running into her room.”

Evening came, and the time of Richard’s departure. It was again snowing heavily, though it had ceased in the middle of the day. Money for the present had been given to him; arrangements had been discussed. Mr. Carlyle insisted upon Richard’s sending him his address, as soon as he should own one to send, and Richard faithfully promised. He was in very low spirits, almost as low as Barbara, who could not conceal her tears: they dropped in silence on her pretty silk dress. He was smuggled down the stairs, a large cloak of Miss Carlyle’s enveloping him, into the room he had entered by storm on the previous night. Mr. Carlyle held the window open.

“Good bye, Barbara dear. If ever you should be able to tell my mother of this day, say that my chief sorrow was, not to see her.”

“Oh, Richard!” she sobbed forth, broken-hearted,

“good-bye. May God be with you and bless you!”

“Farewell, Richard,” said Miss Carlyle: “don’t you be fool enough to get into any more scrapes.”

Last of all he wrung the hand of Mr. Carlyle. The latter went outside with him for an instant, and their leave-taking was alone.

Barbara returned to the chamber he had quitted. She felt that she must indulge in a few moments’ sobbing: Joyce was there, but Barbara was sobbing when she entered it.

“It *is* hard for him, Miss Barbara; if he is really innocent.”

Barbara turned her streaming eyes upon her. “*If!* Joyce, do you doubt that he is innocent?”

“I quite believe him to be so now, miss. Nobody could so solemnly assert what was not true. The thing at present will be to find that Captain Thorn.”

“Joyce!” exclaimed Barbara in excitement, seizing hold of Joyce’s hands, “I thought I had found him, I believed, in my own mind, that I knew who he was. I don’t mind telling you, though I have never before spoken of it: and with one thing or other this night I feel just as if I should die; as if I must speak. I thought it was Sir Francis Levison.”

Joyce stared with all her eyes. “Miss Barbara!”

“I did. I have thought it ever since the night that Lady Isabel went away. My poor brother was at West Lynne then, he had come for a few hours, and he met the man, Thorn, walking in Bean-lane. He was in evening dress, and Richard described a peculiar motion of his, the throwing off his hair from his brow: he said his white hand and his diamond

ring glittered in the moonlight. The white hand, the ring, the motion—for he was always doing it—all reminded me of Captain Levison, and from that hour until to-day I did believe him to be the man Richard saw. To-day Richard tells me that he knows Sir Francis Levison, and that he and Thorn are intimate. What I think now is, that this Thorn must have paid a flying visit to the neighbourhood that night, to assist Captain Levison in the wicked work he had on hand.”

“How strange it all sounds!” uttered Joyce.

“And I never could tell my suspicions to Mr. Carlyle! I did not like to mention Francis Levison’s name to him.”

Barbara returned down stairs. “I must be going home,” she said to Mr. Carlyle. “It is half-past seven, and mamma will be uneasy.”

“Whenever you like, Barbara.”

“But can I not walk? I am so sorry to take out your ponies again, and in this storm.”

Mr. Carlyle laughed. “Which would feel the storm worst, you or the ponies?”

But when Barbara got outside, she saw that it was not the pony-carriage, but the chariot that was in waiting for her. She turned inquiringly to Mr. Carlyle.

“Did you think I should allow you to go home in an open carriage to-night, Barbara?”

“Are you coming also?”

“I suppose I had better,” he smiled. “To see that you and the carriage do not come to harm.”

Barbara withdrew to her corner of the chariot, and cried silently. Very very deeply did she mourn the

unhappy situation, the privations of her brother: and she knew that he was one to feel them deeply: he could not battle with the world's hardships so bravely as many could have done. Mr. Carlyle only detected her emotion as they were nearing the Grove. He leaned forward, took her hand, and held it between his.

"Don't grieve, Barbara. Bright days may be in store for Richard yet." The carriage stopped.

"You may go back," he said to the servants when he alighted. "I shall walk home."

"Oh," exclaimed Barbara, "I do think you intend to spend the evening with us! Mamma will be so glad."

Her voice showed that she was glad also. Mr. Carlyle drew her hand within his arm as they walked up the path.

But Barbara had reckoned without her host. Mrs. Hare was in bed, consequently could not be pleased at the visit of Mr. Carlyle. The justice had gone out, and she, feeling tired and not well, thought she would retire to rest. Barbara stole into her room, but found her asleep; so that it fell to Barbara to entertain Mr. Carlyle.

They stood together before the large pier-glass in front of the blazing fire. Barbara was thinking over the events of the day. What Mr. Carlyle was thinking of was best known to himself: his eyes, covered with their drooping eyelids, were cast upon Barbara. There was a long silence: at length Barbara seemed to feel that his gaze was on her, and she looked up at him.

"Will you marry me, Barbara?"

The words were spoken in the quietest, most matter-of-fact tone, just as if he had said, Shall I give you a chair, Barbara. But oh! the change that

passed over her countenance! the sudden light of joy the scarlet flush of emotion and of happiness. Then it all faded down to paleness and to sadness.

She shook her head in the negative. "But you are very kind to ask me," she added in words.

"What is the impediment, Barbara?"

Another rush of colour as before, and a deep silence. Mr. Carlyle put his arm round her, and bent his face on a level with hers.

"Whisper it to me, Barbara."

She burst into a flood of tears.

"Is it because I once married another?"

"No, no. It is the remembrance of that night—you cannot have forgotten it, and it is stamped on my brain in letters of fire. I never thought so to betray myself. But for what passed that night, you would not have asked me now."

"Barbara!"

She glanced up at him; the tone was so painful.

"Do you know that I *love* you? that there is none other in the world whom I would care to marry, but you? Nay, Barbara, when happiness is within our reach, let us not throw it away upon a chimera."

She cried more softly, leaning upon his arm. "Happiness? Would it be happiness for you?"

"Great and deep happiness," he whispered.

She read truth in his countenance, and a sweet smile illumined her sunny features. Mr. Carlyle read its signs.

"You love me as much as ever, Barbara!"

"Far more; far more," was the murmured answer, and Mr. Carlyle held her closer, and drew her face fondly to his. Barbara's heart was at length at rest;

and she had been content to remain where she was for ever.

And Richard? Had he got clear off? Richard was stealing along the road, plunging into the snow by the hedge because it was more sheltered there than in the beaten path, when his umbrella came in contact with another umbrella. Miss Carlyle had furnished it to him; not to protect his battered hat, but to protect his face from being seen by the passers-by. The umbrella he encountered was an aristocratic silk one, with an ivory handle: Dick's was a democratic cotton, with hardly any handle at all; and the respective owners had been bearing on, heads down and umbrellas out, till they, the umbrellas, met smash, right underneath a gas-lamp. Aside went each umbrella, and the antagonists stared at each other.

"How dared you, fellow? Can't you see where you are going to?"

Dick thought he should have dropped. He would have given all the money his pockets held, if the friendly earth had but opened and swallowed him in. For he, now peering into his face, was his own father.

Uttering an exclamation of dismay, which broke from him involuntarily, Richard sped away with the swiftness of an arrow. Did Justice Hare recognise the tones? It cannot be said. He saw a rough, strange-looking man with bushy black whiskers, who was evidently scared at the sight of him. That was nothing; for the justice, being a justice and a strict one, was regarded with considerable awe in the parish, by those of Dick's apparent calibre. Nevertheless, he stood still and gazed in the direction, until all sound of Richard's footsteps had died away in the distance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROZEN TO DEATH IN THE SNOW.

TEARS were streaming down the face of Mrs. Hare. It was a bright morning after the snow-storm, so bright that the sky was blue and the sun was shining, but the snow lay deeply upon the ground. Mrs. Hare sat in her chair, enjoying the brightness, and Mr. Carlyle stood near her. The tears were of joy and of grief mingled: of grief at hearing that she should at last have to part with Barbara; of joy that she was going to one so entirely worthy of her as was Mr. Carlyle.

“Archibald, she has had a happy home here: you will render yours as much so?”

“To the very utmost of my power.”

“You will be ever kind to her, ever cherish her?”

“With my whole heart and strength. Dear Mrs. Hare, I thought you knew me too well to doubt me.”

“Doubt you! I do not doubt you: I trust you implicitly, Archibald. Had the whole world laid themselves at Barbara’s feet, I should have prayed that she might choose you.”

A smile flitted over Mr. Carlyle’s lips. *He* knew it was what Barbara would have done.

“But, Archibald, what about Cornelia?” resumed Mrs. Hare. “I would not for a moment interfere in your affairs, or in the arrangements you and Barbara

may agree upon: but I cannot help thinking that married people are better alone."

"Cornelia will quit East Lynne," said Mr. Carlyle. "I have not spoken to her yet, but I shall do so now. I have long made up my mind to that; that if I ever married again, I and my wife would live alone. It is said she interfered too much with my former wife: had I suspected it, Cornelia should not have remained in the house a day. Rest assured that Barbara shall not be subjected to the chance."

"How did *you* come over her?" demanded the justice, who had already given his gratified consent, and who now entered, in his dressing-gown and morning wig. "Others have tried it on, and Barbara would not listen to any of them."

"I suppose I must have cast a spell upon her," answered Mr. Carlyle, breaking into a smile.

"Here she is. Barbara," cried the unceremonious justice, "what is it that you see in Carlyle more than in anybody else?"

Barbara's scarlet cheeks answered for her. "Papa," she said, "Otway Bethel is at the door, asking to speak to you. Jasper says he won't come in."

"Then I'm sure I am not going out to him in the cold. Here, Mr. Otway, what are you afraid of? Come in."

Otway Bethel made his appearance, in his usual sporting costume. But he did not seem altogether at his ease in the presence of Mrs. Hare and Barbara.

"The colonel wished me to see you, justice, to ask if you had any objection to the meeting being put off from one o'clock till two," cried he, after nodding to Mr. Carlyle. "He has got a friend coming to

see him unexpectedly, who will leave again by the two o'clock train."

"I don't care which it is," answered Mr. Hare. "Two o'clock will do as well as one for me."

"That's all right, then, and I'll drop in upon Herbert and Pinner, and acquaint them. Have you heard of the dead man being found?"

"What dead man?" cried Justice Hare.

"Some chap who must have missed his way last night: or who perhaps laid himself down, overcome with fatigue. He was found this morning, frozen to death. I have just seen him: he is lying in that hollow, just out of the road, as you turn down towards Hallijohn's old cottage. I saw a lot of folks making for the place, so I went too."

"Who is he?" inquired Justice Hare.

"A stranger, I think, I didn't recognise his face. He is in a smock-frock. A young man, with a profusion of dark whisker."

"By George, but I shouldn't wonder but it's the fellow who last night nearly broke my umbrella!" ejaculated the justice. "He wore a smock frock, and looked young, and his whiskers were fierce enough for an Irishman's. I thought the fellow a little cracked. He was coming blundering along, his umbrella before him, seeing nothing, and he ran right against me. I blew him up naturally; but no sooner had he looked at me, than he uttered an exclamation of dismay, and made off like a shot. I thought it curious. Perhaps it was the man you speak of, Mr. Otway?"

"I shouldn't wonder, Sir."

Mr. Carlyle glanced at Barbara. She had turned

deadly white. He saw what was passing in her mind. Could it be the ill-fated Richard? As Mr. Carlyle crossed the room to the door, he contrived to whisper a word to her in passing.

“I will go and see, and bring you back the news. Bear up, my darling.”

“Are you departing, Archibald?” said Mrs. Hare.

“I am going to have a look at this man that Bethel talks of. Curious as any school-girl, you see, yet.”

He walked very quickly down the garden, and Barbara watched him from the gate. *How* should she bear the sickening suspense until he returned? Something seemed to tell her fears that it was Richard. Otway Bethel departed; and the justice, exchanging his wig and gown for a sprucer wig and coat, followed next: he, too, must have a look at the deceased. In a small place like West Lynne, every little event causes a stir and excites curiosity: what would not be noticed in a large town, is there magnified into a wonder that all folks run after.

Mr. Carlyle was the first back. Barbara went to the porch, and waited: had it been to save her life, she could not have gone to meet him: the suspense was fearful.

“But, as he neared her, he smiled and nodded gaily, as if he would say, Fear not. Barbara’s heart acquired a grain of courage from it; but still it throbbed painfully.

“We were falsely alarmed, Barbara,” he whispered. “It is a complete stranger; some poor man who did not know the road. He is not in the least like Richard, and his whiskers are red.”

For the moment she thought she should have fainted, so great was the relief.

“But, Archibald, could it have been Richard, think you, who ran against Papa—as he spoke of?”

“There is little doubt it was. The cry of dismay, when he recognised Justice Hare, and his speeding off, would betray that it was Richard.”

“And Papa did not know him! What a merciful escape!”

“Is the poor man quite dead, Archibald?” inquired Mrs. Hare, when he reached the sitting-room.

“Quite so. He seems to have been dead some hours.”

“Did you recognise him?”

“Not at all. He is a stranger.”

Miss Carlyle’s cold was better that evening; in fact, she seemed quite herself again, and Mr. Carlyle introduced the subject of his marriage. It was after dinner that he began upon it.

“Cornelia, when I married Lady Isabel Vane, you reproached me severely with having kept you in the dark—”

“If you had not kept me in the dark, but consulted me, as any other Christian would, the course of events might have been wholly changed, and the wretchedness and disgrace, that fell on this house, been spared to it,” fiercely interrupted Miss Carlyle.

“We will leave the past,” he said, “and consider the future. I was about to remark, that I do not intend to fall under your displeasure for the like offence. I believe you have never wholly forgiven it.”

“And never shall,” cried she impetuously. “I did not deserve the slight.”

“Therefore, almost as soon as I know it myself, I acquaint you. I am about to marry a second time, Cornelia.”

Miss Carlyle started up. Her spectacles dropped off her nose, and a knitting box, which she happened to have on her knee, clattered to the ground.

“What did you say?” she uttered, aghast.

“I am about to marry.”

“You!”

“I. Is there anything so very astonishing in it?”

“For the love of common sense, don’t go and make such a fool of yourself! You have done it once: was not that enough for you, but you must run your head into the noose again?”

“Now, Cornelia, can you wonder that I do not speak to you of such things, when you meet them in this way? You treat me just as you did when I was a child. It is very foolish.”

“When folks act childishly, they must be treated as children. I always thought you were mad when you married before, but I shall think you doubly mad now.”

“Because you have preferred to remain single and solitary yourself, is it any reason why you should condemn me to do the same? You are happy alone; I should be happier with a wife.”

“That she may go and disgrace you, as the last one did!” intemperately spoke Miss Carlyle, caring not a rush what she said in her storm of anger. Mr. Carlyle’s brow flushed; but he controlled his temper.

“No,” he calmly replied. “I am not afraid of that, in the one I have now chosen.”

Miss Corny gathered her knitting together; he had picked up her box. Her hands trembled, and the lines of her face were working. It was a blow to her as keen as the other had been.

