ALL RIGHT!

AN OLD MAID'S TALE.

"What then am I?
Amidst applauding worlds,
And world's celestial, is there found on earth
A peevish, dissonant, rebellious string,
Which jars in the grand chorus, and complains?
All, all is right, by God ordained or done."

LONDON:
JAMES BLACKWOOD, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1860.

"Despair not in the vale of woe,
Where many joys from suffering flow,
Oft breathes simoon, and close behind
A breath of God doth softly blow;
To thee hath time brought many joys,
And many it has bid to go,
And seasoned here with bitterness
Thy cup, that flat it should not grow.
Trust in that veilèd hand, which leads
None by the path that he would go;
And always be for change prepared,
For the world's law is ebb and flow."

DEAN TRENCH.

ALL RIGHT! AN OLD MAID'S TALE.

CHAPTER I.

"Did we but see
When life first opened, how our journey lay
Between its earliest and its closing day;
Our view ourselves as we shall one day be,
Who strive for the high prize, such sight would break
The youthful spirit, though bold for Jesus' sake."

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

"Schlafst du mein mutter."

"This is the last of earth."

WHO, that retains any recollection of school-days, does not remember what a school-room is like on a broiling afternoon in June?

The windows are put *down*, not up, because the girls must not look out. And the atmosphere is oppressive, and the lessons are oppresssive, and the room is hot, and the girls are hotter, and the governesses are physically and mentally the hottest of all.

Everything goes on languidly. There is no life nor energy in anything.

The monotony is only broken by the occasional screech of a slate pencil, that seems to drive the governesses frantic. A wasp or a blue-bottle drones into the room once in a while, but almost immediately drones out again. There is nothing there to tempt it to stay, and it wont even give the poor girls the amusement of slily watching its fruitless efforts to get through the window pane, or put itself in a passion as it burs and bangs in vain.

I remember the afternoon of which I write (Wednesday) was devoted to English history, and we were undergoing examination on the principal battles since the

Norman invasion. I can hear now the very tone in which each girl drawled out her answer.

Suddenly the door is opened.

"Miss Heaton is wanted at home at once, if you please."

Up woke my dreaming faculties! I was awake and alert in a moment.

I think some sign must have passed between Miss Foster and the servant, for she said directly, "Go at once, Miss Heaton."

I piled my books together, huddled my exercises into my desk, and hurried out.

Our house was one of a terrace, higher up than the street in which the school was. There were two ways of getting to it from this latter; the one was to go round by the street and up what was called "the bank," the other was much nearer, and consequently the one generally chosen by me. It was to pass out through the back garden of the school, and then through an old brewery, long disused, and fast falling to ruin, and now only serving as a place for all the idle boys of the town to throw stones down the vaults to frighten the rats.

I remember running up that way that afternoon with a cold foreboding feeling of ill, though *why*, I knew not, as my being sent for from school was nothing unusual. It had often happened before, and I never felt alarmed; on the contrary, it was generally a pleasant incident, for it mostly happened when my mother wanted one of us to go out with her.

She was not exactly what one would call "a confirmed invalid," still, she was often ailing, and not quite well.

She had never recovered from the shock occasioned by the death of our only little brother, some three years before the time of which I now write.

She never lamented for him, rarely referred to him, and most persons thought that she had got over it; but those who knew what she had been before he was taken from her, and what she was now, felt that the wound had never healed. She had too much trust in her God and His love "to fret;" and I feel sure she tried hard to be quite resigned, and bright and cheerful, and all her old self again, but the shock had been so great at

the time, as to bring on a severe illness, and I never remember her strong after.

To reach our house by the old brewery way, I should have to enter the garden by a door which was at the foot of it. There was another entrance communicating with the terrace, but this garden-door was a more private one. Often on being summoned from school I should know "why," as soon as I came in sight of the garden-door, if I did not before, by seeing the little pony carriage waiting there; but I knew that could not be the case now, as I had left my mother in bed, to which she had been confined for a day or two, having been suffering from a slight feverish cold, as we thought.

I rushed in at the said door in my then usually impetuous way, for which I had so often been lectured by my father; and quickly skirting the old laburnum tree that stood just inside, was about to run up the walk, when I came face to face with my father and old Mr. Charlton, our family surgeon. Before they saw me, I had caught sound of my father's voice, saying, "You are right, I should much like B—— to see her; I will telegraph at once, and then he can come by to-night's mail."

We had a telegraph, but not a railroad then (there is one now), but at that period it was supposed to be like the good time, "coming," at the rate of a viaduct, or bridge, or directors' meeting, or "something;" one in a year or so, just to keep the thing from being quite mythical.

"What is the matter, papa," I asked. "Is mamma worse?"

Probably I was looking frightened and excited, for Mr Charlton took my hand and said—

"Yes, Millie; but if you get like this it will never do. We shall have to send you down to Oakfield, with your sisters, instead of keeping you here to help us.

"Help us!" That was enough. If I could only *do* something, I should soon be better.

"Yes, yes," I exclaimed, "indeed I will!" and I know I did what was often my trick to "compose" myself, gave my arm a hard pinch.

"Tell me, papa, what can I do?"

My poor father! I had seen him hang over little Willie's cradle; and had then, for the first time in my life, witnessed big tears roll down his face, and I had thought that sight almost more than I could bear. I remember how little Maggie, then a wee thing of three, had pulled him by the coat when she saw his face buried in his hands, and said, "pease don't, papa, pease don't!" her own poor little frightened face turned up so beseechingly the while. But that was nothing, compared with the look I now saw.

I sprang to his side, exclaiming—

"Oh, papa, what is it!"

"Your mamma is very ill, Millie," he said, "very ill, and I am going to send for Dr. B——.

"May I go to her," I interrupted, hastily.

"No, no," Mr. Charlton replied, "not now, Millie. We left her for a few minutes rather better; but I must go back now, and you"—

He stopped, as if he did not know exactly what I was to do.

"Yes, yes," I said, "what can I do?"

He looked inquiringly at my father, who replied—

"It is near post time, and I must walk down to the telegraph office. Do you think you can write a note to your Grandmamma, Millie? Say only that I wish her to come at once, and bring your sisters with her, for your mother is very"—

He stopped a moment, apparently hesitating for the word that would convey sufficient information, and yet not wishing to alarm my grandmother.

Mr Charlton supplied it.

"Say so unwell as to make us *very* anxious."

My father went out at the garden door. Mr. Charlton and I returned towards the house.

I vainly tried to learn more; but he was very cautious, and would not say much, but only that my mother had been suddenly taken much worse, having had a succession of alarming fainting fits.

When we reached the house, I entered the little sitting room, known as "mamma's room;" and instead of going up stairs at once as I thought he would, Mr. Charlton followed me into the room; and, coming up to where I

was stooping looking for writing materials, he put his hand under my chin, and lifting up my face, looked earnestly into it.

His own was very grave. I did not speak; I could not. He laid his hand (how cool it felt) on my forehead, and said,—

"My poor child!" Still I could not speak.

At last he said, "Have a good cry, Millie!"

"I can't!" I said, "I can't!"

I put my hand to my throat, and there seemed to be something choking me; but no tears came.

"I must go up stairs now," he said. "Write your letter, Millie;" and he turned to go out of the room.

Oh, how I longed to say just the few short words, "Is there great danger?" but I could not get them out. It seemed to me as if the very asking it would bring it near. As if the leaving them unsaid would ward it off.

I wrote my note, and sent it to the post; and then tried to be admitted near my mother, but Mr. Charlton came out and ordered me away. I then went back to the little sitting room and tried to practise that hard, hard lesson, "to wait."

Soon my father returned, looking anxious and wretched. Even he was not allowed to be much in the sick-room, and so we spent most of the evening together, silently and sadly.

I pleaded hard for only one look at her before I went to bed, but even that was denied me. Doubtless they knew best, but it seemed so very hard.

About one, Dr. B—— arrived by the night mail. He breakfasted with us the next morning, and then left almost directly. I thought that must surely be a good sign; it looked as if he was not wanted. But I was soon undeceived. It was of no use for him to stay, he could do nothing for her.

She was restless and unconscious all night, but towards morning fell into a dozing state, which gradually became a heavy stupor.

The day passed wearily away, and no amendment.

About five in the evening we began to look out for the party from Oakfield. My sisters had only been there about a fortnight. We always spent our midsummer

holidays there, but these would not commence for more than a fortnight yet. Alice, who was never very strong, and little Maggie had both had slight attacks of influenza, and had been sent into the country earlier than usual this year. I was to join them with my mother when the vacation began, and had been looking forward with great impatience to the time, talking and planning it over with mamma.

I was the eldest, Alice rather more than two years younger. She was now past eleven and a half, and little Maggie was not five, for Willie, our little brother, had come between Alice and her. I went up at last to see if grandmamma's room was all prepared, and everything as I knew she liked it to be. She had the reputation among us of being very particular; and it was quite a relief to find that, in the anxiety and excitement reigning in the house, there were many little things left undone.

What a comfort it was to have something to do. Only taking out clean towels and filling the water bottle was better than sitting thinking, thinking.

About six they came. My grandmother only stayed to kiss me, in passing up the stairs, and to say, "Take care of your sisters, Millie;" and I saw her no more for the evening.

I gave Alice and Maggie their tea; but poor little Maggie did nothing but ask for mamma.

"Where is mamma, Millie? Why don't she come?"

"Poor mamma is very ill, Maggie; and you must be good, and not make a noise."

"Has she a bad head-ache? Perhaps, if I go and put my hand upon her head, it will make it better. She used to say she liked it. May I, Millie? May'nt I give her one little, little kiss?"

Ann, our nursemaid, wanted to put her to bed soon after tea; but, though evidently tired with the journey, she would not go. Poor child, it was something new for her to be allowed to say, "I won't;" but it was evident that she thought, by staying up, to see mamma. She could not understand her being so bad that she might not go in quietly, as she had so often done, when mamma was not very well, and kiss her, and say, "Good night."

At the back of our house was the public bowling-green; and thinking it would keep her quiet, Ann asked me to take her up to the staircase window, and let her look at the bowlers. So there we all three went, and stayed for some time. Alice, with her arm passed round my waist, leant her head on my shoulder, and cried quietly. How I envied her!

At last, little Maggie crept up on my lap, and leant her head against me too, and I thought it better to let her fall asleep there, if she would, than to rouse her, and perhaps make her cry by trying to get her to bed, and so we stayed.

The last of the bowlers left the green. We heard the door closed and locked; and then it was all still and hushed, till the corncraik began its "craik, craik," in the meadow beyond.

Our mother's little Skye terrier "Mop" had coiled himself up at our feet, and lay there, uttering a low piteous whine from time to time, as if he knew that there was something the matter.

He had lain on the mat at mamma's door till we came up stairs, and then he had crept away over to us, as if he came for sympathy.

Maggie by this time slept soundly, curled up on my lap. I had turned up my dress over her, I remember, and Alice wrapped up her little feet in her lap; but for more than an hour we neither of us uttered a word, partly from fear of waking Maggie, and partly because we felt too stunned and miserable to even speak. I believe we might very likely have stayed there all night. We seemed neither of us to think of moving; but my father happened to pass down the stairs, and saw us.

He started as he did so.

"My poor children, you here," he said. "Better go to bed, Millie. I thought you were all there long ago."

He stooped, and kissed us each. I leant my head for a moment against him, and he passed his arm round me, and said, "You must be my comfort, Millie; take care of them."

"How is she, papa," I whispered.

He only shook his head, and said, "Pray for your

dear mother, Millie." And then, as if he could not trust himself, went away.

I gathered up Maggie in my arms, and we crept away to Alice's and my room, and laid her down between us; and though Ann came up soon after, and wanted to carry her away to her own quarters, we begged so hard that she might stay, that she seemed not to have the heart to separate us.

Alice soon cried herself to sleep; but I was still wide awake. I suppose it must have been about two in the morning, when I felt as if I *could* not stay there any longer. I *must* get up and try to go to her.

I slipped out of bed, and groped my way to the room. The door was a little open. I slid in. All was very still.

My grandmother was resting on the sofa, with her back to the door. My father sat by the bedside. He was watching my mother's face so intently, that he did not perceive me till I had crept up close beside him. He looked angry, I thought, at first, on seeing me, and I felt frightened; but whether it was my piteous face, or what, I know not. After saying, very softly, "Millie!" he drew me to him, and wrapping me in his dressing-gown, kept me there. How still, and peaceful, and beautiful she looked! No expression of pain or suffering on her thin, white cheek. She was always very pale and fragile looking; but there was something now in the expression of her face that made me feel the sort of hushed awe and reverent admiration with which, as very little children, we look on pictures of our Lord, or angels. There was nothing of anguish or suffering; only the calm, peaceful look of deep sleep; not healthful, natural sleep, perhaps; but rather that of one who is exhausted by a long and weary struggle.

There we stayed. My grandmother still dosed on, upon the sofa, probably tired out with her journey; only the ticking of the watch, laid on the table by the bedside, was heard. My father's eyes and mine never moving from that still form. He pressed me almost painfully tightly, closer, and closer to him. Girl as I was, I understood it though.

I think we must have remained so for much more than

an hour, when my grandmother rose from off the sofa, and came to the bedside. She looked surprised and displeased when she saw me; but my father said softly—

"Let her stay."

She bent over the bed, and laid her hand gently on my mother's forehead. I saw her start, and look wildly at my father, then touch the pale hand lying outside the coverlet.

I had no mother. I was right in fancying "she only slept," when I came into the room.

CHAPTER II.

"She sleeps in peace beneath the chancel stone.
But ah! so clearly is the vision seen
The dead seem raised, or Death had never been
Were I not here alone.

"Oft as I wake at morn, I seem to see
A moment, the sweet shadow of that shade,
Her blessed face, as it were wont to fade,
Turned back to look on me."

FREDERICK TENNYSON.

"Thee, tender as a callow dove
Long have I nursed and borne;
Have nursed and borne thee up on high,
Ere mother's love to thee was known,
But now I set thee down to try
If thou canst walk alone—
Nay! not alone!"

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

WE had not yet left out fire, although it was the last week in April; but the evenings were still chilly, and so it was lit for tea. It had been lit this evening about an hour; and was beginning to blaze and crackle merrily. Alice was busy finishing some deeply absorbing "last chapter," bending down over the fire to benefit by its light; Maggie played with Mop upon the rug, whilst I still sat coiled up in the window-seat, where I had been the last half-hour or more, leaning my elbows on the cill, and peering out into the garden.

The clock on the chimney-piece struck seven, and soon after the door was opened, and the maid brought in the tea.

Alice just lifted her head one moment from her book, said,

"It is your turn to night," and resumed her reading.

I still sat on; there was apparently but little to be seen. Some time before, I had been watching my father pulling down the rotten branches from the old elm tree, with a crook attached to a long pole. These still lay scattered

all about on the broad gravel path, and over the little lawn in front of the house. But he was standing talking to a gentleman who had come in at the gate some quarter of an hour before.

It was nothing unusual for Mr. Polwhele to come up to our house, or to stand talking on the lawn with my father. I had never thought it worth my while to watch them before. Why should I now? I know not. Unless it be that coming events do truly cast their shadows before them, and that it was these that I was watching. They stood there some minutes longer—my father leaning carelessly on the iron-crooked stick—Mr. Polwhele resting his hand on the top of the little gate communicating with the terrace. Now he is gone. My father turns, pokes the long stick up among the limbs of the old tree. Pulls down one or two dead branches. Appears about to try to get down some others—leaves them—stands a few minutes, apparently thinking—lets the fallen branches still lie about (so like him!)—turns towards the garden-house, deposits his tools; and then I hear him enter the house at the back door.

"Ann, my slippers."

"Yes, sir."

And I jump up and make the tea.

It was now nearly four years since our mother's death. I had continued with Miss Foster as a daily pupil for about two years after; and then had, in common parlance, "finished my education."

Something had been said about sending me away; but it never came to anything more, "than something said." Alas! it was not alone in my going to school that we had learnt to know how much my mother had been the main-spring and propeller of all things. How, in spite of her frail health, she it was, who, beneath that subdued and quiet manner, possessed the largest share of energy and action in our home. We used to think papa did everything; but we had learnt now that it was he who *talked* of everything, but another who had acted.

I continued to take desultory lessons from masters, a quarter now and a quarter then, in drawing, of which I was very fond, and music, and French, and I tried to keep up the little Italian I knew, as well as I could alone;

and read, after my own fashion and system, or rather no system, anything and everything I could lay hands on. I was a queer gawk of a girl, very shy and reserved, in spite of the prominent place I had to assume in the house. My greatest horror was a morning call, and my greatest happiness to get away quietly, "knees and nose together," as my father called it, over a book, or to stoop till my shoulders touched my ears, over a drawing. I suppose a slight near-sightedness increased my natural awkwardness; but from all I can remember, I must have been a great ungainly girl.

Alice still went to Miss Foster when her health would permit her to study; and little Maggie, who had been my pupil at first, in the evenings—and after I left school, during the day—had latterly been promoted to the dignity of going to school with Alice.

It was long before we got over the feeling of "something gone." I missed her, oh! so sadly. There was no one to go to now with all my troubles and perplexities; and, added to my other cares, there was myself to look after, and to see that I kept straight, wandering neither to the right hand nor to the left, in the path of daily duty God had set before me. Keeping myself in order was often the hardest task of all. There was no quiet presence to go to now when perplexed and doubtful, with the feeling of certainty that mamma would set it all right; no sitting down on her footstool and laying my head on her lap, and feeling her soft hand smoothing my ruffled brow, whilst I told her *all*. And blest, doubly blest is the girl who can go to a mother and tell her *all*, feel above all in that dawning hour, when childhood is laid aside and maidenhood just assumed, and womanhood fast coming on; and so many trials come, and so many things puzzle and perplex, and it seems to her half-knowledge that things that should not be are, and that should be are not, that to go to mamma is to be all right and safe.

As long as I could do that, I felt secure; but now oppressive thoughts would come of all I *ought* to do to fill the lost one's place, and of how very little I seemed capable. I felt so sorely my own weakness and powerlessness (and here perhaps lay my real strength). How differently she bore with Alice's peevishness and

fretfulness when she felt weak and poorly. How cheerfully she put up with my father's crotchets; and then I felt at times as if there were cruel heartlessness in the indifferent manner in which I felt I was listening to my sister's complaints, or longed to run away from the detailed recital of some "talked of" plan I had already heard perhaps a dozen times.

My best cure at such times when the fit was on me, was to run away to *her* room. It had never been used since she was borne out of it, and was left just as when she occupied it. And then the lessons she had taught me, and the help she had given me, when even then my quick, impatient temper, and over-eagerness to do all my hand found to do with all my untamed heart, had many and many a time brought me to trouble, would come back again, and the remembrance of that help promised to all who come for it—far better than the holiest, wisest mother's counsel—would return, and I should be enabled to better resist the temptation next time it came.

And so the four years had nearly passed away. It was June when she died, and now it was the close of April.

I knew my father had something on his mind that night, he sat so still—a thing well nigh impossible for him. He did not fidget about the room every five minutes —his usual habit—or torture the lamp, declaring that the flame was now "too high and now too low, or the light too dim or too glaring, or too something!" or make us all hunt for his glass, and find it himself at last, folded up in yesterday's paper, or else hanging about his neck all the time, from where he had no business ever to take it. But to-night he sat quite quiet, the paper resting on his knee, his gaze fixed on "nothing!"