“Pray who is it that you have chosen?” she jerked forth. “The whole neighbourhood has been after you.”

“Let it be who it will, Cornelia, you will be sure to grumble. Were I to say that it was a royal princess, or a peasant’s daughter, you would equally see grounds for finding fault.”

“Of course I should. I know who it is — that stuck-up Louisa Dobede.”

“No, it is not. I never had the slightest intention of choosing Louisa Dobede; nor she of choosing me. I am marrying to please myself, and, for a wife, Louisa Dobede would not please me.”

“As you did before,” sarcastically put in Miss Corny.

“Yes; as I did before.”

“Well, can’t you open your mouth, and say who it is?” was the exasperated rejoinder.

“It is Barbara Hare.”

“Who?” shrieked Miss Carlyle.

“You are not deaf, Cornelia.”

“Well, you *are* an idiot!” she exclaimed, lifting up her hands and eyes.

“Thank you,” he said, but without any signs of irritation.

“And so you are; *you are*, Archibald. To suffer

that girl, who has been angling after you so long, to catch you at last."

"She has not angled after me: had she done so, she would probably never have been Mrs. Carlyle. Whatever passing fancy she may have entertained for me in earlier days, she has shown no symptoms of it of late years: and I am quite certain that she had no more thought, or idea, that I should choose her for my second wife, than you had that I should choose you. Others have angled after me too palpably, but Barbara has not."

"She is a little conceited minx; as vain as she is high."

"What else have you to urge against her?"

"I would have married a girl without a slur—if I must have married," aggravatingly returned Miss Corny.

"Slur?"

"Slur, yes! Dear me, is it an honour—to possess a brother such as Richard?"

"That is no slur upon Barbara. And the time may come when it will be taken off Richard."

Miss Corny sniffed. "Pigs may fly; but *I* never saw them try at it."

"The next consideration, Cornelia, is about your residence. You will go back, I presume, to your own home."

Miss Corny did not believe her own ears. "Go back to mine own home!" she exclaimed. "I shall do nothing of the sort. I shall stop at East Lynne. What's to hinder me?"

Mr. Carlyle shook his head. "It cannot be," he said, in a low, decisive tone.

“Who says so?” she sharply asked.

“I do. Have you forgotten that night — when *she* went away — the words spoken by Joyce? Cornelia, whether they were true or false, I will not subject another to the chance.”

She did not answer. Her lips only parted and closed again. Somehow Miss Carlyle could not bear to be reminded of that revelation of Joyce’s: it subdued even her.

“I cast no reflection upon you,” hastily continued Mr. Carlyle. “You have been mistress of a house for many years, and you naturally look to be so; it is right you should. But two mistresses in a house do not answer, Cornelia: they never did, and they never will.”

“Why did you not give me so much of your sentiments when I first came to East Lynne?” she burst forth. “I hate hypocrisy.”

“They were not my sentiments then: I possessed none. I was ignorant upon the subject, as I was upon others. Experience has come to me since.”

“You will not find a better mistress of a house than I have made you,” she said resentfully.

“I do not look for it. The tenants leave your house in March, do they not?”

“Yes, they do,” snapped Miss Corny. “But as we are on the subject of details, of ways and means, allow me to tell you that if you did what is right *you* would move into that house of mine, and I will go to a smaller — as you seem to think I shall poison Barbara if I remained with her. East Lynne is a vast deal too fine and too grand for you.”

“I do not consider it so. I shall not quit East Lynne.”

“Are you aware that, in leaving your house, I take my income with me, Mr. Archibald?”

“Most certainly. Your income is yours, and you will require it for your own purposes. I have neither right to it, nor wish for it.”

“The withdrawal will make a pretty good hole in your income, I can tell you that. Take care that you and East Lynne don’t go bankrupt together.”

Mr. Carlyle laughed. “I will take care of that, Cornelia. If I were not fully justified in living at East Lynne, I should not do so. With all my extravagance — as you are pleased to term it — I am putting by plenty of money, and you know it.”

“You might put by more, were your expenses less,” rebuked Miss Carlyle.

“I have no fancy to live as a hermit, or a miser.”

“No; nor as a man of common sense. To think that you should sacrifice yourself again!” she wailed, in a tone of lamentation. “And to Barbara Hare! an extravagant, vain, upstart little reptile.”

Mr. Carlyle took the compliments to Barbara with composure. It was of no use doing otherwise. Miss Corny was not likely to regard her with more graciousness, since it was Barbara’s coming there that turned herself out of East Lynne.

At this moment the summons of a visitor was heard. Even that excited the ire of Miss Carlyle. “I wonder who’s come bothering to-night?” she uttered.

Peter entered. “It is Major Thorn, sir. I have shown him into the drawing-room.”

Mr. Carlyle was surprised. He proceeded to the drawing-room, and Miss Carlyle rang for Joyce. Strange to say, she had no thought of rebelling against the decree. An innate consciousness had long been hers that, should Mr. Carlyle marry again, her sojourn in the house would terminate. East Lynne was Mr. Carlyle's: she had learnt that he could be firm upon occasions, and the tone of his voice had told that this was one of them.

"Joyce," began she, after her own unceremonious fashion, "your master is going to make a simpleton of himself a second time, so I shall leave him and East Lynne to it. Will you go with me, and be my upper maid again?"

"What ma'am?" exclaimed Joyce, in bewilderment: "what did you say master was going to do?"

"To make a simpleton of himself," irascibly repeated Miss Carlyle. "He is going to tie himself up again with a wife; that's what he's going to do. Now, do you stop here, or will you go with me?"

"I would go with you, ma'am, but — but for one thing."

"What's that?"

"The promise I gave to Lady Isabel. She exacted it from me when she thought she was about to die — a promise that I would remain with her children. She did not leave them by death after all: but it comes to the same thing."

"Not exactly," sarcastically spoke Miss Carlyle. "But there's another side of the question, Joyce, which you may not have looked at. When there shall be another mistress at East Lynne, will you be permitted to remain here?"

Joyce considered: she could not see her way altogether clear. "Allow me to give you my answer a little later," she said to Miss Carlyle.

"Such a journey!" Major Thorn was saying, meanwhile, to Mr. Carlyle. "It is my general luck to get ill weather when I travel. Rain and hail, thunder and heat, nothing bad comes amiss, when I am out. The snow lay on the rails, I don't know how thick: at one station we were detained two hours."

"Are you purposing to make any stay at West Lynne?"

"Off again to-morrow. My leave, this time, is to be spent at my mother's. I may bestow a week of it, or so, on West Lynne, but am not sure. I must be back in Ireland in a month. Such a horrid bog-hole we are quartered in just now! The truth is, Carlyle, a lady has brought me here."

"Indeed!"

"I am in love with Barbara Hare. The little jade has said No to me by letter: but, as Herbert says, there's nothing like urging your suit in person. And I have come to do so."

Mr. Carlyle took an instant's counsel with himself, and decided that it would be a kind thing to tell the major the state of the case: far more kind than to subject him to another rejection from Barbara, and to suffer the facts to reach him by common report.

"Will you shoot me, major, if I venture to tell you — that any second application to Barbara would be futile."

"She is not appropriated, is she?" hurriedly cried Major Thorn. "She's not married?"

“She is not married. She is going to be.”

“Oh! That’s just like my unlucky fate. And who is the happy man?”

“You must promise not to call me out, if I disclose his name.”

“Carlyle! It is not yourself?”

“You have said it.”

There was a brief silence. It was Mr. Carlyle who broke it.

“It need not make us the less good friends, Thorn. Do not allow it to do so.”

The major put out his hand, and grasped Mr. Carlyle’s. “No, by Jove, it shan’t! It’s all fate. And if she must go beside me, I’d rather see her yours than any other man’s upon earth. Were you engaged when I asked Barbara to be my wife, some months ago.”

“No. We have been engaged but very recently.”

“Did Barbara betray to you that I asked her?” proceeded Major Thorn, a shade of mortification rising to his face.

“Certainly not: you do not know Barbara, if you fancy she could be guilty of it. The justice managed to let it out to me during an explosion of wrath.”

“Wrath because I asked for his daughter.”

“Wrath against Barbara, for refusing. Not particularly at her refusing you,” added Mr. Carlyle, correcting himself; “but she was in the habit of refusing all who asked her, and thereby fell under displeasure.”

“Did she refuse you?”

“No,” smiled Mr. Carlyle, “she accepted me.”

“Ah, well; it’s all fate, I say. But she is an un-

ommon nice girl, and I wish it had been my luck to get her."

"To go from one subject to another," resumed Mr. Carlyle, "there is a question I have long thought to put to you, Thorn, if we ever met again. Which year was it that you were staying at Swainson?"

Major Thorn mentioned it. It was the year of Hallijohn's murder.

"As I thought—in fact knew," said Mr. Carlyle. "Did you, while you were stopping there, ever come across a namesake of yours, one Thorn?"

"I believe I did. But I don't know the man of my own knowledge, and I saw him but once only. I don't think he was living at Swainson. I never observed him in the town."

"Where did you meet with him?"

"At a roadside beer-shop, about two miles from Swainson. I was riding one day, when a fearful storm came on, and I took shelter there. Scarcely had I entered, when another horseman rode up, and he likewise took shelter. A tall, dandified man, aristocratic and exclusive. When he departed—for he quitted first, the storm being over—I asked the people who he was. They said they did not know, though they often saw him ride by; but a man who was in there, drinking, said he was a Captain Thorn. The same man, by the way, volunteered the information that he came from a distance, somewhere near West Lynne: I remember that."

"That Captain Thorn did?"

"No; that he himself did. He appeared to know nothing of Captain Thorn, beyond the name."

It seemed to be ever so! Scraps of information,

but nothing tangible, nothing to lay hold of, or to know the man by. Would it be thus always?

“Should you recognise him again, were you to see him?” resumed Mr. Carlyle, awaking from his reverie.

“I think I should. There was something peculiar in his countenance, and I remember it well yet.”

“Were you by chance to meet him, and discover his real name—for I have reason to believe that Thorn, the one he went by then, was an assumed one—will you oblige me by letting me know it?”

“With all the pleasure in life,” replied the major. “The chances are against it, though, confined as I am to that confounded sister country. Other regiments get the luck of being quartered in the metropolis, or near it: ours doesn’t.”

When Major Thorn had departed, and Mr. Carlyle was about to return to the room where he had left his sister, he was interrupted by Joyce.

“Sir,” she began, “Miss Carlyle tells me that there is going to be a change at East Lynne.”

The words took Mr. Carlyle by surprise. “Miss Carlyle has been in a hurry to tell you!” he remarked, a certain haughty displeasure in his tone.

“She did not speak for the sake of telling me, sir; but I fancy she was thinking about her own plans. She inquired whether I would go with her when she left, or whether I meant to remain at East Lynne. I could not answer her, sir, until I had spoken to you.”

“Well?” said Mr. Carlyle.

“I gave a promise, sir, to—to—my late lady, that I would remain with her children so long as I was permitted: she asked it of me when she was ill;

when she thought she was going to die. What I would inquire of you, sir, is, whether the changes will make any difference to my staying?"

"No," he decisively replied. "I also, Joyce, wish you to remain with the children."

"It is well, sir," Joyce answered: and her face looked bright as she quitted the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. DILL IN AN EMBROIDERED SHIRT-FRONT.

IT was a lovely morning in June, and all West Lynne was astir. West Lynne generally was astir in the morning, but not in the bustling manner that might be observed now. People were abroad in numbers, pressing down to St. Jude's church: for it was the day of Mr. Carlyle's marriage to Barbara Hare.

Miss Carlyle made herself into a sort of martyr. She would not go near it: fine weddings in fine churches did not suit her, she said, they could tie themselves up together fast enough without her presence. She had invited the little Carlyles and their governess and Joyce to spend the day with her; and she persisted in regarding the children as martyrs too, in being obliged to submit to the advent of a second mother. She was back in her old house again, next door to the office, settled there for life now, with her servants. Peter had mortally offended her, in electing to remain at East Lynne.

Mr. Dill committed himself terribly on the wedding morning, and lucky was he to escape a shaking, like the one he had received on Mr. Carlyle's first marriage. About ten o'clock he made his appearance at Miss Carlyle's: he was a man of the old school, possessing old-fashioned notions, and he had deemed

that to step in, to congratulate her on the auspicious day, would be only good manners.

Miss Carlyle was seated in her dining-room, her hands folded before her. It was rare indeed that *she* was caught doing nothing. She turned her eyes on Mr. Dill as he entered.

"Why, what on earth has taken you!" began she, before he could speak. "You are decked out like a young buck."

"I am going to the wedding, Miss Cornelia. Did you not know it? Mrs. Hare was so kind as to invite me to the breakfast, and Mr. Archibald insists upon my going to church. I am not too fine, am I?"

Poor old Dill's "finery" consisted of a white waistcoat with gold buttons, and an embroidered shirt front. Miss Corny was pleased to regard it with sarcastic wrath.

"Fine!" echoed she, "I don't know what *you* call it. I would not make myself such a spectacle for untold gold. You'll have all the ragamuffins in the street forming a tail after you, thinking you are the bridegroom. A man of your years to deck yourself out in a worked shirt! I would have had some rosettes on my coat-tails, while I was about it."

"My coat's quite plain, Miss Cornelia," he meekly remonstrated.

"Plain! what would you have it?" snapped Miss Corny. "Perhaps you covet a wreath of embroidery round it, gold leaves and scarlet flowers, with a swans-down collar? It would only be in keeping with that shirt and waistcoat. I might as well go and order a white tarlatan dress, looped up with sweet peas, and

stream through the town in that guise. It would be just as consistent."

"People like to dress a little out of the common at a wedding, Miss Cornelia: it's only respectful, when they are invited guests."

"I don't say people should go to a wedding in a hop-sack. But there's a medium. Pray do you know your age?"

"I am turned sixty, Miss Corny."

"You just are. And do you consider it decent for an old man, turned sixty, to be decorated off as you are now? I don't; and so I tell you my mind. Why, you'll be the laughing-stock of the parish! Take care the boys don't tie a tin kettle to you!"

Mr. Dill thought he would leave the subject. His own impression was, that he was *not* too fine, and that the parish would not regard him as being so: still, he had a great reverence for Miss Corny's judgment, and was not altogether easy. He had had his white gloves in his hand when he entered, but he surreptitiously smuggled them into his pocket, lest they might offend. He passed to the subject which had brought him thither.

"What I came in for, was, to offer you my congratulations on this auspicious day, Miss Cornelia. I hope Mr. Archibald and his wife, and you, ma'am—"

"There! you need not trouble yourself to go on," interrupted Miss Corny, hotly arresting him. "We want condolence here to-day, rather than the other thing. I'm sure I'd nearly as soon see Archibald go to his hanging."

"Oh, Miss Corny!"