Ten o'clock struck at last. The supper tray was brought in—this was always a very simple affair, and quickly despatched. Then the servants came in. My father read prayers, then rose, lit his candle, told us—as he had done almost every night for many a day—"not to be late," and went up stairs.

I felt an unusual reluctance to rouse myself and be off

too. I wanted to sit there in a vague, wondering mood; and yet I am sure if I had been asked what I wanted, to stay, and think out, I could not have given a reply; but Alice was sleepy, so she shook me up and marched me off to bed.

CHAPTER III.

Can it be wrong for us to say,
The well-beloved still hover near?
Though hid from sight, not far away,
They ever see us here?

Heaven's bright ones are around we know,
Thought mixed of hope and fear;
That earthly loved ones come and go,
Would be a thought most dear.

Those who ne'er needed victory,
Our daily strifes look down upon;
Then may not they our conflicts see,
Who needed victory and won?

In loving hope with her unseen,
Walk as in hallowed air;
When foes are strong and trials keen,
Think, "what if she be there?"

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

"Pourquoi dans l'adversité nous abandonnera a la douleur, puisque nuls pleurs ne sauraient changer le cours des evenements?"

WHAT a bright sunny morning was that of the next day! I remember it so well. It was one of those days we get sometimes at the end of April, as if a sunny May morn had come before its time.

All my dismalness, and dullness of the previous night seemed gone when I threw up my window and leant out. The front of our house was nearly covered by creepers, and I remember I was leaning out in what was doubtless a foolhardy way, trying to reach a particular spray that had caught my fancy, when I nearly lost my equilibrium on hearing my father's voice just below. I knew I should get a scolding, or at least a quizzing if I did not make haste down, for nothing provoked him more than my being late for breakfast; and, truth to tell, it was at one time a thing of fearfully frequent occurrence. I used to try, too, not to be, or think I did; but somehow, do what I would, it seemed as if I *could not* be in time. But, latterly, I had wonderfully improved in this respect, and

had been trying how long I could go on without once being late. Still I was determined to have my branch of early "jassamine;" have it I would, but how? Long as my arms were, and wriggle out as far and as venturesomely as I would, I could not with all my efforts reach it. At last I thought of my father's iron-crooked stick. Down stairs I rattled, nearly coming down with a crash on poor old Mop, out at the back door, into the shed, and upstairs again.

Now it was an easy matter to land my prize. I might have reached it quite as well, probably better, from down below on the lawn; but, no! I had made up my mind to get it from the window, so preferred lugging the long pole up stairs and down again, with the pretty good certainty of a scolding looming in the back ground, and very sure a thorough being laughed at for being late again.

I hastened with a very guilty feeling to the breakfast-room, and there found my father, contrary to his usual custom, as he generally strolled up and down before the house until the breakfast bell rang. Now, he was standing at the open window, looking out into the garden, and when I first wished him "Good morning," he did not turn round or answer me.

"I'm in for it," I thought. "He is so very angry, he won't speak to me." But I ventured one more.

"Good morning, papa," busying myself meanwhile with the tea-caddy.

There was a look on his face when he *did* turn, I had never seen there before; no, not even when our mother died. It was grave, and sad, and foreboding; and something more, that I could not read. Stern as it was though, I had no scolding that day. With a cowardly attempt to shrink what might be coming (just as one instinctively *stoops* to ward off a blow from an angry person who has lifted the arm in a menacing manner, and *may* strike), I rushed into conversation.

We had had carpenters and painters in the house for a month past, doing more than I thought was needed; but which my father said, "Might as well be done, now they were about it." And the new paper and fresh paint in the drawing-room had led to the discovery on his part that a new carpet was absolutely essential.

After divers discussions over patterns, we had halted between two, and the rolls were to be sent up that we might decide which of them it should be, after seeing them on the floor. They had been brought the day before, when papa was out, and I had ordered them to be left until the next morning.

Thinking there could not be a safer subject than this, I felt quite thankful to remember it, and turned to it with avidity.

"Oh, papa, the carpets were brought yesterday. Will you look at them and decide before you go out?"

No reply came for a minute. At last it came: "Mildred (he never called me Mildred unless he was very grave or very angry), I may as well tell you first as last." And here he stopped.

I sat quaking.

"It would perhaps have been better," he continued, "if I had before told you what *might* happen, but I was always hoping something would turn up to prevent things from coming to what they have."

I turned cold and sick at heart. What could it be? Which of my short-comings or misdeeds was the cause of such an issue as this? For the thought of its being anything else never crossed me; and yet my father did not often find fault. What had I been doing? What could it be?

"Perhaps he is going to be married again," suddenly flashed through my mind; and all this painting, and papering, and the new carpet, &c., are on that account.

Something of the kind had been "talked of" some twelve months previously; and *now*, knowing what I do, I believe he would have done so, if he had not then known something of what he was about to tell me.

My poor father! it was a hard task for him, a sore trial, to tell me! I fancied I saw him look up at my mother's picture, as if he almost wished she were by to help him. Here was the first link supplied to me in the chain of *why* she had been taken. I had sometimes dared, when feeling very depressed and foreboding, to question *why* she was taken from us, just when three young girls were so much wanting guidance, and now I was answered.

It would have crushed her, and her God knew it, and was merciful. She would have tried to bear it, as she had borne other crosses, "as bravely as she could;" but He knew that this one "fitted not her stature," and so He took her from "the evil to come."

At length, in an unconnected way, I learnt that my father's affairs were in a very embarrassed state. He had never been what is called "a business man" in the first instance, and had badly managed what, as the only child of a prosperous man, had been a handsome property.

Then, when he found his income diminishing year by year, he had been led to speculate; knew nothing about it—had lost—missed opportunities that he might have had for retrieving his losses; and so it proved to be the old story so often told. Unwillingness to worry my mother, at first induced him to conceal the real state of the case; and then, on her death, when, as I afterwards learnt, friends tried to induce him to look into things, and retrench, if possible, came that moral cowardice, that unwillingness to know the worst, which is so often met with. I do not believe he ever knew the *exact* state of his affairs; and so it appeared the evil had gone on increasing from year to year, until at last, partly owing to an unusually bad speculation, things were brought to a crisis.

Still I never fully understood it; and I suppose I never shall. For before this he had never been very communicative on such matters, and he became less so afterwards. We had always lived comfortably. There was no display, far less any extravagant expenditure in our household. But we resided in a pretty spot I had always heard called our own—held a good position in society—and I had heard something of my mother having inherited property, which was to be divided among us three some day. But I never busied myself about money matters.

A certain weekly allowance was made me for housekeeping, and my father looked strictly over my accounts—however careless he might have been with regard to his own. I had also a yearly sum for my own dress, and so much for Alice's and Maggie's. But what my father's income was, or whence derived, I knew not. I only knew that there was a sort of consciousness

imbibed from infancy that we were considered "well off," comfortably independent—*voilà tout.*

It came like a thunderbolt upon me. Fortunately, I had not rung the breakfast-room bell—the signal for the servant to ring the breakfast bell—so that Alice and Maggie had not come into the room. The former never rose early, the latter always lingered in the garden until the last minute.

I do not think I could have made any reply to what my father had said, more than what my face must have conveyed.

I felt completely stunned. His last words, "We must leave here, and where we shall go, I know not," rung in my ears.

Leave there! Leave the dear old place, where we had all been born! Where he had brought home our dear mother, a young winsome bride, and where she had lain down and died! Where our only little brother had lived his short life! No need now to ask why God took him home so soon. The dear old place! the happy place, spite of the two deep shadows that had fallen on it. I know I felt choking, felt that I *must* go away out of that room, and yet I was tearless, and my eyes quite dry. I went mechanically up to that other room, and kneeling down by the bed-side, laid my throbbing, stunned head on the pillow. Everything took an exaggerated form; the uppermost feeling was one of utter disgrace, and never to be-got-over misery. But I am thankful to say there was nothing of that; there was no disgrace, and every claim was fully paid.

"Mamma! mamma!" was all I cried. Much as I had often needed her, I felt I had never wanted her as I did then. And, yet, with that very cry on my lips, was a feeling of thankfulness in my heart that she was not there.

There must have been an early wedding at our church that day, for all at once the bells pealed out loudly and merrily. We were, as a town, very proud of our bells. And from our house they sounded well. But, oh! how the sound jarred then. I can almost smile now as I remember. I thought it cruel that they should ring. How clearly and indelibly every thing relating to that

morning is impressed on my memory. It is very strange; but often, when in the deepest grief, we find ourselves noting little trivial things, in spite of ourselves, as it were. I know then I heard distinctly every twitter of the birds outside—every rise and fall of the bells—every sound in the air. I can see the very forms the sunbeams took, as they fell between the venetian blinds upon the carpet. And yet I only lifted my face once from the pillow where I had buried it. I was roused at last by Alice standing by my side, begging to know what was the matter. She had fancied the breakfast bell must have been rung, and she not heard it; so hastened down stairs—and frightened at my father's manner, she had come to look for me, to know what was amiss; but I had startled her still more. Before I could say anything, my father came into the room, and, I scarcely know how; but she was told. Poor Alice! her grief was very bitter. All at once we heard little Maggie's voice on the stairs; our little sunbeam. My father hastily left the room, and I heard him go into his own, and lock the door. We did not tell Maggie all at once; but it was impossible to hide from her but that something was wrong. Dear little Maggie, she tried to be as brave as she could, poor little darling; but she would wander about the garden in a way that went to our hearts, gathering daily all the buds and blossoms which, as "common flowers," she was allowed to take, because she would say she shouldn't be able to pick any double primroses next year—"because we are going away, are'nt we, Millie?" And then her little mouth would quiver, and the big tears gather in her eyes.

Some friends kindly offered to take her until things were a little settled; but somehow we could not send her away until we all went. A small house was taken for the time near our old home; but no definite future was settled.

Alice and I had enough to do, and it was well for us we had. But my father seemed incapable of making any exertion. We wrote lists; selected what was necessary to be kept; and even saw persons who came about matters relative to the sale, &c.

We might have stayed on a few months longer; but when we found that we *must* leave sooner or later, we

begged that it might be over as soon as possible. What would have been the good of lingering there a few months longer in wretched anticipation of what *must* come? Better far be up and doing, while we could act, and before the hand and heart alike grew nerveless and unstrung.

And this, as I look back and retrace step by step my life, seems to me to have been my waking hour. We go on *existing*, till all at once, some day, we wake up and *live*. To some this hour comes very, very early; to others not for a long, long time. We have eaten and drank—gone to bed, and got up—and gone about our daily occupations; but it has only been existing. We have not lived—till one day, *the* day, comes, and we wake up with a start, and a shiver, and may be a moan, for the *reveillée* is very rough to some. And we never, never sleep that same deep sleep again. But we *live* henceforward—we no longer walk as in a dream, and view the things around us as through a medium, or a haze; or, again, seem to see the world and its ways as something apart and distinct from ourselves; a sort of ideal, unmaterial state—for, like the unbelieving disciple, we have *felt* that it is even so, and no vision. My awakening to life, was that day—when I heard the bells pealing for a bridal in the early April morn.

CHAPTER IV.

"I remember! I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Or brought too long a day."
HOOD.

"Demeurons dans le poste où
le ciel nous a mis;
Et S'il nous en rappelle, à ses
ordres soumis,
Partons!"

"Go on! go on! thy master's ear
And constant eye,
Observe each groan, each struggling tear,
He, midst the shadows dark and drear,
Is standing by;
Go on!"

IT was all over now! Home was home no longer. The smooth green grass around the old spot bore witness to the desolation that reigned within. It was trampled, and worn, and bare. Straw lay littered all about; disorder and confusion reigned everywhere. The trail of those who had borne away the old familiar household belongings. It was a wrench to part from them. And our eyes *would* fill with tears when we looked at them for the last time, spite of our trying to be brave about it. And saying, in what were meant to be hearty tones, "Never mind; we'll work for others if needs be, and we shall be prouder of them than of these which cost us nothing. It is only old associations make us care for them." True! and therein lay the secret. It was "only old associations" that made us value them at all. It was not that we had any predeliction for particular chairs and tables, but we had a yearning tenderness for old memories connected with them, such as no new ones, "though we might even work to win them," could ever have.

The last thing was sent away that we had decided on keeping. The last day was come that we should be there. And I went from room to room for the last time. I remember, after having gone into all the apartments, that I went out at the back of the house with a sort of vague restless indefinite wish to go "everywhere" once more—just for the last time. The place looked so disordered, desolate, and dreary—none of the neat, comfortable home appearance it used to have.

I looked up at the old bowling-green—its smooth, close shaven sward, and long golden wreathed laburnums and scented lilacs. How natural how part of the old home it all seemed. There was a corncraik then "craik, craiking" its monotonous note in the meadow beyond. It carried me back to one hushed evening (how long ago it seemed just then!) And I know, I thought—"I wonder if it is the same we heard then?" And thus I stood in a dreamy sort of way, that in spite of its sadness, was not all sorrow—for I was young and hopeful—and there was a new road in life just opening before me. Though how it began, or where it ended I knew not; nor yet what aspect it wore. Rough, and rugged, and narrow, and all up hill most likely; yet a road *somewhere* there must be, though as yet I had not found it, nor even knew in what direction to begin to look for it. Still something to do there certainly was, and there was stirring within me that vague, hopeful, eager, upward feeling; that aspiration which the sanguine young heart ever feels. That bracing up of the will and energies; that longing to be up and doing so soon as God pleases to make known to us what is to be done.

I walked round the garden, down to the plot beneath the old pink-thorn, that had been my own especial bit of ground: the scene of so many day-dreams. What "Chateaux en Espagne" had I not built there.

I sat down on the rustic seat that I had made every bit myself. How many hits I had given myself in doing it; how many a rap, meant for the nail-head, had come down upon my poor knuckles; how many a half-hour had been spent in searching for the exact bit of crooked stick; and how proud I was when it was at last completed—and how mortified when, the first time, after a

deal of coaxing and persuasion, I had got papa to sit down on it, one of the legs came off, and he nearly came to the ground. I always had a decided talent for carpentery. Only the worst was, what I did nearly always came to pieces in a remarkably short time.

How beautiful it was that evening, so still and calm. The young buds just bursting into life. Pale, rathe flowers springing up all around. I remember I stood at the garden door, listening to the cheery sound of children's voices at play, borne upward from the town. I don't think we ever notice such sounds except at eventide, when the busy hum and rush of daily life is fast passing away. Then we have time to pause, and listen to what during the care and turmoil of the day has been unheeded. I used to think then, and do still, that there is something very soothing in such sounds, heard in the restful, hushful gloaming. Probably we should very much dislike it at noon-tide, and call the children a noisy set of urchins.

I suppose I was worn and overdone. Whilst there had been something to do I had kept up, but now all was over; and as the old familiar sounds fell on my ear, and the remembrance that I looked on old familiar places for the last time, pressed home, I fairly gave way; and with a yearning at my heart for the comfort that a word from lips that would never speak to me again, could have given; and a sickening, wistful, agonising, longing to feel her arms round me, and to rest my head against her just once more, I leaned my head against the old laburnam tree, and cried, cried, cried! I could not help it. Tears *would* come, and they did me good. God knows that in time He will teach us to feel that His love is sufficient for us. But He who planted all feelings in our heart will not be angry if we cannot quickly learn the lesson, for He is very patient with His children, and *never* expects us to learn it all at once. And I did so yearn then for some one to turn to.

Although we had a large circle of acquaintances, we had not many whom I should call friends—and on both my father's and my mother's side, but very few relations—he being an only child, and most of her connections in India.

My father's parents I had never known; and my mother's only surviving parent had died about two years after my mother's death. But there was one family with whom we were on really intimate terms. It consisted of old Mrs. Polrudon and her two grandchildren. Philip, the eldest, was studying for his father's profession. He had been a highly respected medical man; but, dying early, had left his two children to the care of old Mrs. Polrudon, his mother. Their own had died when the other child, Edith, was born. Edith and I were about the same age, and had always been fast friends. Mrs. Polrudon has insisted on having Alice and Maggie with them during the last few days, and papa and I had also been there a good deal. But now, we felt that the sooner we settled in our new habitation the better, though it was long before we could call it *home*.

And then came the question, "What is to be done?"

All kind of wild plans floated through my brain. For a long time emigration was in the ascendant, and night and day I scarcely thought of anything else; till it occurred to me, "what we were to do when we got there?" and I could really think of nothing to which we could any of us put our hand, unless I could turn my taste for carpentering to some account; so then I began to think that perhaps that would not be quite the best move. When I tried to speak of some of my most reasonable and mundane schemes to my father, he invariably heaved a great sigh: some would have said, "groaned:" said—

"Something may turn up, wait and see."

But, "no thank you," I thought. I am awake now, and have learnt what waiting for "something to turn up" means. I have been told that what is worth having is worth fetching, and brighter days wont come unless we go half way to meet them.

But which was the road to set out on? It would never do to take a wrong turning now, so I used to feel very much like a wayfarer come to a stand still on some cross road where there is no directing-post, nor any passer-by to help him.

At last, as is usually the case, "the most trodden road seemed the "most likely." So I at length decided

that the old well-beaten route of governess-ship must be the one for me, and hence resulted the natural inquiry, "How far was I qualified for the post?"

What I am about to observe, I have learned since the time of which I am writing, *i.e.*, that a governess life *need* not be the slave-driving it is often represented to be, and that when such cases do occur (and that there are such I must allow), they are the exceptions and not the rule. If the governess is competent, up to, and a *little beyond* what she professes to be, it need not be the life so often depicted in colours that glare at us. True, it is a life of anxiety and responsibility, and often of vexation and disappointment. I do not deny that to many it proves a life of mortification and daily bitterness, but I believe these to be the exceptional cases. I do indeed. It is a wearing life, and unless one's heart be thoroughly in the work, a weary one. Much, too much, is often required, I allow, but I believe this results from the experience parents have bought, perhaps dearly, that to obtain mediocrity, they must require, or at least pretend to expect a high standard of proficiency.

Parents are often thoughtless and selfish, and unfeeling enough, goodness knows, and little allowance is made by the generality of them for all a governess has to put up with. They seldom think how disheartening it is to look back on days, and weeks, and months of toil, and see no result—nothing, nothing! They seldom reflect how trying even the best children can be, and what is more, *are*, at times. How seldom the governess's highest aims for their benefit are understood by the children; but that they put it down to "crossness, and over-strictness, and fidgets, and all nonsense and bother." Not only do the parents neglect to think, but the natural consequence is, they don't make their children think. If they only consistently backed up the teacher, who is doing so much, that is perhaps doubly hard to effect, because the parents have done *so little*. If they showed the children that they really appreciated the governess's labours, felt grateful and truly indebted to her for what she did, would not things go on more smoothly on both sides?

It is weary work to be *obliged* to lead a willing child

from morn till noon, and from noon till eve; how much more wearying then to have to *drag* an obstinate, *backing*, little biped on a rough, and rugged, and uphill road all through the day?—and then, unhappily, all mamma's little goslings are cygnets. I often wonder where the grown-up geese all come from, and where all the full-grown swans have flown.

Still, it is not all the parents' fault. It is much of it our own; and, until we learn to go about our work with the cheerful conviction that it is "God's work," and that He is our employer, things will be no better. We must learn to set about it with all our heart and soul, and to labour *heartily* at it. We must learn to look on it through a holier, higher, purer medium than I am afraid we do at present. We must learn to forget ourselves. Ah! herein often lies the great mischief. We think of ourselves, and don't think of our work—no, not *our* work, of God's work.