“I would: and you need not stare at me as if you were throttled. What business has he to go and fetter himself with a wife again? one would have thought he had had enough with the other. It is as I have always said: there’s a soft place in Archibald’s brain.”

Old Dill knew there was no “soft place” in the brain of Mr. Carlyle, but he deemed it might be as well not to say so, in Miss Corny’s present humour. “Marriage is a happy state, as I have heard, ma’am, and honourable; and I am sure Mr. Archibald—”

“Very happy! very honourable!” fiercely cried Miss Carlyle, sarcasm in her tone. “His last marriage brought him all that, did it not?”

“That’s past and done with, Miss Corny, and none of us need recall it. It brought him some happy years before that happened. I hope he will find in his present wife a recompense for what’s gone: he could not have chosen a prettier or nicer young lady than Miss Barbara: and I am glad to my very heart that he has got her.”

“Couldn’t he!” jerked Miss Carlyle.

“No, ma’am, he could not. Were I young, and wanting a wife, there’s not one in all West Lynne I would so soon look out for as Miss Barbara. Not that she’d have me; and I was not speaking in that sense, Miss Corny.”

“It’s to be hoped you were not,” retorted Miss Corny. “She is an idle, insolent, vain fagot, caring for nothing but her own doll’s face and for Archibald.”

“Ah, well, ma’am, never mind that: pretty young girls know they are pretty, and you can’t take their vainty from them. She’ll be a good and loving wife

to him; I know she will; it is in her nature; she won't serve him as—as—that other poor unfortunate did."

"If I feared she was one to bring shame to him, as that other did, I'd go into the church this hour and forbid the marriage; and if that didn't do, I'd—I'd—smother her!" shrieked Miss Carlyle. "Look at that piece of impudence!"

The last sentence was uttered in a different tone, and concerned somebody in the street. Miss Carlyle hopped off her chair and strode to the window. Mr. Dill's eyes turned in the like direction.

In a gay summer's dress, fine and sparkling, with a coquettish little bonnet, trimmed with pink, shaded by one of those nondescript articles at present called veils, which article was made of white spotted net, with a pink ruche round it, sailed Afy Hallijohn, conceited and foolish and good looking as ever. Catching sight of Mr. Dill, she made him a flourishing and gracious bow. The courteous old gentleman returned it, and was pounced upon by Miss Corny's tongue for his pains.

"Whatever possessed you to do that?"

"Well, Miss Corny, she spoke to me. You saw her."

"I saw her! yes, I did see her, the brazen bell-wether! And she saw me, and spoke to you in her insolence. And you must answer her, in spite of my presence, instead of shaking your fist and giving her a reproving frown. You want a little sharp talking to, yourself."

"But, Miss Corny, it's always best to let bygones be bygones," he pleaded. "She was flighty and fool-

ish, and all that, was Afy; but now that it's proved she did not go with Richard Hare, as was suspected, and is at present living creditably, why should she not be noticed?"

"If the very deuce himself stood there with his horns and tail, you would find excuses to make for him," fired Miss Corny. "You are as bad as Archibald! Notice Afy Hallijohn! when she dresses and flirts, and minces, as you saw her but now! What creditable servant would flaunt about in such a dress and bonnet as that? — with that flimsy gauze thing over her face! It's as disreputable as your shirt-front."

Mr. Dill coughed humbly, not wishing to renew the point of the shirt-front. "She is not exactly a servant, Miss Corny, she's a lady's-maid: and ladies'-maids dress outrageously fine. I had a great respect for her father, ma'am: never a better clerk came into our office."

"Perhaps you'll tell me you have a respect for her! The world's being turned upside down, I think. Formerly, mistresses kept their servants to work; now, it seems they keep them for play. She's going to St. Jude's, you may be sure of it, to stare at this fine wedding, instead of being at home, in a cotton gown and white apron, making beds. Mrs. Latimer must be a droll mistress, to give her her liberty in this way. What's that fly for?" sharply added Miss Corny, as one drew up to the office door.

"Fly," said Mr. Dill, stretching forward his bald head. "It must be the one I ordered. Then I'll wish you good day, Miss Corny."

"Fly for you!" cried Miss Corny. "Have you

got the gout, that you could not walk to St. Jude's on foot?"

"I am not going to church yet, I am going on to the Grove, Miss Corny. I thought it would look more proper to have a fly, ma'am; more respectful."

"Not a doubt but you need it, in that trim," retorted she. "Why didn't you put on pumps; and silk stockings, with pink clocks?"

He was glad to bow himself out. But he thought he would do it with a pleasant remark, to show her he bore her no ill will. "Just look at the crowds pouring down, Miss Corny: the church will be as full as it can cram."

"I dare say it will," retorted she. "One fool makes many."

"I fear Miss Cornelia does not like this marriage, any more than she did the last," quoth Mr. Dill to himself, as he stepped into his fly. "Such a sensible woman as she is in other things, to be so bitter against Mr. Archibald because he marries! It's not like her. I wonder," he added, his thoughts changing, "whether I do look foolish in this shirt? I'm sure I never thought of decking myself out to appear young—as Miss Corny said: I only wished to testify respect to Mr. Archibald and Miss Barbara: nothing else would have made me give five-and-twenty shillings for it. Perhaps it's not etiquette—or whatever they call it—to wear them in a morning? Miss Corny ought to know; and there must certainly be something wrong about it, by the way it put her up. Well, it can't be helped now; it must go: there's no time to return home to change it.

St. Jude's church was crowded: all the world and

his wife had flocked to see it. Those who could not get in, took up their station in the church-yard and in the road. Tombstones were little respected that day, for irreverent feet stood upon them: five-and-twenty boys at least were mounted on the railings round Lord Mount Severn's grave, holding on, one to another. Was the bridal party never coming? Eleven o'clock, and no signs of it. The mob outside grew impatient; the well-dressed mob inside grew impatient too: some of them had been there for two hours. Hark! a sound of carriages! Yes, it was coming now; and the beadle and the pew-opener cleared the space before the altar rails, which had been invaded, and, until now, the invasion winked at.

Well, it was a goodly show. Ladies and gentlemen as smart as fine feathers could make them. Mr. Carlyle was one of the first to enter the church, self-possessed and calm, every inch a gentleman. Oh! but he was noble to look upon: though when was he ever otherwise? Mr. and Mrs. Clitheroe were there, Anne Hare, that was: a surprise for some of the gazers, who had not known they were expected to the wedding. Gentle, delicate Mrs. Hare walked up the church leaning on the arm of Sir John Dobede, a paler look than usual on her sweet, sad face. "She's thinking of her wretched, ill-doing son," quoth the gossips, one to another. But who comes in now, with an air as if the whole church belonged to him? An imposing, pompous man, stern and grim, in a new flaxen wig, and a white rose in his button-hole. It is Mr. Justice Hare, and he leads in one, whom folks jump upon seats to get a look at.

Very lovely was Barbara, in her soft white silk

robes, and her floating veil. Her cheeks, now blushing rosy red, now pale as the veil that shaded them, betrayed how intense was her emotion. The bridesmaids came after her with jaunty steps, vain in their important office: Louisa Dobede, Augusta and Kate Herbert, and Mary Pinner.

Mr. Carlyle was already in his place at the altar; and as Barbara neared him, he advanced, took her hand and placed her on his left. I don't think that it was quite usual: but he had been married before, and ought to know. The clerk directed the rest where to stand, and, after some little delay, the service proceeded.

In spite of her emotion—and that it was great, scarcely to be repressed, none could doubt—Barbara made the responses bravely. Be you very sure that a woman who *loves* him to whom she is being united, must experience this emotion. “Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy state of matrimony?” spoke the Reverend Mr. Little. “Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, as long as ye both shall live?”

“I will.” Clearly, firmly, impressively was the answer given. It was as if Barbara had in her thoughts one, who had not “kept only unto him,” and would proclaim her own resolution never so to betray him, God helping her.

The ceremony was very soon over; and Barbara, the magic ring upon her finger, and her arm within Mr. Carlyle's, was led out to his chariot, now hers: had he not just endowed her with his worldly goods?

The crowd shouted and hurraed as they caught a

sight of her lovely face, but the carriage was soon clear of the crowd, who concentrated their curiosity upon the other carriages that were to follow it. The company were speeding back to the Grove, to breakfast. Mr. Carlyle, breaking the silence, suddenly turned to his bride and spoke, his tone impassioned, almost unto pain.

“Barbara, *you* will keep your vows to me?”

She raised her shy blue eyes, so full of love, to his: earnest feeling had brought the tears to them.

“Always: in the spirit and in the letter: until death shall claim me. So help me heaven!”

PART THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

S T A L K E N B E R G.

MORE than a year had gone on.

The German watering-places were crowded that early autumn. They generally are crowded at that season, now that the English flock abroad in shoals, like the swallows quitting our cold country, to return again some time. France has been pretty well used up, so now we fall upon Germany. Stalkenberg was that year particularly full; for its size: you might have put it in anut-shell: and it derived its importance, name, and most else belonging to it, from its lord of the soil, the Baron von Stalkenberg. A stalwart old man was the baron, with grizzly hair, a grizzly beard, and manners as loutish as those of the boars he hunted. He had four sons as stalwart as himself, and who promised to be in time as grizzled. They were all styled the Counts von Stalkenberg, being distinguished by their Christian names; all save the eldest son and he was generally called the young baron. Two of them were away; soldiers; and two, the eldest and the youngest, lived with their father, in the tumble-down castle of Stalkenberg, situated about a mile from the village to which it gave its name.

The young Baron von Stalkenberg was at liberty to marry; the three Counts von Stalkenberg were not — unless they could pick up a wife with enough money to keep herself and her husband. In this creed they had been brought up: it was a perfectly understood creed, and not rebelled against.

Stalkenberg differed in no wise from the other baths of its class in the Vaterland. It had its lindentrees, its fair scenery, its Kursaal, its balls, its concerts, its tables d'hôte, its gaming tables, where one everlasting sentence dins the visitor's ear — and one to which he will do well to be deaf — “Faites votre jeu, messieurs! faites votre jeu,” its promenades, and its waters. The last were advertised — and some accorded their belief — to cure every malady known or imagined, from apoplexy down to an attack of love-fever provided you only took enough of them.

The young Baron von Stalkenberg (who was only styled young in contradistinction to his father, being in his forty-first year) was famous for a handsome person, and for his passionate love of the chase: he was the deadly enemy of wild boars and wolves. The Count Otto von Stalkenburg (eleven years his brother's junior) was famous for nothing but his fiercely-ringed moustache, a habit of eating, and an undue addiction to draughts of Marcobrunnen. Somewhat meagre fare, so report ran, was the fashion in the castle of Stalkenberg; neither the old baron nor his heir cared for luxury; therefore Count Otto was sure to be seen at the table d'hôte, as often as anybody would invite him. And that was nearly every day: for the Count von Stalkenberg was a high-sounding title, and his baronial father, proprietor of

all Stalkenberg, lording it in the baronial castle close by ; all of which appeared very grand and great ; and that is bowed down to with an idol's worship.

Stopping at the Ludwig Bad, the chief hotel in the place, was a family of the name of Crosby. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Crosby, an only daughter, her governess, and two or three servants. What Mr. Crosby had done to England, or England to him, I can't say : but he never went near his native country. For years and years he had lived abroad : not in any settled place of residence : they would travel about, and remain a year or two in one place, a year or two in another, as the whim suited them. A respectable, portly man, of quiet and gentleman-like manners, looking as little like one who need be afraid of the laws of his own land, as can be. Neither is it said, or insinuated, that he was afraid of them : a gentleman who knew him, had asserted, many years before, when it was once questioned, that Crosby was as free to go home and establish himself in a mansion in Piccadilly, as the best of them. But he had lost fearfully by some roguish scheme, like the South Sea bubble, and could not live in the style he once had done, and therefore preferred to remain abroad. Mrs. Crosby was a pleasant, chatty woman, given to take as much gaiety as she could get, and Helena Crosby was a remarkably fine-grown girl of seventeen. You might have given her some years more, had you been guessing her age, for she was no child, either in appearance or manners, and never had been. She was an heiress, too : an uncle had left her twenty thousand pounds : and, at her mother's death, she would have ten thousand more. The Count Otto Von Stalken-

berg heard of the thirty thousand pounds, and turned his fierce moustache and his eyes on Miss Helena.

“Tirty tousand pound and von handsome girls!” cogitated he, for he prided himself upon his English. “It is just what I have been seeking after.”

He found the rumour, touching her fortune, to be correct, and from that time was seldom apart from the Crosbys. They were as pleased to have his society as he was to be in theirs, for was he not the Count von Stalkenberg?—and the other visitors at Stalkenberg, looking on with envy, would have given their ears to have been honoured with a like intimacy. Whether Mr. Crosby cared so much for the distinction as did madame and mademoiselle, must remain a question; he was civil to him, and made him welcome; and Mrs. Crosby, in all things relating to society, was the grey mare.

One day there thundered down in a vehicle the old Baron von Stalkenberg. The like of this conveyance, for its shape and its silver ornaments, had never been seen since the days of Adam. It had been the pride of the baron’s forefathers, but was rarely disturbed in its repose now. Some jägers in green and silver attended it, and it drew up at the door of the Ludwig Bad, the whole of whose inmates thereupon flocked to the windows to feast their eyes. The old chief had come to pay a visit of ceremony to the Crosbys: and the host of the Ludwig Bad, as he appeared himself to marshal his chieftain to their saloon, bowed his body low with every step: “Room there, room there, for the mighty Baron von Stalkenberg.”

The mighty baron had come to invite them to a feast at his castle — where no feast had ever been

made so grand before, as this would be ; and Otto had *carte blanche* to engage other distinguished sojourners at Stalkenburg, English, French, and natives who had been civil to him. Mr. Crosby's head was turned.

And now, I ask you, knowing as you do our national notions, was it not enough to turn it? You will not, then, be surprised to hear that when, some days subsequent to the feast, the Count Otto von Stalkenberg laid his proposals at Helena's feet, they were not rejected.

"But she is so young," remonstrated Mr. Crosby to his wife. "If they would only wait a couple of years, I would say nothing against it."

"And get the count snapped up meanwhile. No, no, Mr. Crosby. Counts von Stalkenberg are not secured every day."

"If he has a title and ancestry, Helena has money."

"Then they are pretty equally balanced," returned Mrs. Crosby. "I never thought of looking for such a match for her: the Countess von Stalkenberg; only listen to the sound!"

"I wish he would cut off those frightful moustaches," grumbled Mr. Crosby.

"Now don't worry about minor details: Helena thinks they are divine. The worst is about the governess."

"What about her?"

"Why, I engaged her, for certain, up to Christmas, and of course I must pay her. Unless I can get her another place: I'll try."

"Ah! Helena would be much better with her, than getting married. I don't like girls to marry so young," lamented Mr. Crosby. "I don't know what the English here will say to it!"