Really highly qualified governesses are not so common, in spite of the apparent contradiction to this assertion daily put forward in "The Times" for instance, as to be *obliged*, unless under very peculiar circumstances, to remain where they are not well treated. As regards being *fully appreciated*, I doubt if there be many who ever feel they are quite; and I almost doubt if ever they will be—at least according to the present arrangement of things. Besides, I suspect, individually, we are inclined (I don't specially mean governesses) to put our standard of worth a little higher at all times than others are inclined to bow down to. Humility and a humble opinion of one's self are *very* rare just at present.

Well, the result of my examination of self, as a fitting candidate for the office of a governess, proved excessively unsatisfactory; and the upshot was, that I decided I had better try to go abroad for a time, and work up deficiencies.

When it had come to discharging servants, old nurse Truan would not start. No, there was really no getting rid of her.

She had seen us all born, she said, and it was her duty to stay with us; and, I believe, poor, faithful, simple-

hearted old nurse, she was just on the point of adding, "see us all die," but she substituted, "See us all happy again one day;" and, at last, after she had almost, in the words of Ruth of old, said, pleadingly, "Entreat me not to leave thee," it was settled she should stay.

She was still an active, bustling woman, and very quickly took the house, master, and the children, entirely into her own hands, and managed them all so decidedly and well, that I soon saw it would be easy for them to get on very well without me, particularly as Alice was now old enough to take my place. I pondered the matter over for some time. The principal obstacle seemed to me, a lack of the requisite funds wherewith to carry out my scheme.

When matters were wound up, it was found that the proceeds of some property, in which my father held a life interest, would afford a small, though, with management, sufficient income to live comfortably upon. But the "something" we had been led to think we should inherit from my mother, was all gone, vanished!

At last, the only conclusion to which I could come was, that I better buckle on courage, and openly and frankly talk it over with my father.

But before doing so, I stretched out a feeler in the direction of nurse. At first she was desperate; but, after some judicious stroking down, in the way of pointing out all the advantages I should gain, and a cautiously admitted portion of alarm administered as to what would become of us all at a future day, she began to "pur" instead of "spit," and at last gave in, the tears filling her eyes, and her kind old wrinkled hand trembling whilst she fondly bent over and stroked my head, drawing it at last up against her, as she used to do when I was a little thing, and fairly giving way, as she murmured, "To think they should any of them come to that!"

Now, then, for my father.

Night after night I determined to talk it over with him, after Alice and Maggie were gone to bed; and night after night I slunk off, like a great coward, as I was, and never said a word. I used to scold myself, and give it

to myself well. I used to infuse an immense amount of contempt for myself into my own breast, and tell myself to act somewhat differently from the great goose I was. But all in vain. A goose I was, and a goose in this respect I should have probably remained, but for the following circumstance.

CHAPTER V.

"Helfen Sie sich selbst, und Gott wird Ihnen helfen."

"No se mou la fulla, que Deu no ha vulla."

"Friend, *tie* thy camel, and commit it to God."

I HAD called on some acquaintances one morning, some of the most unlikely people possible, I should have said, to further my wishes; but they did so, nevertheless, though unwittingly. As I was about to leave them, one of them remarked—

"We expect some friends to-morrow: Mr. Melville and his daughter. Only for a short time though, as they are about to leave England for the continent. Caroline (that's Miss Melville) was educated in France, and as she has been very delicate of late, they think it may prove beneficial if she goes back to Arrés again, as she was never better than when she was there.

"Arrés, I remarked. That is in Brittany, is it not?"

"Yes; Mr. Melville is not rich, and the reason for sending Caroline there to be educated, was its inexpensiveness, though I believe, at the same time, it was a good establishment. At all events, I know he was very satisfied, and he is rather particular.

"The very thing for me," thought I, "and I must contrive means of learning more about it;" but not considering it the proper time to do so then, I said "Good morning," and hastened home. No sooner there, than I informed myself of the exact locality of Arrés. I found it was situated in "La Bretagne Douce," so there was no fear of my going to learn Welsh, and Cornish. It contained a college and "Sous Préfecture."

I wondered what "inexpensive" meant, in that part of the world, calculated travelling expenses, and ended by working myself up into a fever.

When I was quite a child, an aunt of my mother had

left me, because I was the eldest, some old trinkets; antiquated and old-fashioned, but rather valuable, and these were what I trusted to to carry out my plans. My father had always laughed at them, and said they were not worth resetting, and I had great hopes of gaining his consent to their being disposed of, could I but once get him to listen to my scheme. I *determined* to settle the matter that night, so when Alice and Maggie were safely disposed of in bed, I said—

"Papa, I want to talk to you."

"Well, my dear, what is it now!"

Something had annoyed him, and he was in a shockingly unpropitious mood; decidedly bad tempered.

I was rather glad of it than otherwise. I should not have liked to have gained his consent from him in a benign moment, and perhaps have afterwards seen him inclined to retract.

I plunged in head foremost, floundered about at the commencement; but finally succeeded in finding a footing and smooth water.

Such things are very like a cold plunging bath in December. We stand shivering, looking at it for some time, then dip in one foot, draw it back with a fearful "ugh!" try again; and finally end by feeling assured we shall never do it that way. We must go right in, or not at all. And so we at last take the proper plunge, and then wonder we ever hesitated—we feel such a pleasant glow; and so I ended by "glowing" all over at the thought of life at Arrés. It was a tough battle, though, and lasted till two in the morning; but at last I gained the day, jewels and all.

And now, when I had what I wanted, I was seized with one of my old fits of "mauvaise honte." I could not bear the idea of having it talked over by everybody, and "oh, dear me'd," and "are you really'd," by all the little gossip of our town. If people would only content themselves with talking it over among themselves, they were quite welcome to do so to their heart's content; but I knew they would not, they would not rest until they had persecuted me *in propria personæ*, and I confess I shrank from it.

Then, again, I hesitated to make the needful inquiries

of Miss Melville; and yet nothing could be decided until I did. Fortunately, Mr. Melville and my father had known each other some years before, and this was an introduction.

I found Miss Melville only too happy to tell me all I wished to know. The information gained was satisfactory. She highly recommended the school; spoke in raptures of Mademoiselle de Garaye, the directrice, who, she said was a Parisienne, and every thing desirable; and ended by strongly urging me to accompany herself and father to Arrés.

Mademoiselle de Garaye was written to, arrangements were speedily concluded; and I felt only too glad that my preparations left me not a moment's leisure. For, truth to tell, now the fiat had gone forth, my heart failed me sadly. I had not counted the cost of parting from them all. I did not remember that I should have to leave them behind. My own darling, my child, my precious little Maggie, and dear Alice. But I believed I was doing right, and all for the best. And yet, I felt as if I were acting very selfishly. Still I think *she* would have told me to go.

CHAPTER VI.

"I ken ye'll think it a'
A foolish moonshine matter,
But hech, sirs, how I started when
I got my first love letter!"

STILL Philip lingered!

"I wish he'd go," I thought. There's all my packing to finish, and lots of last things to do. "I wish he'd go."

Still Philip lingered.

"It is getting cold," I said at last; "really it is quite chilly to-night; and I have a deal to do."

I didn't like to tell him to be off in plainer terms; besides, I would not have parted rudely or unkindly from old Mop, who followed close upon our heels, much less from Philip, whom I liked dearly.

The clock struck nine.

"How late," I said.

Still Philip lingered.

"I really think I must go in now, Philip," I said at last; "I have so much still to do."

"Just one turn more, Millie," he said. "I want to say something to you."

"What can it be," I thought. I had a headache with packing and bustling all day; for I was to leave on the morrow. And when it was dusk, Alice and Maggie drove me out for a walk, up and down the long narrow slip of garden at the back of the house, saying they would go on with the packing the while; and here I had been joined by Philip Polrudon, who had come up, he said, to bid me good-bye. But, somehow, he was a long time about it.

At last it came (not the good-bye).

"Millie, you are going away, and no one knows when we may meet again; and I cannot let you go without

saying what—if you had not been going so far away—I should not have ventured to say yet."

A queer half-pained, and more than half-surprised, feeling came over me. I longed to stop him, but I could not.

And so, in an honest, manly way, Philip Polrudon told me he loved me; and, would I only promise to be his wife, he hoped one day, God helping him, to offer me such a home as a hard working up-hill country practitioner could provide for his wife.

"And, Millie," he added, "I know you wont care for luxuries; but I will try hard that you shall never need regret them, or repent having married Philip Polrudon, though he had little but these," holding out his honest hands; "and this," shaking his head in the merry quick way I remember he used to give it "a toss," as a boy.

"God bless you, Philip," I thought, as the tears sprang to my eyes, "I am sure of that; but I can't ever be your wife," and so I told him.

It was a sorry farewell, but I could not help it.

We had always grown up together like brother and sister. I, having no brother of my own, had always looked on Philip as my big, grown-up one; and the thought of his thinking of me in any other light than just the same as he did Edith, only, of course, not quite so near, had never once crossed me.

I had rather than much, that my last remembrance of him had not been his grave face passing away down the long narrow strip of garden, after his last "Good-bye, and God bless you, Millie;" and I had no business to stand behind the tall espalier tree and watch him till he turned the corner, far less, I'm sure, to stay for ever so long in the same place, long after he must have entered his own home, thinking, thinking of nothing in the wide world but Philip Polrudon. And all my packing to finish. And no end of last things to be done—that I was so impatient to be about while Philip lingered—and yet I did, and couldn't help it.

Philip had no business to spoil my last evening like that; it was very unkind of him.

I went up stairs, and set about completing my arrangements in a very absent, scandalously careless way; and

was about to envelop my new best bonnet in one of the thick Bath coating petticoats, with which nurse had insisted on my providing myself, "For that there cold place, where, she had heard, such a thing as a 'grate' and a coal fire were never seen," when Alice fortunately stopped me just in time from doing mischief, and bringing my finery to grief.

But, though I did not want to have Philip as a lover, it went to my heart to lose him as a friend. It had seemed quite a natural thing that Philip's interests should be mine as well as Edith's.

He used to tell us all he meant to do, and what he meant to be.

"Millie, I've been talking the matter over with Edith, and now I want to know what you think of it?" was the natural sequence to any scheme discussed, without my presence; though the general habit had been, "to wait until we see Millie, and then we'll talk it over all together."

I see no reason why as true and well founded a friendship may not exist between a man and a woman as between two of the same sex; and where it does exist, (and there are such instances, I know,) I believe it is often a better balanced one than that between man and man, woman and woman. But, to keep such a friendship untroubled, there must be singleness and purity of heart, and a high and holy aim, on her side, with a true man's true-hearted chivalry and faith in woman on the other.

CHAPTER VII.

"Not with a heart unmov'd, I left thy shores,
Dear native isle!"

MADOC.

THE noisy bustling deck of a steamer, confusion, and hurry, and excitement everywhere—a fluttering, restless, nervous state, that won't let me sit quiet in one place two consecutive minutes—a feeling of wretchedness and utter loneliness, (for where such solitude as in the midst of a noisy, bustling crowd?)—a sensation of being rooted up, and cast forth out of old England, as if Britannia wouldn't have anything more to do with me, and had thrown me into the English channel, on my own resources, with an impetus towards the continent on the other side.

This was the next phase.

It was arranged that I should meet Mr. and Miss Melville on board the steamer. My father went with me; and we were so early, that they were not arrived when he left me, as he was obliged to do, before they came, in order not to lose his train back. So he found me a comfortable seat, and left me to my meditations, or rather to watch the arrivals. At last, Mr. and Miss Melville came. Then those persons who had only come on board with friends went on shore. Some nearly too late people hurried panting across the plank. (There are always people nearly too late on board steamers.) The plank was drawn away, and we were off.

We staid on deck some time, until Mr. Melville, fearing for his daughter's safety in the rather chilly evening air, took her down to the cabin, that place where "*Lasciate agni speranza, voi ch'ntrate,*" should always be written above the door. I followed her down, but as quickly as possible rushed up again. It was crowded, and every one there, more or less, resigning themselves to "mal de mer." I knew I should soon be the worst of

the worst if I remained there. The stewardess was at her wit's end, everybody calling for her at once. Poor woman, she was enormously stout; but, happily, good-tempered in proportion to her size.

We resigned Miss Melville to her care. I would willingly have stayed with her, but there were two good reasons against my doing so. One, that if I did, I should very soon be as ill as she was, directly she set foot in the cabin; and so should have been of additional trouble, instead of being of use. And the other was, that, what with the stewardesses ample proportions, and all her patients, there was no room to be spared, and I was only in the way. And, in fact, the stewardess told me in plain terms, that if I could stay up, I had much better go there and do so, and she would manage Miss Melville.

Soon I was conscious of several breaks in the flow of conversation Mr. Melville was politely using his best efforts to sustain. There was a peculiarly fastidious look about his mouth; and, at last, lo! he rushed from his seat in a manner totally at variance with his usually highly dignified deportment. And, I saw him no more.

In spite of my remaining on deck, I soon began to feel miserably wretched—not sick; oh, no, I was not in the least that; but ill, ill—dismally ill. I sat on the camp-stool so long as I could, till, being in imminent peril of being lurched head foremost on the deck, I slid down and rested my head against the seat; but finding this anything but comfortable, I pulled out a carpet bag I saw under it, and took possession of it as a pillow. And I was soon reduced to that plight, that I didn't seem to care for anything or anybody. They might have taken me up and thrown me overboard, and I should not have resisted. I couldn't. And there I lay shivering and reckless. If I had been trodden under foot by all the passengers, I couldn't have crawled out of the way, or made a sign that I was anything more than a human log. I had a warm wrap somewhere within a few feet of me; but I was reduced to that low ebb, that had I but to stretch out my hand to take it, I could not have made the effort. A few minutes after I perceived some one bending over me, and heard a gentlemanly voice say:

"I am afraid you must be cold; allow me," whilst a warm wrap, of some thick woolly kind, was thrown over me. I tried to raise my head to say, "thank you," but could not.

The stewardess came up about an hour after—I suppose it was in reality—though it seemed ages to me, that I had lain there. And by some means or other—I never understood *how*—I found myself in a berth.

The next morning I crawled on deck with the warm wrap on my arm, in search of the owner.

I was puzzling how to find him out among the numerous gentlemen passengers on board, when some one, almost touching me, but standing with his back to me, spoke. I knew the voice, and restored the owner his property, with thanks.

He looked very much as if he would have liked to say something more than the simple—

"You were very welcome," when I thanked him; but "Selon la coutume de son pays il me salua très gravement," and limited himself to those four words.

As soon as we touched the quay, before any one was allowed to quit the boat, the gendarmes and women searchers descended. Each lady was subjected in turn to a little private investigation in the ladies' cabin. Our boxes being meantime carried off to the "Douane," where we shortly followed them, through narrow, dirty streets, flanked by houses, five or six stories high. We had not much trouble in getting our luggage passed, and sent on to the hotel where we intended staying the night. This was an old antiquated building, entered from the street by a glass door, which opened into a sort of "salon," the public "rendez-vous." We passed through this, and wound our way through divers passages, until we emerged on a square, ornamented by a plaster cast, and a stunted plant, in a painted tub, alternately. On three sides there were doorways innumerable, as they looked to me, and windows opening down to the ground. In the centre of the fourth was an external staircase, up which we mounted, to get to our rooms.

The house was full. The noise, and chatter, and apparent confusion most bewildering.

We dined at the table d'hôte; no novelty for Mr. and

Miss Melville, but a great one for me. I know at last I grew very tired, and longed for it to be over.

Mr. Melville advised me, as it was my first French dinner, to undergo the full penalty; so I submitted to have my plate changed fourteen or fifteen times—for I counted out of curiosity—and I tasted a little of each *something* put before me; though of what half of it consisted I had not the slightest conception, but I liked it all very much, and was highly satisfied with my initiation into French cookery.

After dinner, we went out exploring. First, to the church, or rather the cathedral. It was a large edifice, containing a few good paintings and several altars, above one of which I observed a little miniature vessel suspended. It looked odd, and out of place, but was doubtless the votive offering of some sailor saved from "perils by sea."

The hush and quiet of the place—the solemn gloom at that hour—the earnest devotion of the few worshippers, who were kneeling here and there—were very striking.

Mr. and Miss Melville wished to call on some friends residing in the neighbourhood, so they ordered a cabriolet, which proved to be a nondescript affair, driven by a boy in a blouse. The horse was not nearly so good a one, or as neatly harnessed, as many an English cart horse. The vehicle had decidedly no springs, and the jog-trot pace at which we went, was anything but agreeable.

The quaint costumes, the streets, the houses, and the jargon were all very amusing to me.

Here we met a regular "Bas Briton," with his flowing locks, and broad brimmed beaver, his loose jacket, and ample "bragons bas;" then a paysanne passed, wearing the "bonnet" peculiar to her village or parish, her short petticoat of bright coloured woollen material, and tightly fitting hose, and buckled shoes.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Come forth, come forth, my maidens, 'tis the day of good St. John,
It is the Baptist's morning that breaks the hill upon.
Come forth, come forth, my maidens, the hedgerows all are green,
And the little birds are singing the opening leaves between—
The blessed, blessed morning of John the Baptist's Day."

We reached Arrés the next day about three. Dear, quaint, old Arrés! with its crooked streets and gabled houses. How soon I learnt to love it.

I parted from Mr. and Miss Melville on the quay, where a "sous maîtresse" was waiting to attend me to the school. My boxes were taken possession of by two women, whilst I and Mademoiselle Josephine (it was long before I found out that she had the additional surname of Lefébre) proceeded up a long, stiff street, fearful to look at—though at one time it had been the only entrance to the town. How quadrupeds ever kept a footing there, in either ascending or descending, is a mystery to me; bipeds could as much as ever do so.

At last we emerged through an ancient gate-way, and found ourselves nearly opposite the school. Arrés is built on the summit of a high hill, embowered in trees, whilst here and there a bit of gray embattled wall (for "once on a time" Arrés was strongly fortified) peeps out from among them. We entered a narrow street, with tall, overhanging wooden houses, the first storey of each supported on pillars, either of wood or stone, quaintly carved, and forming a kind of covered side walk; then, turning to the right, entered a "guichet" in one of the large folding doors, before which we stopped, and found ourselves in the court of l' Hôtel du Nord. It was a large building, occupying three sides of a square, of which the large grim looking doors, flanked by a high wall on each side, made the fourth.

We entered a low doorway on one side, and ascended

a flight of winding stone steps, when Mademoiselle Josephine, opening the door of a room, bade me "entrez," and went to inform Mademoiselle de Garaye of my arrival.

A small room, with a window high up, looking out into the court; a piano; a small table, covered with an old tartan shawl as a cover, whereon rested a tête à tête in white and gold china; a stove, and two chairs, were the result of my investigation. The floor was polished, and slippery to a degree.

At length the door is opened, and voilà! Mademoiselle de Garaye. She was a tall, handsome woman, with dark hair and brilliant eyes, white teeth, and a loud, thoroughly French woman's voice, past "sa première jeunesse," but with decided pretensions still to be thought a fine woman.

Her greeting was voluble, but kind.

"Had I dined?" "No!" Thereupon Mademoiselle Josephine was again called upon to give some orders to "Margaridd,"—for the school dinner-hour was long passed.

Be it known that the said Mademoiselle Josephine made great pretension to speak "Ingleesh," having spent some time in Jersey; so that she was considered an invaluable auxiliary on the arrival of a poor, ignorant, bewildered English girl. But I regret to be obliged to confess, that her English puzzled me fully as much as her French.