“If you don’t let out her age, nobody need know it,” cried his wife. “Helena looks a woman, not a child. As to the English, they are going mad that the luck has not fallen upon them.”

Mr. Crosby’s objections seemed to be met in every way, so he relapsed into silence. He knew it was of no use carrying on the war.

Helena Crosby, meanwhile, had rushed into her governesses room. “Madame! madame! only think! I am going to be married!”

Madame lifted her pale, sad face: a very sad and pale face was hers. “Indeed!” she gently replied.

“And my studies are to be over from to-day. Mamma says so.”

“You are over young to marry, Helena.”

“Now, don’t bring up that, madame. It is just what papa is harping upon,” returned Miss Helena.

“Is it to Count Otto?” asked the governess. And it may be remarked that her English accent was perfect, although the young lady addressed her as “Madame.”

“Count Otto, of course. As if I would marry anybody else!”

Look at the governess reader, and see whether you know her. You will say no. But you do, for it is Lady Isabel Vane. But how strangely she is altered! Yes; the railway accident did that for her: and what the accident left undone, grief and remorse accomplished. She limps slightly as she walks, and stoops, which takes from her former height. A scar extends from her chin above her mouth, completely changing the character of the lower part of her face, some of her teeth are missing, so that she speaks with a lisp, and the sober bands of her grey hair—it is nearly silver—

are confined under a large and close cap. She herself tries to make the change greater, that the chance of being recognised may be at an end, for which reason she wears disfiguring green spectacles, or, as they are called, preservers, going round the eyes, and a broad band of grey velvet coming down low upon her forehead. Her dress, too, is equally disfiguring. Never is she seen in one that fits her person, but in those frightful "loose jackets," which must surely have been invented by somebody envious of a pretty shape. As to her bonnet, it would put to shame those masquerade things tilted on to the back of the head, for it actually shaded her face; and she was never seen out of doors without a thick veil. She was pretty easy upon the score of being recognised now: for Mrs. Ducie and her daughters had been sojourning at Stalkenberg, and they did not know her in the least. Who could know her? What resemblance was there between that grey, broken down woman, with her disfiguring marks, and the once lovely Lady Isabel, with her bright colour, her beauty, her dark flowing curls, and her agile figure? Mr. Carlyle himself would not have known her. But she was good-looking still, in spite of it all, gentle, and interesting; and people wondered to see that grey hair on one, yet young.

She had been with the Crosbys nearly two years. After her recovery from the railway accident, she removed to a quiet town in its vicinity, where they were living, and she became daily governess to Helena. The Crosbys were given to understand that she was English, but the widow of a Frenchman—she was obliged to offer some plausible account. There were no references; but she so won upon their esteem as the

daily governess, that they soon took her into the house : had Lady Isabel surmised that they would be travelling to so conspicuous a spot as an English-frequented German watering-place, she might have hesitated to accept the engagement. However, it had been of service to her ; the meeting with Mrs. Ducie proving that she was altered beyond chance of recognition. She could go anywhere now.

But now, about her state of mind ? I do not know how to describe the vain yearning, the inward fever, the restless longing for what might not be. Longing for what ? For her children. Let a mother, be she a duchess, or be she an apple-woman at a standing, be separated for a while from her little children : let *her* answer how she yearns for them. She may be away on a tour of pleasure : for a few weeks, the longing to see their little faces again, to hear their prattling tongues, to feel their soft kisses, is kept under ; and there may be frequent messages, "The children's dear love to mamma : " but, as the weeks lengthen out, the desire to see them again becomes almost irrepressible. What must it have been, then, for Lady Isabel, who had endured this longing for years ? Talk of the *mal du pays*, which is said to attack the Swiss when exiled from their country, that is as nothing compared to the heart-sickness which clung to Lady Isabel. She had passionately loved her children : she had been anxious for their welfare in all ways : and, not the least that she had to endure now, was the thought that she had abandoned them to be trained by strangers. Would they be trained to goodness, to morality, to religion ? Careless as she herself had once been upon these points, she had learnt better now. Would Isabel grow up to

indifference, to—perhaps do as she had done? Lady Isabel flung her hands before her eyes, and groaned in anguish.

Of late, the longing had become intense. It was indeed a very fever; and a fever of the worst kind, for it attacked both the mind and body. Her pale lips were constantly parched: her throat had that malady in it, which those, who have suffered from some hideous burden, know only too well. She had never heard a syllable of, or from East Lynne since that visit of Lord Mount Severn's to Grenoble, nearly three years ago. An English newspaper never came in her way. Mr Crosby sometimes had them, but they were not sent up to the governess: and, as Lady Isabel would say to herself, what should there be about East Lynne in a newspaper? She might have asked Mrs. Ducie for news, but she did not dare: what excuse could *she*, Madame Vine, make, for wishing tidings of East Lynne. For all she knew, Mr. Carlyle and the children might be dead and buried. Oh! that she could see her children but for a day, an hour? that she might press one kiss upon their lips! Could she live without it? News, however, she was soon to have.

It happened that Mrs. Latimer, a lady living at West Lynne, betook herself about that time to Stalkenberg: and, with her, three parts maid and one part companion, went Afy Hallijohn. Not that Afy was admitted to the society of Mrs. Latimer, to sit with her or dine with her, nothing of that; but she did enjoy more privileges than most ladies'-maids; and Afy, who was never backward at setting off her own consequence, gave out that she was "companion." Mrs. Latimer was an easy woman, fond of Afy; and

Afy had made her own tale good to her, respecting the ill-natured reports at the time of the murder, so that Mrs. Latimer looked upon her as one to be compassionated.

Mrs. Latimer and Mrs. Crosby, whose apartments in the hotel adjoined, struck up a violent friendship, the one for the other. Ere the former had been a week at the Ludwig, they had sworn something like eternal sisterhood—as both had probably done for others fifty times before.

On the evening of the day Helena Crosby communicated her future prospects to Lady Isabel, the latter strolled out in the twilight and took her seat on a bench in an unfrequented part of the gardens, where she was fond of sitting. Now it came to pass that Afy, some few minutes afterwards, found herself in the same walk—and a very dull one too, she was thinking.

“Who’s that?” quoth Afy to herself, her eyes falling upon Lady Isabel. “Oh, it’s that governess of the Crosbys. She may be known, a mile off, by her grandmother’s bonnet. I’ll go and have a chat with her.”

Accordingly Afy, who was never troubled with bashfulness, went up and seated herself beside Lady Isabel. “Good evening, Madame Vine,” cried she.

“Good evening,” replied Lady Isabel, courteously, not having the least idea of whom Afy might be.

“You don’t know me, I fancy,” pursued Afy, so gathering from Lady Isabel’s looks. “I am companion to Mrs. Latimer; and she is spending the evening with Mrs. Crosby. Precious dull, this Stalckenberg!”

“Do you think so?”

“It is for me. I can’t speak German or French,

and the upper attendants of families here can't, most of them, speak English. I'm sure I go about like an owl, able to do nothing but stare. I was sick enough to come here, but I'd rather be back at West Lynne, quiet as it is."

Lady Isabel had not been encouraging her companion, either by words or manner, but the last sentence caused her heart to bound within her. Control herself as she would, she could not quite hide her feverish interest.

"Do you come from West Lynne?"

"Yes. Horrid place! Mrs. Latimer took a house there soon after I went to live with her. I'd rather she had taken it at Botany Bay."

"Why do you not like it?"

"Because I don't," was Afy's satisfactory answer.

"Do you know East Lynne?" resumed Lady Isabel, her heart beating and her brain whirling, as she deliberated how she could put all the questions she wished to ask.

"I ought to know it," returned Afy. "My own sister, Miss Hallijohn, is head maid there. Why? do you know it, Madame Vine?"

Lady Isabel hesitated: she was deliberating upon her answer. "Some years ago, I was staying in the neighbourhood for a little time," she said. "I should like to hear of the Carlyles again: they were a nice family."

Afy tossed her head. "Ah! but there have been changes since that. I dare say you knew them in the time of Lady Isabel?"

Another pause. "Lady Isabel? Yes. She was Mr. Carlyle's wife."

"And a nice wife she made him!" ironically re-

joined Afy. "You must have heard of it, Madame Vine, unless you have lived in a wood. She eloped: abandoned him and her children."

"Are the children living?"

"Yes, poor things. But the one's on its road to consumption—if ever I saw consumption yet. Joyce—that's my sister—is in a flaring temper with me when I say it. She thinks it will get strong again."

Lady Isabel passed her handkerchief across her moist brow. "Which of the children is it?" she faintly asked. "Isabel?"

"Isabel!" retorted Afy, "Who's Isabel?"

"The eldest child, I mean; Miss Isabel Carlyle."

"There's no Isabel. There's Lucy. She's the only daughter."

"When—when—I knew them, there was only one daughter; the other two were boys: I remember quite well that she was called Isabel."

"Stay," said Afy; "now you speak of it, what was it that I heard? It was Wilson told me, I recollect—she's the nurse. Why, the very night that his wife went away, Mr. Carlyle gave orders that the child in future should be called Lucy; her second name. No wonder," added Afy, violently indignant, "that he could no longer endure the sound of her mother's, or suffer the child to bear it."

"No wonder," murmured Lady Isabel. "Which child is it that is ill?"

"It's William, the eldest boy. He is not to say ill, but he is as thin as a herring, with an unnaturally bright look on his cheeks, and a glaze upon his eyes. Joyce says his cheeks are no brighter than his mother's used to be, but I know better. Folks in health don't have those brilliant colours."

“Did you ever see Lady Isabel?” she asked, in a low tone.

“Not I,” returned Afy; “I should have thought it demeaning. One does not care to be brought into contact with that sort of misdoing lot, you know, Madame Vine.”

“There was another one, a little boy, Archibald, I think his name was. Is he well?”

“Oh, the troublesome youngster! he is as sturdy as a Turk. No fear of his going into a consumption, He is the very image of Mr. Carlyle, is that child. I say, though, madame,” continued Afy, changing the subject unceremoniously, “if you were stopping at West Lynne, perhaps you heard some wicked mischief-making stories concerning me?”

“I believe I did hear your name mentioned. I cannot charge my memory now with the particulars.”

“My father was murdered — you must have heard of that?”

“Yes, I recollect so far.”

“He was murdered by a chap called Richard Hare, who decamped instanter. Perhaps you knew the Harcs also? Well, directly after the funeral I left West Lynne; I could not bear the place; and I stopped away. And what do you suppose they said of me? — that I had gone after Richard Hare. Not that I knew they were saying it: or I should pretty soon have been back and given them the length of my tongue. But now, I just ask you, as a lady, Madame Vine, whether a more infamous accusation was ever pitched upon?”

“And you had not gone after him?”

“No: that I swear,” passionately returned Afy.

“Make myself a companion of my father’s murderer! If Mr. Calcraft the hangman finished off a few of those West Lynne scandal-mongers, it might be a warning to the others. I said so to Mr. Carlyle.”

“To Mr. Carlyle,” repeated Lady Isabel, hardly conscious that she did repeat it.

“He laughed I remember, and said that would not stop the scandal. The only one who did not misjudge me was himself: he did not believe that I was with Richard Hare: but he was ever noble-judging, was Mr. Carlyle.”

“I suppose you were in a situation?”

Afy coughed. “To be sure. More than one. I lived as companion with an old lady who so valued me that she left me a handsome legacy in her will. I lived two years with the Countess Mount Severn.”

“With the Countess of Mount Severn!” echoed Lady Isabel, surprised into the remark. “Why, she — she — was related to Mr. Carlyle’s wife. At least Lord Mount Severn was.”

“Of course: everybody knows that. I was living there at the time the business happened. Didn’t the countess call Lady Isabel to pieces! She and Miss Levison used to sit, cant, cant, all day over it. Oh, I assure you I know all about it. Have you got the headache, that you are leaning on your hand?”

“Headache and heartache both,” she might have answered. Miss Afy resumed.

“So, after the flattering compliment West Lynne had paid me, you may judge I was in no hurry to go back to it, Madame Vine. And if I had not found that Mrs. Latimer’s promised to be an excellent place, I should have left it, rather than be marshalled there. But I have lived it down: I should like to hear any

of them fibbing against me now. Do you know that blessed Miss Corny?"

"I have seen her."

"She shakes her head and makes eyes at me still. But so she would at an angel: a cross-grained old cockatoo!"

"Is she still at East Lynne?"

"Not she, indeed. There would be drawn battles between her and Mrs. Carlyle, if she were."

A dart, as of an ice-bolt, seemed to arrest the blood in Lady Isabel's veins. "Mrs. Carlyle?" she faltered. "Who is Mrs. Carlyle?"

"Mr. Carlyle's wife. Who should she be?"

The rushing blood leaped on now, fast and fiery. "I did not know he had married again."

"He has been married now—getting on for fifteen months: a twelvemonth last June. I went to the church to see them married. Wasn't there a cram! She looked beautiful that day."

Lady Isabel laid her hand upon her beating heart. But for that delectable "loose jacket," Afy might have detected her bosom's rise and fall. She steadied her voice sufficiently to speak.

"Did he marry Barbara Hare?"

"You may take your oath of that," said Afy. "If folks tell true, there were love scenes between them before he ever thought of Lady Isabel. I had that from Wilson, and she ought to know, for she lived at the Hares'. Another thing is said—only you must just believe one word of West Lynne talk, and disbelieve ten: that if Lady Isabel had not died, Mr. Carlyle never would have married again: he had scruples. Half a dozen were given to him by report: Louisa

Dobede for one, and Mary Pinner for another. Such nonsense! folks might have made sure it would be Barbara Hare. There's a baby now."

"Is there?" was the faint answer.

"A beautiful boy, three or four months old. Mrs. Carlyle is not a little proud of him. She worships her husband."

"Is she kind to the first children?"

"For all I know. I don't think she has much to do with them. Archibald is in the nursery, and the other two are mostly with the governess."

"There is a governess?"

"Nearly the first thing that Mr. Carlyle did, after his wife's moonlight flitting, was to seek a governess, and she has been there ever since. She is going to leave now: to be married, Joyce told me."

"Are you much at East Lynne?"

Afy shook her head. "I am not going much, I can tell you, where I am looked down upon. Mrs. Carlyle does not favour me. She knew that her brother Richard would have given his head to marry me, and she resents it. No such great catch, I'm sure, that Dick Hare, even if he had gone on right," continued Afy, somewhat after the example of the fox, looking at the unattainable grapes. "He had no brains, to speak of; and what he had were the colour of a peacock's tail—green. Ah me! the changes that take place in this world! But for that Lady Isabel's mad folly in quitting him, and leaving the field open, Miss Barbara would never have had the chance of being Mrs. Carlyle."

Lady Isabel groaned in spirit.

"There's one person who never will hear a word

breathed against her, and that's Joyce," went on Afy. "She was as fond of Lady Isabel, nearly, as Mr. Carlyle was."