At last, in utter despair of making me understand them, or they me, "Mees Jackson" was sent for. She proved to be the English governess, "la maîtresse Anglaise," and with her assistance, conversation went on flowingly. And, after I had explained that Mr. and Miss Melville had been prevented from "introducing" me, by the wretched state to which "mal de mer" had reduced the latter, but that they hoped to call the next day, etc., etc., I was conducted to the "Salle à manger," an immense room, which looked like, what I afterwards found it once had been, a refectory. My dinner, which there awaited me, consisted of a little pond of "soupe aux chous," which the English girls were unthankful enough to denominate "cabbage water a la chenille," because a

few graceless caterpillars would now and then float on the surface, some "saucisses," and a plate of fruit.

It was "le St Jean," and a holiday. Should I like to join "les elèves" in "une promenade?"

"Very much."

Was I sure that I was not "trop fatiquée?"

"Very sure."

To enter the "classe," or upper school-room, as I afterwards found, it was necessary to cross the bottom of the "salle à manger." This accounted for the noise I heard behind a door in that direction, and the continual opening and shutting of the said means of egress and ingress, nearly every other minute—followed by the apparition of a girl walking across the room all the time I was alone at my repast—for both "Mees" Jackson and Mademoiselle Josephine had withdrawn to prepare for the walk. The latter, on her return, re-conducted me to the Dortoir, where I had gone for a moment before dinner, and which I had now more leisure to examine. It was a large room, containing eight little, narrow, white-curtained beds, one of which was occupied by "une maîtresse."

On my descending, I found the whole school—that is to say, the "internes," or boarders—consisting of more than fifty girls, of all ages and sizes, mustered in the court. About a dozen were English, the rest French, or rather the greater part "Britonnes." Most of them were plain and hard-featured.

One overlooks irregularity of feature and coarseness of complexion when dressed in "costume;" but when the usual dress, "d'une dame" is assumed, there is nothing to atone for their swart, flattish faces, and insignificant features. Besides the pupils, there were four "maîtresses," three French, and Miss Jackson. I was put to walk with a great girl with a flat face and light hair. I believe she was rather sulky at being my companion, and so she strode along by my side in a grumphy, unsociable manner.

I knew French enough to understand her when she remarked to another girl, "Elle est bien bête!"

"Much obliged!" I thought, "but that remains to be proved."

Arrés is situated in the midst of beautiful scenery.

Once out of the narrow, dirty streets, (and yet they are full of attraction,) and the eye revels in all that is picturesque and beautiful.

We walked that afternoon to a place called "La Fontaine," situated in a deeply wooded dell.

The girls had brought, some their "broderie," some a book, and were soon scattered in little knots all over the place. Here, a few big girls clustered round a favourite "maîtresse," there, some little ones got away and whispered secrets; whilst, further on, might be seen a set of giggling, grinning hoydens. They had each brought a slice of bread and butter, and a handful of fruit—their usual substitute for tea—which was eaten "al fresco." Sorry was I to climb up the steep winding path, and again emerge upon the dusty, bustling highway.

On our return to the school, we had supper, consisting of roast veal, and a large plate of cherries, each; meat and fruit being placed on the table at the same time, flanked by immense "caraffes" of cider and water. The English girls went to Miss Jackson's room to prayers, the French girls adjourned to the school-room.

We all kissed the "maîtressses" before separating, in orthodox style, on both cheeks; and those girls who were "très amies," kissed each other. I felt greatly relieved that I was not "très amie" with any of them, and sincerely hoped never should be, if that was to be the nightly penalty of such an "étreinte cordiale." My bed looked exceedingly comfortable, with its white drapery, though very limited as to proportions. Happily I was not remarkable for breadth. I looked forward to sleep at once, for I was very tired, but it was an illusion on my part, for it was long before I closed my eyes. Mademoiselle Josephine had enveloped her head in one "fichu" of colour and pattern most atrocious, and tied another round her neck. I wondering the while if she suffered from rheumatism, even though the month was June; and now the sounds issuing from her corner of the room attested that she slept. Happy Mademoiselle Josephine! Two English girls, besides myself, and four French ones, completed the number in our room.

They, too, were undoubtedly sound asleep, whilst I lay wider awake than I had been at supper time.

Everything was hushed within the house, not a sound was heard from without. Suddenly, the silence was broken by the ringing of the "angelus" from the neighbouring church of St. Pierre. It sounded quite near, and so I afterwards found the church was. The school had been formerly a convent, and a door in the garden wall (now well secured) had been the means of daily egress for the nuns. A retired narrow street alone separated the house from the church. Very different must that convent garden have been in that olden time. Very different the quiet, meekly-robed figures who then paced the alleys, or glided through the now closed door, from the troop of noisy, boisterous girls that filled it now in recreation hours. In after days I used often to pause at that door, to look above it, at the flying buttresses and quaint carving about St. Pierre, with a feeling that it would be very nice to steal out for a few quiet minutes into that solemn old church.

I, as being one of the big girls, was sometimes privileged to go out into the town with one of the governesses, mostly Miss Jackson, and we almost invariably went into the church, either in coming or going, "just for a few minutes."

The hush, and rest, and solemn quiet of the sanctuary, where one could enter unobserved and unremarked at any time, were very soothing after the noisy, buzzing, throbbing school.

Those "just a few minutes" did much to make me bear in mind that I was not there only to learn what the "Pension" taught.

I suppose it *is* difficult for things to be other than they are; but it does seem hard that our own church on the continent should be often but a shabby room, where "the prayers are said on Sundays."

It was such at Arrés, with an old decrepid clergyman. But I wonder, *must* it be that there should be that air of uncared-for-ness and neglect in little things, even though it be but a poor upper room in an out-of-the-way street?

CHAPTER IX.

"Look not mournfully back into the past, it comes not again; wisely improve the present, it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a manly heart."

LONGFELLOW.

THE ringing of a bell was the first sound that greeted me the next morning, as it had been the last that I had heard the night before; but what a bell! what a contrast! Instead of the solemn, "hushful," soothing, reverential angelus, a noisy, clanging, impatient, uproarious, brazen-toned, and brazen-mannered "revéil" rung; no, not rung, *jerked* by Margaridd, the cook.

Then, Madamoiselle Josephine's shrill voice was heard, driving away sleep from pillows where it might have remained undisturbed by the bell, but quite unable to keep ground against that shrill "Levez-vous, Mademoiselles! vite! vite!"

The accommodations for our ablutions were on an exceedingly limited scale; four "cuvettes," of very diminutive size, standing in what at home I should have called "pie dishes," were to serve the whole party.

There was not the slightest occasion to be alarmed at the prodigality of Mademoiselle Josephine, with regard to the quantity of water she considered requisite for her morning refreshing. This was a great relief, as I looked with dismay at the quantum to be shared by eight. But, unfortunately for my greediness, I was not the only English girl in the room; and, as it was quite a matter of first come first served, I found, when my turn came, that there was none, literally none! of the precious fluid left!

"What am I to do?" I asked, in dismay.

"Run down to the well and get more," was the rejoinder; "some of us have to do it every day."

"But I am not dressed; how can I? Is there no means of getting any brought?"

"I should think not! Justine would be 'en fureur' were you to ask her; besides she is nowhere hereabout."

There was but one alternative, so seizing the *mug* (it was nothing more) I scurried through the long corridor that led to our "Dortoir," down the winding stone stairs (they were all stone from the top to the bottom of the house); and, when at the foot, remembered I did not know where the well was.

I had passed a huge cavernous place, wherein I saw a fire burning on the hearth the evening before; and rightly judging it must be the kitchen, I directed my steps thither. My "Où est le puits, s'il vous plaît?" was evidently "English" to Margaridd, the cook, who turned round from the "four," at which she was standing. However, I repeated the question; and, to render it more impressive, held up the *mug*.

She pointed to a door, "Là Mademoiselle." On issuing therefrom, I found the said well in a little court, and filled my jug.

In my unsophisticated simplicity, I thought she might have had the good manners to have offered to fill it for me. I soon learnt my mistake. If I expected as much much then, I never did again.

She was a character, was Margaridd, with her good-tempered red face, beneath her Briton "bonnet," her short comfortable-looking form, clothed in a striped woollen "jupon," with a dark cloth boddice, over which was worn a "fichu" of cotton, pinned down at the waist, and around her neck a neatly plaited narrow frill; blue worsted stockings and well polished sabots, terminated the costume.

She was the kindest, best hearted creature possible, with much more intelligence in her countenance than her countrywomen of her class in general possess. Her temper was rather uncertain, it is true, and she would send us flying from her domain, when "en mauvaise humeur," without the least hesitation. But I really did not wonder, for she must have been dreadfully "agaçéed" at times; as, in spite of the little tempers, all the girls were so fond of her, that they were everlastingly coaxing her, and coming about her, to wheedle something out of her—some little private commission or other. Justine

was not so trustworthy. We had a private suspicion that she told tales; but Margaridd, everybody felt sure, was as true as steel, and when any of the girls were ailing, it was *almost* as good as being at home to have her to nurse one. But, alas! poor human Margaridd, besides her little tempers, she had one other fault, a very sad one, indeed. "Pauvre Margaridd!"

She had lived with Mademoiselle de Garaye ever since the latter first established a school; and yet, every year, nay, nearly every month, since she first came, was she to be dismissed, all on account of this one deplorable failing; and yet there she was, and there she remained until Mademoiselle Garaye gave up the school; but of this, more at a future time, when, I fear, I shall have to let it all out.

On descending to breakfast, I found this meal consisted of milk, and bread and butter—and plates of fruit, for those who had chosen to commission Margaridd over night to get it for them. A few "sous" bought enough to suffice for two or three; so the custom was to club together. The milk was served in large white tureens, and "ladled" into little handleless white basins.