"Was he so fond of her?"

"He worshipped the very ground she trod upon. Ay, up to the hour of her departure; Joyce says she knows he did: and that's how she repaid him. But it's sure to be the way, in this world: let a man, or woman, make an idol of another, and see if they don't get served out. The night that Mr. Carlyle brought his new wife home, Joyce, who was attending on her, went into the dressing-room, leaving Mrs. Carlyle in the bed-chamber. 'Joyce,' she called out. 'My lady?' answered Joyce — proving who was filling up her thoughts. I don't know how Mrs. Carlyle liked it. Joyce said she felt as mad as could be with herself."

"I wonder," cried Lady Isabel, in a low tone, "how the tidings of her death were received at East Lynne?"

"I don't know anything about that. They held it as a jubilee, I should say, and set all the bells in the town to ring, and feasted the men upon legs of mutton and onion sauce afterwards. I should, I know. A brute animal deaf and dumb clings to its offspring: but *she* abandoned hers. Are you going in, Madame Vine?"

"I must go in now. Good evening to you."

She had sat till she could sit no longer; her very heart-strings were wrung. And she might not rise up in defence of herself. Defence? Did she not deserve more, ten thousand times more reproach than had met her ears now? This girl did not say of her half what the world must say.

To bed at the usual time, but not to sleep. What she had heard only increased her vain, insensate longing. A stepmother at East Lynne, and one of her children gliding on to death! Oh! to be with them! to see them once again! To purchase that boon, she would willingly forfeit all the rest of her existence.

Her frame was fevered; the bed was fevered; and she rose and paced the room. This state of mind would inevitably bring on bodily illness, possibly an attack of the brain. She dreaded that; for there was no telling what she might reveal in her delirium. Her temples were throbbing, her heart was beating; and she once more threw herself upon the bed, and pressed the pillow down upon her forehead. There is no doubt that the news of Mr. Carlyle's marriage helped greatly the excitement. She did not pray to die; but she did wish that death might come to her.

What would have been the ending it is impossible to say, but a strange turn in affairs came: one of those wonderful coincidences which are sometimes, but not often, to be met with. Mrs. Crosby appeared in Madame Vine's room after breakfast, and gave her an account of Helena's projected marriage. She then apologized, (the real object of her visit) for dispensing so summarily with madame's services, but she had reason to hope that she could introduce her to another situation. Would madame have any objection to take one in England? Madame was upon the point of replying that she did not choose to enter one in England, when Mrs. Crosby stopped her, saying she would call in Mrs. Latimer, who could tell her about it better than she could.

Mrs. Latimer came in, all eagerness and volubility.

“ Ah, my dear madame,” she exclaimed, “ you would be fortunate indeed if you were to get into this family. They are the nicest people, he so liked and respected ; she so pretty and engaging. A most desirable situation. You will be treated as a lady, and have all things comfortable. There is only one pupil, a girl ; one of the little boys, I believe, goes in for an hour or two, but that is not much : and the salary is seventy guineas. The Carlyles are friends of mine ; they live at a beautiful place, East Lynne.”

The Carlyles ! East Lynne ! Go governess there ? Lady Isabel’s breath was taken away.

“ They are parting with their governess,” continued Mrs. Latimer, “ and when I was there, a day or two before I started on my tour to Germany, Mrs. Carlyle said to me, ‘ I suppose you could not pick us up a desirable governess for Lucy : one who is mistress of French and German.’ She spoke in a half-joking tone, but I feel sure that were I to write word that I *had* found one, it would give her pleasure. Now, Mrs. Crosby tells me your French is quite that of a native. Madame Vine, that you read and speak German well, and that your musical abilities are excellent. I think you would be just the one to suit : and I have no doubt I could get you the situation. What do you say ? ”

What could she say ? Her brain was in a whirl.

“ I am anxious to find you one if I can,” put in Mrs. Crosby. “ We have been very much pleased with you, and I should like you to be desirably placed. As Mrs. Latimer is so kind as to interest herself, it appears to me an opportunity that should not be missed.”

“ Shall I write to Mrs. Carlyle ? ” rejoined Mrs. Latimer.

Lady Isabel roused herself, and so far cleared her intellects as to understand and answer the question. “ Perhaps you will kindly give me until to-morrow morning to consider of it? I had not intended to take a situation in England.”

She had a battle with herself that day. Now resolving to go, and risk it; now shrinking from the attempt. At one moment it seemed to her that Providence must have placed this opportunity in her way that she might see her children, in her desperate longing; at another, a voice appeared to whisper that it was a wily, dangerous temptation flung across her path, one which it was her duty to resist and flee from. Then came another phase of the picture — how should she bear to see Mr. Carlyle the husband of another? — to live in the same house with them, to witness his attentions, possibly his caresses? It might be difficult; but she could force and school her heart to endurance: had she not resolved in her first bitter repentance, to *take up her cross* daily, and bear it? No; her own feelings, let them be wrung as they would, should not prove the obstacle.

Evening came, and she had not decided. She passed another night of pain, of restlessness, of longing for her children: this intense longing appeared to be overmastering all her powers of mind and body. The temptation at length proved too strong: the project, having been placed before her covetous eyes, could not be relinquished, and she finally resolved *to go*. “ What is it that should keep me away ? ” she argued.

“The dread of discovery? Well, if that comes, it must: they could not hang me, or kill me. Deeper humiliation than ever would be my portion, when they drive me from East Lynne with abhorrence and ignominy, as a soldier is drummed out of his regiment; but I could bear that, as I must bear the rest, and I can shrink under some hedge and lay myself down to die. Humiliation for me! no; I will not put that in comparison with seeing and being with my children.”

Mrs. Latimer wrote to Mrs. Carlyle. She had met with a governess; one desirable in every way, who could not fail to suit her views precisely. She was a Madame Vine, English by birth, but the widow of a Frenchman: a Protestant, a thorough gentlewoman, an efficient linguist and musician, and competent to her duties in all ways. Mrs. Crosby, with whom she had lived two years, regarded her as a treasure, and would not have parted with her but for Helena's marriage with a German nobleman. “You must not mind her appearance,” went on the letter. “She is the oddest-looking person: wears spectacles, caps, enormous bonnets, and has a great scar on her mouth and chin; and though she can't be more than thirty, her hair is grey: she is also slightly lame. But, understand you, she is a *gentlewoman* with it all; and looks one.”

When this description reached East Lynne, Barbara laughed as she read it aloud to Mr. Carlyle. He laughed also.

“It is well governesses are not chosen according to their looks,” he said, “or I fear Madame Vine would stand but a poor chance.”

They resolved to engage her. And word went back to that effect.

A strangely wild tumult filled Lady Isabel's bosom. She first of all hunted her luggage over, her desk, everything belonging to her, lest any scrap of paper, any mark on linen might be there, which could give a clue to her former self. The bulk of her luggage remained at Paris, warehoused, where it had been sent ere she quitted Grenoble. She next saw to her wardrobe, making it still more unlike anything she had formerly worn: her caps, save that they were simple, and fitted closely to the face, nearly rivalled those of Miss Carlyle. She had been striving for two years to change the character of her handwriting, and had so far succeeded that none would now take it for Lady Isabel Vane's. But her hand shook when she wrote to Mrs. Carlyle—who had written to her. She—*she* writing to Mr. Carlyle's wife! and in the capacity of a subordinate! How would she like to live with her as a subordinate?—a servant, it may be said—where she had once reigned, the idolised lady? She must bear that; as she must bear all else. Hot tears came into her eyes, with a gush, as they fell on the signature "Barbara Carlyle."

All ready, she sat down and waited the signal of departure: but that was not to be yet. It was finally arranged that she should travel to England and to West Lynne with Mrs. Latimer, and that lady would not return until October. Lady Isabel could only fold her hands and strive for patience.

But the day came at last; and Mrs. Latimer, Lady Isabel, and Afy quitted Stalkenberg. Mrs. Latimer

would only travel slowly, and the impatient, fevered woman thought the journey would never end.

“You have been informed, I think, of the position of these unhappy children to whom you are going,” Mrs. Latimer said one day. “You must not speak to them of their mother. She left them.”

“Yes.”

“It is never well to speak to children of a mother who has disgraced them. Mr. Carlyle would not like it. And I dare say they are taught to forget her, to regard Mrs. Carlyle as their only mother.”

Her aching heart had to assent to all.

It was a foggy afternoon, grey with the coming twilight, when they arrived at West Lynne. Mrs. Latimer, believing the governess was a novice in England, kindly put her into a fly, and told the driver his destination. “Au revoir, madame,” she said, “and good luck to you!”

Once more she was whirling along the familiar road. She saw Justice Hare’s house, she saw other marks which she knew well. And once more she saw *East Lynne*, the dear old house, for the fly had turned into the avenue. Lights were moving in the windows, it looked gay and cheerful, a contrast to her. Her heart was sick with expectation, her throat was beating; and as the man thundered up with all the force of his one horse, and halted at the steps, her sight momentarily left her. Would Mr. Carlyle come to the fly to hand her out? She wished she had never undertaken the project, now, in the depth of her fear and agitation. The hall door was flung open, and there gushed forth a blaze of light.

CHAPTER II.

CHANGE AND CHANGE.

THE hall doors of East Lynne were thrown open, and a flood of golden light streamed out upon the steps.

Two men-servants stood there. One remained in the hall, the other advanced to the chaise. He assisted Lady Isabel to alight, and then busied himself with the luggage. As she ascended to the hall she recognised old Peter: strange, indeed, did it seem, not to say, "How are you, Peter?" but to meet him as a stranger. For a moment she was at a loss for words: what should she say, or ask, coming to her own home? Her manner was embarrassed, her voice low.

"Is Mrs. Carlyle within?"

"Yes, ma'am."

At that moment, Joyce came forward to receive her. "It is Madame Vine, I believe?" she respectfully said. "Please to step this way, madame."

But Lady Isabel lingered in the hall, ostensibly to see that her boxes came in right: Stephen was bringing them up then: in reality to gather a short respite, for Joyce might be about to usher her into the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle.

Joyce, however, did nothing of the sort. She merely conducted her to the grey parlour: a fire was burning in the grate, looking cheerful on the autumn night.

“This is your sitting-room, madame. What will you please to take? I will order it to be brought in, while I show you your bed-chamber.”

“A cup of tea,” answered Lady Isabel.

“Tea, and some cold meat with it,” suggested Joyce. But Lady Isabel interrupted her.

“Nothing but tea: and a little cold toast.”

Joyce rang the bell, ordered the refreshment to be made ready, and then preceded Lady Isabel upstairs. On she followed, her heart palpitating: past the rooms that used to be hers, along the corridor, towards the second staircase. The doors of her old bed and dressing-rooms stood open, and she glanced in with a yearning look. No, never more, never more could they be hers: she had put them from her by her own free act and deed. Not less comfortable did they look now, than in former days: but they had passed into another’s occupancy. The fire threw its blaze on the furniture: there were the little ornaments on the large dressing-table, as they used to be in *her* time, and the cut glass of the crystal essence bottles was glittering in the fire-light. On the sofa lay a shawl and a book, and on the bed a silk dress, as if thrown there after being taken off. No: these rooms were not for her now; and she followed Joyce up the other staircase. The bed-room to which she was shown was commodious and well furnished: it was the one Miss Carlyle had occupied when she, Isabel, had been taken, a bride, to East Lynne, though that lady had subsequently quitted it for one on the lower floor. Joyce put down the wax light she carried, and looked round.

“Would you like a fire lighted here, madame, for

to-night? Perhaps it will feel welcome, after travelling."

"Oh no, thank you," was the answer.

Stephen, with somebody to help him, was bringing up the luggage. Joyce directed him where to place it, telling him to uncord the boxes. That done, the man left the room, and Joyce turned to Lady Isabel, who had stood like a statue, never so much as attempting to remove her bonnet.

"Can I do anything for you, madame?" she asked.

Lady Isabel declined. In these, her first moments of arrival, she was dreading detection: how was it possible that she should not?—and feared Joyce's keen eyes, more perhaps than she feared any others. She was only wishing that the girl would go down.

"Should you want any one, please to ring, and Hannah will come up," said Joyce, preparing to retire. "She is the maid who waits upon the grey parlour, and will do anything you like up here."

Joyce had quitted the room, and Lady Isabel had got her bonnet off, when the door opened again. She hastily thrust it on—somewhat after the fashion of Richard Hare's rushing on his hat and his false whiskers. It was Joyce.

"Do you think you shall find your way down alone, madame?"

"Yes, I can do that," she answered. Find her way!—in that house!

Lady Isabel slowly took her things off. Where was the use of lingering?—she *must* meet their eyes sooner or later. Though, in truth, there was little, if any, fear of her detection, so effectually was she disguised, by nature's altering hand, or by art's. It

was with the utmost difficulty she kept tranquil : had the tears once burst forth, they would have gone on to hysterics, without the possibility of control. The coming home again to East Lynne ! Oh, it was indeed a time of agitation ; terrible, painful agitation : and none can wonder at it. Shall I tell you what she did ? Yes, I will. She knelt down by the bed, and prayed for courage to go through the task she had undertaken, prayed for self-control : even she, the sinful, who had quitted that house under circumstances so notorious. But I am not sure that this mode of return to it was an expedition precisely calculated to call down a blessing.

There was no excuse for lingering longer, and she descended, the wax-light in her hand. Everything was ready in the grey parlour ; the tea-tray on the table, the small urn hissing away, the tea-caddy in proximity to it. A silver rack of dry toast, butter, and a hot muffin covered with a small silver cover. The things were to her sight as old faces ; the rack, the small cover, the butter-dish, the tea-service ; she remembered them all. Not the urn ; a copper one : she had no recollection of that. It had possibly been bought for the use of the governess, when a governess came into use at East Lynne. If she had reflected on the matter, she might have known, by the signs observable in the short period she had been in the house, that governesses at East Lynne were regarded as gentlewomen ; treated well and liberally. Yes ; for East Lynne owned Mr. Carlyle for its master.

She made the tea, and sat down with what appetite she might. Her brain, her thoughts, all in a

chaos together. She wondered whether Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle were at dinner: she wondered in what part of the house were the children. She heard bells ring now and then; she heard servants cross and re-cross the hall. Her meal over, she rang her own.

A neat-looking, good-tempered maid answered it. Hannah; who — as Joyce had informed her — waited upon the grey parlour, and was at her, the governess's, especial command. She took away the things, and then Lady Isabel sat on alone. For how long she scarcely knew, when a sound caused her heart to beat as if it would burst its bounds, and she started from her chair like one who has received an electric shock.

It was nothing to be startled at — for ordinary people; it was but the sound of children's voices. *Her* children! were they being brought in to her? She pressed her hand upon her heaving bosom.

No: they were but traversing the hall, and the voices faded away up the wide staircase. Perhaps they had been in to dessert, as in the old times, and were now going up to bed. She looked at her new watch: half-past seven.

Her *new* watch. The old one had been changed away for it. All her trinkets had been likewise parted with, sold, or changed away, lest they should be recognised at East Lynne. Nothing whatever had she kept, except her mother's miniature and the small golden cross, set with its seven emeralds. Have you forgotten that cross? Francis Levison accidentally broke it for her the first time they ever met. If she had looked upon the breaking of that cross, which her mother had enjoined her to set such

store by, as an evil omen, at the time of the accident, how awfully had the subsequent events seemed to bear her fancy out! These two articles, the miniature and the cross, she could not bring her mind to part with. She had sealed them up, and placed them in the remotest spot of her dressing-case, away from all chance of public view. Peter entered.

“My mistress says, ma’am, she would be glad to see you, if you are not too tired. Will you please to walk into the drawing-room?”

A mist swam before her eyes. Was she about to enter the presence of Mr. Carlyle?—had the moment really come? She moved to the door, which Peter held open. She turned her head from the man, for she could feel how ashy white were her face and lips.

“Is Mrs. Carlyle alone?” she asked, in a subdued voice. The most indirect way she could put the question, as to whether Mr. Carlyle was there.

“Quite alone, ma’am. My master is dining out to-day. Madame Vine, I think?” he added, waiting to announce her, as, the hall traversed, he laid his hand on the drawing-room door.

“Madame Vine,” she said, correcting him. For Peter had spoken the name, Vine, broadly, according to our English habitude; she set him right, and pronounced it à la mode française.

“Madame Veen, ma’am,” quoted Peter to his mistress, as he ushered in Lady Isabel.

The old familiar drawing-room; its large, handsome proportions, its well-arranged furniture, its bright chandelier! It all came back to her with a heart-sickness. No longer *her* drawing-room, that she

should take pride in it: she had flung it away from her when she flung away the rest.

Seated under the blaze of the chandelier was Barbara. Not a day older did she look than when Lady Isabel had first seen her at the churchyard gates, when she had inquired of her husband who was that pretty girl. "Barbara Hare," he had answered. Ay. She was Barbara Hare, then, but now she was Barbara Carlyle: and she, she, who had been Isabel Carlyle, was Isabel Vane again! Oh woe! woe!

Inexpressibly more beautiful looked Barbara than Lady Isabel had ever seen her — or else she fancied it. Her evening dress was of pale sky blue — no other colour suited Barbara so well, and there was no other she was so fond of — and on her fair neck was a gold chain, and on her arms were gold bracelets. Her pretty features were attractive as ever, her cheeks were flushed; her blue eyes sparkled, and her light hair was rich and abundant. A contrast, her hair, to that of the worn woman opposite to her.

Barbara came forward, her hand stretched out with a kindly greeting. "I hope you are not very much tired after your journey?"

Lady Isabel murmured something: she did not know what: and pushed the chair set for her as much as possible into the shade.

"You are not ill! — are you?" asked Barbara, noting the intensely pale face — as much as could be seen of it for the cap and the spectacles.

"Not ill," was the low answer: "only a little fatigued."

"Would you prefer that I should speak with you in the morning? You would like, possibly, to retire to bed at once."

But this Lady Isabel declined. Better get the first interview over by candlelight than by daylight.

“You looked so very pale. I feared you might be ill.”

“I am generally pale; sometimes remarkably so: but my health is good.”

“Mrs. Latimer wrote us word that you would be quite sure to suit us,” freely said Barbara. “I hope you will; and I hope you may find your residence here agreeable. Have you lived much in England?”

“In the early portion of my life.”

“And you have lost your husband and children? Stay. I beg your pardon if I am making a mistake: I think Mrs. Latimer did mention children.”

“I have lost them,” was the faint, quiet response.

“Oh, but it must be terrible grief when children die!” exclaimed Barbara, clasping her hands in emotion. “I would not lose my baby for the world; I *could* not part with him.”

“Terrible grief, and hard to bear,” outwardly assented Lady Isabel. But, in her heart she was thinking that death was not the worst kind of parting. There was another, far more dreadful. Mrs. Carlyle began to speak of the children about to be placed under her charge.

“You are no doubt aware that they are not mine! Mrs. Latimer would tell you. They are the children of Mr. Carlyle’s first wife.”

“And Mr. Carlyle’s,” interrupted Lady Isabel. What in the world made her say that? She wondered, herself, the moment the words were out of her mouth. A scarlet streak flushed her cheeks, and she

remembered that there must be no speaking upon impulse at East Lynne.

“Mr. Carlyle’s of course,” said Barbara, believing Madame Vine had but asked the question. “Their position — the girls in particular — is a sad one, for their mother left them. Oh, it was a shocking business.”

“She is dead I hear,” said Lady Isabel hoping to turn the immediate point of conversation. Mrs. Carlyle, however, continued, as though she had not heard her.

“Mr. Carlyle married Lady Isabel Vane, the late Lord Mount Severn’s daughter. She was attractive and beautiful, but I do not fancy she cared very much for her husband. However that may have been, she ran away from him.”

“It was very sad,” observed Lady Isabel, feeling that she was expected to say something. Besides, she had her *rôle* to play.

“Sad? It was wicked, it was infamous,” returned Mrs. Carlyle, giving way to some excitement. “Of all men living, of all husbands, Mr. Carlyle least deserved such a requital. You will say so when you come to know him. And the affair altogether was a mystery: for it never was observed or suspected, by any one, that Lady Isabel entertained a liking for another. She eloped with Francis Levison — Sir Francis, he is now. He had been staying at East Lynne, but no one detected any undue intimacy between them, not even Mr. Carlyle. To him, as to others, her conduct must always remain a mystery.”

Madame Vine appeared to be occupied with her spectacles, setting them straight. Barbara continued.

“Of course the disgrace is reflected on the children, and always will be; the shame of having a divorced mother—”

“Is she not dead?” interrupted Lady Isabel.

“She is dead. Oh yes. But they will not be the less pointed at, the girl especially, as I say. They allude to their mother now and then, in conversation, Wilson tells me: but I would recommend you, Madame Vine, not to encourage them in that. They had better forget her.”

“Mr. Carlyle would naturally wish them to do so.”

“Most certainly. There is little doubt that Mr. Carlyle would blot out all recollection of her, were it possible. But unfortunately she was the children’s mother, and, for that, there is no help. I trust you will be able to instil principles into the little girl which will keep her from a like fate.”

“I will try,” answered Lady Isabel, with more fervour than she had yet spoken. “Are the children much with you, may I inquire?”

“No. I never was fond of being troubled with children. When my own grow up into childhood, I shall deem the nursery and the schoolroom the best places for them. I hold an opinion, Madame Vine, that too many mothers pursue a mistaken system in the management of their family. There are some, we know, who, lost in the pleasures of the world, in frivolity, wholly neglect them: of those I do not speak; nothing can be more thoughtless, more reprehensible; but there are others who err on the opposite side. They are never happy but when with their children; they must be in the nursery: or, the children in the drawing-room. They wash them, dress them, feed

them; rendering themselves slaves, and the nurse's office a sinecure. The children are noisy, troublesome, cross; all children will be so; and the mother's temper gets soured, and she gives slaps where, when they were babies, she gave kisses. She has no leisure, no spirits for any higher training: and as they grow old she loses her authority. One who is wearied, tired out with her children, cross when they play or make a little extra noise, which jars on her unstrung nerves, who says, 'You shan't do this; you shall be still,' and that perpetually, is sure to be rebelled against at last: it cannot be otherwise. Have you never observed this?"

"I have."

"The discipline of that house soon becomes broken. The children run wild; the husband is sick of it, and seeks peace and solace elsewhere. I could mention instances in this neighbourhood," continued Mrs. Carlyle, "where things are managed precisely as I have described, even in our own class of life. I consider it a most mistaken and pernicious system."

"It undoubtedly is," answered Lady Isabel, feeling a sort of thankfulness, poor thing, that the system had not been hers—when she had a home and children.

"Now, what I trust I shall never give up to another, will be the *training* of my children," pursued Barbara. "Let the offices, properly pertaining to a nurse, be performed by the nurse—of course taking care that she is thoroughly to be depended on. Let her have the *trouble* of the children, their noise, their romping; in short, let the nursery be her place and the children's place. But I hope I shall never fail to gather my children round me daily, at stated and convenient

periods, for higher purposes: to instil into them Christian and moral duties; to strive to teach them how best to fulfil the obligations of life. *This* is a mother's task—as I understand the question; let her do this work well, and the nurse can attend to the rest. A child should never hear aught from its mother's lips but persuasive gentleness; and this becomes impossible, if she is very much with her children."

Lady Isabel silently assented. Mrs. Carlyle's views were correct.

"When I first came to East Lynne, I found Miss Manning, the governess, was doing everything necessary for Mr. Carlyle's children in the way of the training that I speak of," resumed Barbara. "She had them with her for a short period every morning, even the little one: I saw that it was all right, therefore did not interfere. Since she left—it is nearly a month, now—I have taken them myself. We were sorry to part with Miss Manning; she suited very well. But she has been long engaged to an officer in the navy, and now they are to be married. You will have the entire charge of the little girl: she will be your companion out of school hours: did you understand that?"

"I am quite ready and willing to undertake it," said Lady Isabel, her heart fluttering. "Are the children well? Do they enjoy good health?"

"Quite so. They had the measles in the spring, and the illness left a cough upon William, the eldest boy. Mr. Wainwright says he will outgrow it."

"He has it still, then?"

"At night and morning. They went last week to spend the day with Miss Carlyle, and were a little late in returning home. It was foggy, and the boy

coughed dreadfully after he came in. Mr. Carlyle was so concerned, that he left the dinner-table and went up to the nursery: he gave Joyce strict orders that the child should never again be out in the evening air, so long as the cough was upon him. We had never heard him cough like that."

"Do you fear consumption?" asked Lady Isabel in a low tone.

"I do not fear that, or any other incurable disease for them," answered Barbara. "I think, with Mr. Wainwright, that time will remove the cough. The children come of a healthy stock on their father's side: and I have no reason to think they do not on their mother's. She died young, you will say. Ay, but she did not die of disease: her death was the result of accident. How many children had you?" pursued Mrs. Carlyle, somewhat abruptly.

At least, the question fell with abruptness upon the ear of Lady Isabel, for she was not prepared for it. What should she answer? In her perplexity she stammered forth the actual truth.

"Three. And—and a baby. That died. Died an infant, I mean."

"To lose four dear children!" uttered Barbara, with sympathising pity. "What did they die of?"

A hesitating pause. "Some of one thing, some of another," was the answer, given in almost an inaudible tone.

"Did they die before your husband? Otherwise the grief must have been worse to bear."

"The—baby—died after him," stammered Lady Isabel, as she wiped the drops from her pale forehead.

Barbara detected her emotion, and felt sorry to

have made the inquiries: she judged it was caused by the recollection of her children.

“Mrs. Latimer wrote us word you were of gentle birth and breeding,” she resumed, presently. “I am sure you will excuse my asking these particular questions,” Barbara added, in a tone of apology, “but this is our first interview; our preliminary interview, it may in a measure be called, for we could not say much by letter.”

“I was born and reared a gentlewoman,” answered Lady Isabel.

“Yes, I am sure of it: there is no mistaking the tone of a gentlewoman,” said Barbara. “How sad it is when pecuniary reverses fall upon us! I dare say you never thought to go out as governess.”

A half smile positively crossed her lips. She, think to go out as a governess! — the Earl of Mount Severn’s only child! “Oh, no, never,” she said, in reply.

“Your husband, I fear, could not leave you well off. Mrs. Latimer said something to that effect.”

“When I lost him I lost all,” was the answer. And Mrs. Carlyle was struck with the wailing pain betrayed in the tone. At that moment a maid entered.

“Nurse says the baby is undressed, and quite ready for you, ma’am,” she said, addressing her mistress.

Mrs. Carlyle rose but hesitated as she was moving away.

“I will have the baby here to-night,” she said to the girl. “Tell nurse to put a shawl round him and bring him down. It is the hour for my baby’s supper,” she smiled, turning to Lady Isabel. “I may as

well have him here for once, as Mr. Carlyle is out. Sometimes I am out myself, and then he has to be fed."

"You do not stay in-doors for the baby, then?"

"Certainly not. If I and Mr. Carlyle have to be out in the evening baby gives way. I should never give up my husband for my baby; never, dearly as I love him."

The nurse came in. Wilson. She unfolded a shawl, and placed the baby on Mrs. Carlyle's lap. A proud, fine, fair young baby, who reared his head and opened wide his great blue eyes, and beat his arms at the lights of the chandelier, as no baby of nearly six months old ever did yet. So thought Barbara. He was in his clean white night-gown and night-cap, with their pretty crimped frills and border; altogether a pleasant sight to look upon. *She* had once sat in that very chair, with a baby as fair upon her knee: but, all that was past and gone. She leaned her hot head upon her hand, and a rebellious sigh of envy went forth from her aching heart.

Wilson, the curious, was devouring her with her eyes; Wilson was thinking she never saw such a mortal fright as the new governess. Them blue spectacles capped everything, she decided: and what made her tie up her throat, in that fashion, for? As well wear a man's collar and stock, at once! If her teaching was no better than her looks, Miss Lucy might as well go to the parish charity school!

"Shall I wait, ma'am?" demurely asked Wilson, her investigations being concluded.

"No," said Mrs. Carlyle. "I will ring."

Baby was exceedingly busy, taking his supper. And of course, according to all baby precedent, he

ought to have gone off into a sound sleep over it. But the supper concluded, and the gentleman seemed to have no more sleep in his eyes than he had before he began. He sat up, crowed at the lights, stretched out his hands for them, and set his mother at defiance, absolutely refusing to be hushed up.

“Do you wish to keep awake all night, you rebel?” cried Barbara, fondly looking on him.

A loud crow by way of answer. Perhaps it was intended to intimate that he did. She clasped him to her with a sudden gesture of rapture, a sound of love, and devoured his pretty face with kisses. Then she took him in her arms, putting him to sit upright, and approached Madame Vine.

“Did you ever see a more lovely child?”

“A fine baby indeed,” she constrained herself to answer: and she could have fancied it her own little Archibald over again when he was a baby. “But he is not much like you.”

“He is the very image of my darling husband. When you see Mr. Carlyle—” Barbara stopped, and bent her ear, as if listening.

“Mr. Carlyle is probably a handsome man?” said poor Lady Isabel, believing that the pause was made to give her opportunity of putting in an observation.

“He is handsome; but that is the least good about him. He is the most noble man! revered, respected by every one, I may say, loved. The only one who could not appreciate him was his wife. How ever she could leave him,—how she could even look at another after calling Mr. Carlyle husband, will always be a marvel to those who know him.”

A bitter groan—and it nearly escaped her lips.

“That certainly is the pony carriage,” cried Barbara, bending her ear again. “If so, how very early Mr. Carlyle is home! Yes, I am sure it is the sound of the wheels.”

How Lady Isabel sat, she scarcely knew: how she concealed her trepidation she never would know. A pause; an entrance to the hall; Barbara, baby in arms, advanced to the drawing-room door, and a tall form entered. Once more Lady Isabel was in the presence of her sometime husband.

He did not perceive that any one was present, and he bent his head and fondly kissed his wife. Isabel's jealous eyes were turned upon them. She saw Barbara's passionate, lingering kiss in return, she heard her fervent whispered greeting. “My darling!” and she watched him turn to press the same fond kisses on the rosy, open lips of his child. Isabel flung her hands over her face. Had she bargained for this? It was part of the cross she had undertaken to carry, and she *must* bear it.

Mr. Carlyle came forward and saw her. He looked somewhat surprised. “Madame Vine,” said Barbara; and he held out his hand and welcomed her in the same cordial, pleasant manner that his wife had done. She put her shaking hand in his: there was no help for it: little thought Mr. Carlyle that that hand had been tenderly clasped in his a thousand times; that it was the one pledged to him at the altar at Castle Marling.

She sat down on her chair again, unable to stand, feeling as though every drop of blood within her had left her body. It had certainly left her face. Mr. Carlyle made a few civil inquiries as to her journey,

but she did not dare to raise her eyes to him, as she breathed forth the answers.

“ You are at home soon, Archibald,” Barbara exclaimed. “ I did not expect you so early. I did not think you could get away. I know what the justices’ annual dinner at the Buck’s Head is; they always make it late.”

“ As they will to-night,” laughed Mr. Carlyle. “ I watched my opportunity, and got away when the pipes were brought in: I had determined to do so, if possible. Dill — who means to stick it out with the best of them—has his tale ready when they miss me: ‘ Suddenly called away: important business; could not be helped.’ ”

Barbara laughed also. “ Was papa there? ”

“ Of course. He took the table’s head. What would the dinner be without the chairman of the bench, Barbara? ”

“ Nothing at all, in papa’s opinion,” merrily said Barbara. “ Did you ask him how mamma was? ”

“ I asked him,” said Mr. Carlyle. And there he stopped.

“ Well? ” cried Barbara. “ What did he say? ”

“ ‘ Full of nervous fidgets,’ was the answer he made me,” returned Mr. Carlyle, with an arch look at his wife. “ It was all I could get out of him.”

“ That is just like papa. Archibald, do you know what I have been thinking to-day? ”

“ A great many foolish things, I dare say,” he answered: but his tone was a fond one: all too palpably so for one ear.

“ No, but listen. You know papa is going to London with Squire Pinner, to see those new agri-

cultural implements—or whatever it is. They are sure to be away three days. Don't you think so?"

"And three to the back of it," said Mr. Carlyle, with a wicked smile upon his lips. "When old gentlemen get plunged into the attractions of London, there's no answering for their getting out of them in a hurry, country justices especially. Well, Barbara?"

"I was thinking if we could but persuade mamma to come to us for the time he is away. It would be a delightful little change for her; a break in her monotonous life."

"I wish you could," warmly spoke Mr. Carlyle. "Her life, since you left, is a monotonous one; though, in her gentle patience, she will not say so. It is a happy thought, Barbara, and I only hope it may be carried out. Mrs. Carlyle's mother is an invalid, and lonely, for she has no child at home with her now," he added, in a spirit of politeness, addressing himself to Madame Vine.

She simply bowed her head: she did not trust herself to speak. Mr. Carlyle scanned her face attentively, as she sat, her head bent downwards. She did not appear inclined to be sociable, and he turned to the baby who was wider awake than ever.

"Young sir, I should like to know what brings you up, and here, at this hour?"

"You may well ask," said Barbara. "I had him brought down, as you were not here, thinking he would be asleep directly. And only look at him! no more sleep in his eyes than in mine."

She would have hushed him to her as she spoke, but the young gentleman stoutly repudiated it. He set up a half cry, and struggled his arms and head

free again, crowing the next moment most impudently. Mr. Carlyle took him.

“It is of no use, Barbara, he is beyond your coaxing this evening.” And he tossed the child in his arms, held him up to the chandelier, made him bob at the baby in the pier-glass, until the rebel was in an ecstasy of delight. Finally he smothered his face with kisses, as Barbara had done. Barbara rang the bell.

Oh! can you imagine what it was for, Lady Isabel? So had he tossed, so had he kissed her children, she standing by, the fond, proud, happy mother, as Barbara was standing now. Mr. Carlyle came up to her.

“Are you fond of these little troubles, Madame Vine? This one is a fine fellow, they say.”

“Very fine. What is his name?” she replied, by way of saying something.

“Arthur.”

“Arthur Archibald,” put in Barbara to Madame Vine. “I was vexed that his name could not be entirely Archibald, but that was already monopolised. Is that you, Wilson? I don’t know what you’ll do with him, but he looks as if he would not be asleep by twelve o’clock.”

Wilson satisfied her curiosity by taking another prolonged stare at Madame Vine, received the baby from Mr. Carlyle, and departed with him.

Madame Vine rose. Would they excuse her? she asked, in a low tone: she was tired, and would be glad to retire to rest.

Of course. And would she ring for anything she might wish in the way of refreshment. Barbara shook hands with her, in her friendly way; and Mr.

Carlyle crossed the room to open the door for her, and bowed her out with a courtly smile.

She went up to her chamber at once. To rest? Well, what think you? She strove to say to her lacerated and remorseful heart, that the cross—far heavier though it was proving, than anything she had imagined or pictured—was only what she had brought upon herself, and *must* bear. Very true: but none of us would like such a cross to be upon our shoulders.

“Is she not droll looking?” cried Barbara, when she was alone with Mr. Carlyle. “I can’t think why she wears those blue spectacles: it cannot be for her sight, and they are very disfiguring.”

“She puts me in mind of—of—” began Mr. Carlyle, in a dreamy tone.

“Of whom?”

“Her face, I mean,” he said, still dreaming.

“So little can be seen of it,” returned Mrs. Carlyle. “Of whom does she put you in mind?”

“I don’t know, nobody in particular,” returned he, rousing himself. “Let us have tea in, Barbara.”

CHAPTER III.

THE YEARNING OF A BREAKING HEART

AT her bedroom door, the next morning, stood Lady Isabel, listening whether the coast was clear, ere she descended to the grey parlour, for she had a shrinking dread of encountering Mr. Carlyle. When he was glancing narrowly at her face the previous evening, she had felt the gaze, and it impressed upon her a dread of his recognition. Not only that: he was the husband of another: therefore it was not expedient that she should see too much of him, for he was far dearer to her heart than he had ever been.

Almost at the same moment, there burst out of a remote room, the nursery, an upright, fair, noble boy of some five years old, who began careering along the corridor, astride upon a hearth-broom. She did not need to be told that it was her boy, Archibald; his likeness to Mr. Carlyle would have proclaimed it, even if her heart had not. In an impulse of unrestrainable tenderness, she seized the child as he was galloping past her, and carried him into her room, broom and all.

“You must let me make acquaintance with you,” said she to him, by way of excuse. “I love little boys.”

Love! Down she sat upon a low chair, the child held upon her lap, kissing him passionately, and the

tears raining from her eyes. She could not have helped the tears, had it been to save her life; she could as little have helped the kisses. Lifting her eyes, there stood Wilson, who had entered without ceremony. A sick feeling came over Lady Isabel: she felt as if she had betrayed herself. All that could be done now, was to make the best of it; to offer some lame excuse. What possessed her, thus to forget herself?

“He put me in remembrance of my own children,” she said to Wilson, gulping down her emotion, and hiding her tears in the best manner she could; whilst the astonished Archibald, now released, stood with his finger in his mouth and stared at her spectacles, his great blue eyes opened to their utmost width. “When we have lost children of our own, we are apt to love fondly all we come near.”

Wilson, who stared only in a less degree than Archie, for she deemed the new governess had gone suddenly mad, gave some voluble assent, and turned her attention upon Archie.

“You naughty young monkey! how dared you rush out in that way with Sarah’s hearth-broom? I’ll tell you what it is, sir; you are getting too owdacious and rumbustical for the nursery; I shall speak to your mamma about it.”

She seized hold of the child and shook him. Lady Isabel started forward, her hands up, her voice one of painful entreaty.

“Oh, don’t, don’t beat him! I cannot see him beaten.”

“Beaten!” echoed Wilson; “if he got a good beating it would be all the better for him; but it’s

what he never does get. A little shake, or a tap, is all I must give; and it's not half enough. You wouldn't believe the sturdy impudence of that boy, madame; he runs riot, he does. The other two never gave a quarter of the trouble. Come along, you figure! I'll have a bolt put at the top of the nursery door!—And if I did, he'd be for climbing up the door-post to get at it.”

The last sentence Wilson delivered to the governess, as she jerked Archie out of the room, along the passage and into the nursery. Lady Isabel sat down with a wrung heart, a chafed spirit. Her own child! and she might not say to the servant, You shall not beat him!

She descended to the grey parlour. The two elder children, and breakfast, were waiting: Joyce quitted the room when she entered it.

A graceful girl of eight years old, a fragile boy a year younger, both bearing her own once lovely features, her once bright and delicate complexion, her large, soft, brown eyes. How utterly her heart yearned to them! but there must be no scene like there had just been above. Nevertheless, she stooped and kissed them both; one kiss each of impassioned fervour. Lucy was naturally silent, William somewhat talkative.

“You are our new governess,” said he.

“Yes. We must be good friends.”

“Why not?” said the boy. “We were good friends with Miss Manning. I am to go into Latin soon, as soon as my cough's gone. Do you know Latin?”

“No. Not to teach it,” she said, studiously avoiding all endearing epithets.

“Papa said you would be almost sure not to know Latin, for that ladies rarely did. He said he should send up Mr. Kane to teach me.”

“Mr. Kane?” repeated Lady Isabel, the name striking upon her memory. “Mr. Kane, the music-master?”

“How did you know he was a music-master?” cried shrewd William. And Lady Isabel felt the red blood flush to her face at the unlucky admission she had made. It flushed deeper at her own falsehood, as she muttered some evasive words about hearing of him from Mrs. Latimer.

“Yes, he is a music-master; but he does not get much money by it, and he teaches the classics as well. He has come up to teach us music since Miss Manning left: mamma said that we ought not to lose our lessons.”

Mamma! How the word, applied to Barbara, grated on her ear. “Whom does he teach?” she asked.

“Us two,” replied William, pointing to his sister and himself.

“Do you always take bread-and-milk for breakfast?” she inquired, perceiving that to be what they were eating.

“We get tired of it sometimes, and then we have milk-and-water and bread-and-butter, or honey: and then we take to bread-and-milk again. It’s Aunt Cornelia who thinks we should eat bread-and-milk for breakfast: she says papa never had anything else when he was a boy.”

Lucy looked up. “Papa would give me an egg when I breakfasted with him,” cried she, “and Aunt

Cornelia said it was not good for me, but papa gave it me all the same. I always had breakfast with him then."

"And why do you not now?" asked Lady Isabel.

"I don't know. I have not since mamma came."

The word "stepmother" rose up rebelliously in the heart of Lady Isabel. Was Mrs. Carlyle putting away the children from their father?

Breakfast over, she gathered them to her, asking them various questions; about their studies, their hours of recreation, the daily routine of their lives.

"This is not the school-room, you know," cried William, when she made some inquiry as to their books.

"No?"

"The school-room is up-stairs. This is for our meals, and for you in an evening."

The voice of Mr. Carlyle was heard at this juncture in the hall, and Lucy was springing towards the sound. Lady Isabel, fearful lest he might enter, if the child showed herself, stopped her with a hurried hand.

"Stay here, Isabel."

"Her name's Lucy," said William, looking quickly up. "Why do you call her Isabel?"

"I thought—thought I had heard her called Isabel," stammered the unfortunate lady, feeling quite confused with the errors she was committing.

"My name is Isabel Lucy," said the child, "but I don't know who could have told you, for I am never called Isabel. I have not been, since—since— Shall I tell you? Since mamma went away," she concluded, dropping her voice. "Mamma that was, you know."

"Did she go?" cried Lady Isabel, full of emotion and possessing a very faint idea of what she was saying.

“She was kidnapped,” whispered Lucy.

“Kidnapped!” was the surprised answer.

“Yes; or she would not have gone. There was a wicked man on a visit to papa, and he stole her. Wilson said she knew he was a kidnapper, before he took mamma. Papa said I was never to be called Isabel again, but Lucy. Isabel was mamma’s name.”

“How do you know your papa said it?” dreamily returned Lady Isabel.

“I heard him. He said it to Joyce, and Joyce told the servants. I put only Lucy to my copies. I did put Isabel Lucy, but papa saw it one day, and he drew his pencil through Isabel, and told me to show it to Miss Manning. After that, Miss Manning let me put nothing but Lucy. I asked her why, and she told me papa preferred the name, and that I was not to ask questions.”

She could not well stop the child, but every word was rending her heart.

“Lady Isabel was our very very own mamma,” pursued Lucy. “This mamma is not.”

“Do you love this one as you did the other?” breathed Lady Isabel.

“Oh, I loved mamma! I loved mamma!” uttered Lucy, clasping her hands. “But it’s all over. Wilson said we must not love her any longer, and Aunt Cornelia said it. Wilson said, if she had loved us, she would not have gone away from us.”

“Wilson said so?” resentfully spoke Lady Isabel.

“She said she need not have let that man kidnap her. I am afraid he beat her: for she died. I lie in my bed at night, and wonder whether he did beat her, and what made her die. It was after she died that

our new mamma came home. Papa said she was come to be our mamma in place of Lady Isabel, and we were to love her dearly."

"Do you love her?" almost passionately asked Lady Isabel.

Lucy shook her head. "Not as I loved mamma."

Joyce entered to show the way to the school-room, and they followed her up-stairs. As Lady Isabel stood at the window, she saw Mr. Carlyle depart on foot, on his way to the office. Barbara was with him, hanging fondly on his arm, about to accompany him to the park gates. So had *she* fondly hung, so had *she* accompanied him, in the days gone for ever.

Barbara came into the school-room in the course of the morning, and entered upon the subject of their studies, the differently allotted hours, some to play, some to work. She spoke in a courteous but most decided tone, showing that she was the unmistakable mistress of the house and children, and meant to be. Never had Lady Isabel felt her position more keenly; never had it so galled and fretted her spirit: but she bowed in meek obedience. A hundred times that day did she yearn to hold the children to her heart, and a hundred times she had to repress the longing.

Before tea, when the beams of the sun were slanting across the western horizon, she went out with the two children. They took the field path, leading parallel with the high-road, the hedge only dividing them; the path that Captain Levison used to take when he went to pry into the movements of Mr. Carlyle. To the excessive dismay of Lady Isabel, whom should they come upon, but Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle: they

were walking home from West Lynne together, and had chosen the field way.

A confused greeting : it was confused to the senses of Lady Isabel : and then they were all returning together. Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle in advance : she and the children behind.

She slackened her pace. She strove to put all possible distance between herself and them. It did not avail her. Coming to a stile, Mr. Carlyle helped his wife over it, and then waited. The children were soon on the other side : little need of help for them : but he remained, in his courtesy, to assist the governess.

“ I thank you,” she panted, as she came up. “ I do not require help.”

Words that fell idly on his ear. He stood waiting for her, and she had no resource but to mount the stile : an awkward stile : she remembered it of old. Not more awkward, however, than she herself was at that moment. Before her was Mr. Carlyle’s outstretched hand, and she could do no less than put the tips of her fingers into it : but, in her trepidation she got her feet entangled in her petticoats ; and, in attempting to jump, would have fallen, had not Mr. Carlyle caught her in his arms.

“ You are not hurt, I trust !” he exclaimed, in his kindly manner.

“ I beg your pardon, sir ; my foot caught. Oh no, I am not hurt. Thank you.”

He walked forward and took his wife upon his arm, who had turned to wait for him. Lady Isabel lingered behind, striving to still her beating heart.

They were at tea in the grey parlour, she and the

two children, when William was seized with a fit of coughing. It was long and violent. Lady Isabel left her seat : she had drawn him to her, and was hanging over him with unguarded tenderness, when, happening to lift her eyes, they fell upon Mr. Carlyle. He had been descending the stairs, on his way from his dressing-room, heard the cough, and came in. Had Lady Isabel been killing the boy, she could not have dropped him more suddenly.

“ You possess a natural love for children, I perceive,” he said, looking at her with his sweet smile.

She did not know what she answered : some confused, murmured words. If Mr. Carlyle made sense of them, he was clever. Into the darkest corner of the room retreated she.

“ What is the matter ? ” interrupted Mrs. Carlyle, looking in. She also had been descending, and was in her dinner dress. Mr. Carlyle had the boy on his own knee then.

“ William’s cough is troublesome. I don’t like it, Barbara. I shall have Wainwright up again.”

“ It’s nothing,” said Barbara. “ He was at his tea : perhaps a crumb went the wrong way. Dinner is waiting, Archibald.”

Mr. Carlyle put the boy down, but stood for a minute looking at him. The cough over, he was pale and exhausted, all his brilliant colour gone : it was too brilliant, as Afy had said. Mrs. Carlyle entwined her arm within her husband’s, but turned her head to speak as they were walking away.

“ You will come into the drawing-room by-and-by with Miss Lucy, Madame Vine. We wish to hear you play.”

Miss Lucy! And it was spoken in the light of a command. Well? Barbara was Mrs. Carlyle, and she was — what she was. Once more she drew to her her first-born son, and laid her aching forehead upon him.

“Do you cough at night, my darling child?”

“Not much,” he answered. “Joyce puts me some jam by the bed-side, and if I have a fit of coughing, I eat that. It’s black currant.”

“He means jelly,” interposed Lucy, her mouth full of bread-and-butter. “It is black currant jelly.”

“Yes, jelly,” said William. “It’s all the same.”

“Does any one sleep in your room?” she inquired of him.

“No. I have a room to myself.”

She fell into deep thought, wondering whether they would let a little bed be put in her room for him, wondering whether she might dare to ask it. Who could watch over him and attend to him as she would? In this one day’s intercourse with William, she had become aware that he was possessed of that precocious intellect which too frequently attends weakness of body. He had the sense of a boy of fourteen, instead of one of seven: his conversation betrayed it. “Knowing,” “understands more than’s good for a child,” say old wives, as they look and listen, coupling their remark with another, “he’ll never live.”

“Should you like to sleep in my room?” asked Lady Isabel.

“I don’t know. Why should I sleep in your room?”

“I could attend to you; could give you jelly, or anything else you might require, if you were to cough

in the night. I would love you, I would be tender with you as your own mamma could have been."

"Mamma did not love us," cried he. "Had she loved us she would not have left us."

"She did love us," exclaimed Lucy, somewhat fiercely. "Joyce says she did, and I remember it. It wasn't her fault that she was kidnapped."

"You be quiet, Lucy: girls know nothing about things. Mamma—"

"Child, child," interposed Lady Isabel, the scalding tears filling her eyes, "your mamma did love you: loved you dearly: loved you, as she could never love anything again."

"You can't tell that, Madame Vine," persisted William, disposed to be resolute. "You were not here; you did not know mamma."

"I am sure she must have loved you," was all Madame Vine dared to answer. "I have been here but a day, and I have learnt to love you. I love you already, very very much."

She pressed her lips to his hot cheek as she spoke, and the rebellious tears would not be restrained, but fell on it also.

"Why do you cry?" asked William.

"I once," she answered, in a low tone, "lost a dear little boy like you, and I am so glad to have you to replace him: I have had nothing to love since."

"What was his name?" cried curious William.

"William." But the word was scarcely out of her lips before she thought how foolish she was to say it.

"William Vine," cogitated the boy. "Did he speak French or English? His papa was French, was he not?"

“He spoke English. But you have not finished your tea,” she added, finding the questions were becoming close.

It was Barbara’s custom, when they were at home, to leave Mr. Carlyle at the dessert-table and to go up for a few minutes to her baby, before entering the drawing-room. As she was descending on this evening, she saw Lucy, who was peeping out of the grey parlour.

“May we come in now, mamma?”

“Yes. Ask Madame Vine to bring in some music.”

Madame Vine, delaying as long as she dared, arrived at the drawing-room door at an inopportune moment, for Mr. Carlyle was just coming from the dining-room. She paused when she saw him: her first impulse was to retreat; but he looked round and appeared to wait for her. Lucy had already gone in.

“Madame Vine,” he began, his hand upon the door-handle, and his tone suppressed, “have you had much experience in the ailments of children?”

She was about to answer “No.” For her own children, so long as she had been with them, were remarkably healthy. But she remembered that she was supposed to have lost four by death, and must speak accordingly.

“Not a very great deal, sir. Somewhat, of course.”

“Does it strike you that this is an ugly cough of William’s?”

“I think that he wants care; that he should be continually watched, especially at night. I was wishing that he might be allowed to sleep in my room,” she added, some strong impulse prompting her to prefer this request to Mr. Carlyle, trembling inwardly

and outwardly, as she did so. "His bed could be readily moved in, and I would attend to him, sir, as—as—I would attend more cautiously than any servant could be likely to do."

"By no means," warmly responded Mr. Carlyle. "We would not think of giving you the trouble. He is not ill, to require night nursing: and, if he were, our servants are to be depended on."

"I am so fond of children," she ventured to plead. "I have already taken a great liking for this one, and would wish to make his health my care by night and by day. It would be a pleasure to me."

"You are truly kind. But I am sure Mrs. Carlyle would not hear of it: it would be taxing you unreasonably."

His tone was one of decision, and he opened the door for her to pass in.

What she most dreaded, of all, was her singing. The lisp was not perceptible when she sung, and she feared her voice, her tones, might be recognised. She was determined not to attempt any song that she had ever sung in that house, and to give her voice but half its full compass. She remembered how ardently her husband had admired her singing in the days gone by. Barbara sang to him now.

For that evening, there was a respite. Not many minutes had elapsed after her entrance, when one of the servants appeared, showing in Justice Hare, his march pompous as ever, his wig in elaborate order. No singing when he was present, for the sweetest melody was lost upon him. Barbara and Mr. Carlyle both rose to greet him.

"Oh, papa; what a wonder to see you in an evening! I am very glad. Come to the easy-chair.

Madame Vine," added Barbara, as the justice was passing that lady, to get to the easy-chair.

"Hope you are well, madmoselle. Nong parley Frongsey, me," said the justice, with an air that seemed to say, "And thank goodness that I don't."

Madame Vine could not suppress a smile. "There is no necessity, sir. I am not French, but English."

"Beg pardon," said the justice. "But I heard there was a French madam coming here: and I'm sure you look like French," he added, staring at her blue spectacles and her disfiguring dress. "I shouldn't have taken you for English, if you had not told me; but I'm glad to hear it. No good ever comes of a French governess in one's house. Keep 'em at arm's length, say I."

"Do you think not?" returned Lady Isabel.

"I know it," bluntly replied the justice. "When our girls were young, Anne and Barbara, my wife must needs have a French maid for 'em: after that, she must have a French governess. I was dubious about it. 'She'll turn us all papists,' said I, 'and require frogs to be served up for her dinner.' But Mrs. Hare represented that the girls must learn French, like other folks, and I let one come. Two years and some months she stopped, and —"

"And what, sir?"

"Well, it's not just drawing-room talk. I had a brother staying with us most of the time, a post-captain in the navy. On the sick-list he was, invalided for three years. And we found them out. From nearly the first day that French madmoselle put her foot inside our door, up to the day I cleared her out of it, a nice game they had been carrying on. It gave Mrs. Hare a sickener for French jesuits of go-

vernesses, and I told her she was just served right. When I heard that Mrs. Carlyle had engaged a madmoselle for these children at East Lynne, I said she wanted her ears boxed."

"But, papa, I told you then that Madame Vine was English, not French."

The justice growled some answer, and continued his narrative to Madame Vine.

"I gave it my brother right and left; in fact, the quarrel, we had then, may be said to have lasted his life, for he never forgave me. He returned to service, and got his flag early. But he died close upon it, and left all his money to Barbara. Like a donkey, as he was."

"The effects of the quarrel, you see, papa," laughingly said Barbara; the justice thought, saucily.

"You are in Carlyle's hands now, and not in mine, or I'd tell you what I think of that speech, ma'am," was the grim retort to Barbara, as the justice once more turned to Madame Vine.

"You must have seen some of the pranks of these French madmoselles, these governesses?"

"Not very much. I have not been brought into contact with them. I am English, as I tell you."

"And a good thing for you, ma'am, I should say," returned the justice, in his abrupt bluntness. "But the mistake was natural, you must see. Being called by a French title, and living in France, or some of those outlandish places over the water, one could but take you for French. If I set up my quarters in France and called myself Mosseer, I'd forgive the very dickens himself, if he mistook me for a French frog."

Lucy clapped her hands, and laughed in merriment.

“You may laugh, Miss Lucy: but I can tell you, you’d have been changed into a frog, or something worse, if they had turned you over to a French madmoselle. If your poor mother hadn’t had a French madmoselle of a governess in the first years of her life, she’d never have—have—”

“Have—what?” said Lucy, who was staring with all her might at Justice Hare.

“Done as she did. There! It’s out. Barbara, what’s this nonsense that you have been putting into your mamma’s head?”

“I don’t know what you mean, papa. I and Archibald want her to be with us while you are in London: if you allude to that.”

“And are determined to have her, justice,” put in Mr. Carlyle. “Even though we should have to make a night assault on the Grove, and carry her off by storm.”

“The Grove, yes,” growled Justice Hare. “Much either Barbara or you care what becomes of that. A pretty high life below stairs there would be, with the master and mistress both away! You young ones have no more consideration than so many calves.”

“Oh, papa, how can you fancy such things?” uttered Barbara. “The Grove would be just as safe and quiet, without you and mamma, as with you. The servants are all steady, and have been with us a long while.”

“If you want your mamma here for more than a day, why can’t you get her to come when I am at home?”

“Because she will not leave you; you know that, papa. If you are at home, she will be there too. I

am sure there never was a pattern wife like mamma: if Archibald finds me only half such a one, in years to come, he may think himself lucky."

The above remark was accompanied by a glance at Mr. Carlyle, meant to express saucy independence: but her deep love shone out in spite of herself. Mr. Carlyle lifted his drooping eyelids, and smiled as he nodded to her.

"Papa, you always have your own way, but you must allow us to have ours for once. Mamma wishes to come to us: she gave quite a glad start when I proposed it to-day: and you must be kind enough not to oppose it. The house and servants will go on swimmingly; I'll answer for it."

"Rather too swimmingly," cried Justice Hare.

"She *requires* a change, sir," said Mr. Carlyle. "Think what your wife's inward life is."

"Fretting after that vagabond! Whose fault is it? Why does she do it?"

"She has been a good and loving wife to you, sir."

"I didn't say she hadn't."

"Then encourage her to take this little holiday. The change of coming here for a few days will do her good; Barbara's society will do her good: remember how fond Mrs. Hare is of her."

"A vast deal fonder than Barbara deserves," retorted the justice. "She's as perky as she can be now she thinks she's beyond my correction."

"She's not beyond mine," said Mr. Carlyle, quite gravely. "I assure you, justice, I keep her in order."

"I know," cried the justice, his tone rather rough. "You'd kill her with indulgence, before you'd keep her in order. That's you, Carlyle."

The justice thought he could relish a glass of ale, and some was brought in. During the slight stir occasioned by this, Lady Isabel slipped round to Mrs. Carlyle. "Might she retire? She believed she was not wanted," and Mrs. Carlyle graciously acceded to the request.

An evening to herself in the grey parlour. A terrible evening; one made up of remorse, grief, rebellion, and bitter repentance: repentance of the wretched past, rebellion at existing things. Between nine and ten, she dragged herself up-stairs, purposing to retire to rest.

As she was about to enter her chamber, Sarah, Wilson's assistant in the nursery, was passing, and a sudden thought occurred to Lady Isabel. "In which room does Master Carlyle sleep?" she asked. "Is it on this floor?"

The girl pointed to a door near. "In there, ma'am."

Lady Isabel watched her down stairs and then entered the room softly. A little white bed, and William's beautiful face lying on it. His cheeks were flushed, his hands were thrown out, as if with inward fever; but he was sleeping quietly. By the bedside stood a saucer, some currant jelly in it and a teaspoon; there was also a glass of water.

She glided down upon her knees and let her face rest on the bolster beside him, her breath in contact with his. Her eyes were wet; but that she might wake him, she would have taken the sleeper on to her bosom, and caressed him there. Death for him? She could hardly think it.

"My gracious heart alive! Seeing a light here, if I didn't think the room was on fire. It did give me a turn."

The speaker was Wilson, who had discerned the light, in passing the door. Lady Isabel sprang up as though she had been shot. She feared the detection of Wilson and Joyce more than she feared that of Mrs. Carlyle.

“I am looking at Master William,” she said, as calmly as she could speak. “Mr. Carlyle appears somewhat uneasy respecting his cough. He has a flushed, delicate look.”

“It is nothing,” returned Wilson. “It’s just the look that his mother had. The first time I saw her, nothing would convince me but what she had got paint on.”

“Good night,” was all the reply made by Lady Isabel, as she retreated to her own room.

“Good night, madame,” replied Wilson, returning towards the nursery. “I’ll be blest if I know what to think of that French governess!” she mentally continued. “I hope it may turn out that she’s not deranged, that’s all.”

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 048318163