After breakfast, the English girls again adjourned to Miss Jackson's room for prayers. Then, until the bell rang, we were at liberty to stroll about the garden, or do what we liked. At nine, we all assembled in the class-rooms; these were three large apartments. Mademoiselle de Garaye presided over the first, assisted by a "Maîtresse," Mademoiselle Rivière by name. How I disliked her. I tried hard to conquer the aversion with which she had inspired me, from almost the first moment I saw her, but in vain; tall, thin, sallow-faced, with a stereotyped *smirk*, (it was no smile,) silent-footed, she glided about the house like—the sneak she was—sinuous as her name, both in principle and practice, she wriggled herself into all the weak places in Mademoiselle de Garaye's composition; flattering her, as every French woman, but above all a handsome one, on the verge of becoming *passée*, is ever won by; and was, consequently, for the time being, high in power. I used to wonder how Mademoiselle de Garaye could be so blinded, for there was much that was very estimable in her. We all

loved her; but what was better, she won, and retained our esteem and respect, as well as affection. The fact was, there was nothing mean or *little* about her. She was a French woman, more, "Une Parisienne," with the consequent love of flattery, and being complimented; but she was a decidedly clever woman, the most widely informed, and largest minded French woman I ever knew, kind-hearted, and generous to a fault. I soon became much attached to her; no one who came in daily contact with her could help doing so. In contrast to Mademoiselle Rivière, came the next "sous Maîtresse." Mademoiselle Aigredou, a little fat, irritable, waspish body, with "un nez trousé," and more high-mindedness and principle in her little finger than Mademoiselle Rivière possessed in her whole body; and more real kind-heartedness in her sharp, curt tone and manner, than in all the other's smooth, oily plausibility. And, yet, scarcely anybody cared for her. Only a very few really liked her; but *they* did so heartily. And I know, in spite of her *snarl*, that she thoroughly appreciated it; for beneath all that crustiness, beat a warm, true, affectionate heart.

Mademoiselle Josephine completed the list of resident governesses, of whom the principal thing I can say is, that she had flaming red hair, and an infinitesimal waist. Masters for "nearly everything" attended daily; most of them the college professors. There was only one lady who gave lessons in the school, and she came as an assistant to Mademoiselle de Garaye, who, a short time before I went to Arrés, had been ill for a long period. Mademoiselle Couësnon (that was her name) used to come for three hours daily. The "sous Maîtresses" hated her. Mademoiselle de Garaye was afraid of her; and in the bottom hated her, in her own way, too.

I said just now that Mademoiselle de Garaye was the best informed French woman I ever knew, and so she was, for I never *knew* Mademoiselle Couësnon; I never fathomed her, never got below the surface; but enough floated thereupon, *rose*, from time to time, to make me feel assured that could I but gauge her attainments, I should find Mademoiselle de Garaye was as nothing compared with her. I loved Mademoiselle de Garaye.

Yea, more, *esteemed* her; but I placed Mademoiselle Conësnon on a pedestal, and looking up to her, felt that "looking up" it must always be. I could never attain to her altitude.

She was thoroughly *un-French*—quiet in manner, tone, look, movement, dress, everything. Steeped, as I know she was, in every kind of information, she never paraded it. Her system and manner of instruction were admirable; but more admirable still, was the simple, dignified unconsciousness that accompanied every word and action. She was an orphan, living in a retired, quiet manner, with an aunt. I should think her age could not have been, at the very most, five and thirty; but, long before that period, she had gained "deplomatus" of every kind. Her dress and appearance were thoroughly characteristic; her robe always composed of some one, quiet, delicate tint, invariably fitting her very good figure, as only a Frenchwoman's dress *can* fit. She was simplicity—*natural, unstudied*, simplicity itself. And yet, that atmosphere of dignity, which we *feel* surrounds some few we meet with, was so strongly felt in her, that instinctively "one drew oneself up" in her presence; aye, Mademoiselle de Garaye, even.

She was little, at least they said she was "petite." I never measured her by inches, but to me she seemed "grande." I never saw such eyes as hers. In the first place, they were of a very peculiar colour—clear, very clear—with that remarkably limpid look some few eyes have, as if they floated in liquid. They always looked *moist*, and were fringed by long dark lashes. I never saw such *tender* eyes, such pitying ones, nor yet such withering ones. Their clear glance annihilated one who deserved it. And, yet, I never saw her angry or impatient—indignant and grieved often. She must have known great sorrow, to be so gentle and forbearing. I have heard it whispered that she had—and she must have done so. To be so tender—and with that charity which is above all other virtues, so imbued as she was—her's must have been a Fire-Baptism.

CHAPTER X.

"Our to-days and yesterdays,
Are the blocks with which we build;
Build to-day, then, strong and sure,
With a firm and ample base."

LONGFELLOW.

"Der Abend krönt den Tag, und das ende das werk."

THAT large first "classe" room, with its deep window at each end, and the wide fire-place on one side, where, in winter, burnt a fire of wood and "mottes" (Nurse Truan was right—there were no grates or coal fires "in that there place")—how plainly do I see it still! The long rows of desks, the long rows of faces, the long "Dictées" given at the former, the long, long time before either of the latter was more than "a face" to me! How freshly it all comes back again!

It seemed so strange to me to have to go to school again. However, fortunately for my pride, there were several still older and bigger girls there.

It was a pleasant life that old school life at Arrés. Everything new and strange, and *fresh* to the new-comer; everything so thoroughly un-English. And then, to me, there was the feeling of being *anchored* for the next year or two, with a definite aim and purpose, in being there, and *doing* there. I was no longer a waif, drifting hither and thither. I had been told, "Now, there is your work, go and do it." And I had determined to do so with my whole heart, God helping me. How, then, could I be mopish and miserable? Ah! those dear old Arrés days were some of the happiest I ever spent. And then, again, home news was cheering. Alice seemed to have roused herself, and had learnt trouble's lesson as it was meant she should. All the dormant nobleness of her character woke to life; all the latent energy that had long lain hidden under the crust of "self" developed itself; and peevish irritability and indolence, caused

primarily by ill health, seemed to disappear. And yet all did not go smoothly with her. At first, she and old nurse used to be too much like flint and steel coming in contact; *sparks* were emitted, and then a flame blazed up. Nurse had been so long accustomed to pet her, and treat her as an ailing child, that she could not understand that Alice now filled my place, and was getting a reasonable woman. And then, for the first time in her life, Alice was being initiated into that most blighting, cankering, of all cares, "*Money ones.*" There is no dead weight, no mill-stone about the neck like that. It paralyses every nerve, and hangs, like the sword of Damocles, perilously over the head.

My father had never known what it was to have a *certain* income, and that limited; so, without exactly intending it, he became dishonest, inasmuch as when the year came round, somehow no amount of straining could make the two ends of his income dove-tail in as they should. But all this was doing Alice good; was making a woman of her.

Dear Alice! what a comfort her letters were to me. I used to go up in the old "Grenier" to be out of the way, and quiet; and read and re-read them, till I knew their contents by heart.

The said Grenier was a queer place. A large, low-roofed, brick-floored room, right under the tiles, where boxes, and dresses, &c., were consigned. We were not allowed to keep a single thing in the "Dortoirs," so that a trip to the attic regions in the coldest weather was a thing of constant occurrence. To grope up the cold stone stairs in the early morning, somewhere about six a.m., without a light, was anything but exhilirating to the system.

In the garden there was a "pavillon," one of those substantial buildings, as unlike a "summer-house" as possible—all high peaked roof and little towers—most probably erected at the same time as the house, and in the same style of architecture in miniature. It was a favourite haunt of all the girls. I had a colony of pet lizards that lived in the walls there, pretty little green things! how they glittered in the sun.

There was a piano in this said pavilion; and often

there would be a regular squabble as to who should get there to practise. Very pleasant it was in the hot summer time to escape from the broiling, buzzing "classe," out into that cool, quiet retreat, for an hour's practising. Here it was, that, in fine weather, the singing lessons were given. What a scene was that! They sang in class, thirty girls or more, thirty *French* girls! with that peculiar, indescribable tone, French girls have. The Professor, Signor Morōsus, was a Spaniard by extraction. The *white* passion I have seen him in was something frightful; something that can only be hinted at with an expressive shrug; a real French shrug.

At the time I arrived, they were very busy getting up a piece to sing at the "Distribution;" which was a shortly coming event, all were looking forward to with great anxiety.

How fearful was this said "chason." The refrain was "jour de bonheur," (the last syllable of "bonheur" very lengthened), so, "jour de bon-h-e-u-r" was heard incessantly out of study hours; in the garden, in the "pavillon," up in the "Grenier," in every tone and key, till I quite longed for the "jour de bonheur" to be well over.

These lessons were "surveilléed" by a Mademoiselle de Merveille, who filled the same post at all the professors' lessons. She had formerly been "sous Maîtresse," but was now a kind of housekeeper; going to market, and scolding and worrying the tradespeople out of doors, and "les domestiques" in. And she was truly "Une Merveille." A more marvellous body I never saw.

Can I describe her, I wonder? for instance, just as she sat behind the glass door of the pavilion on that hot July afternoon, of which I am about to more particularly write. I am afraid I shall not do her anything like justice, and yet I should like to attempt the sketch.

These said singing lessons were given immediately after dinner. A very inconvenient hour; most especially so for Mademoiselle de Merveille, for she then became so very somnolent as to cause the "surveillance" to be but a very nominal affair, I am sorry to say.

She generally held her knitting, in the shape of an ample blue angola stocking, for her own winter wear, in

her hand for a few minutes. Then it fell on her lap; that was the first stage—then her head would seem to be greatly inclined to follow the knitting, down, down, down, lower—yet lower would it bow; till, being on the point of losing her balance, and falling forward with her nose against the glass, she would recover herself, and looking full at some girl who was behaving in a most exemplary manner as a pattern to all the class, would suddenly reprimand her—for nothing whatever—just to shew us that Mademoiselle de Merveille saw all that was going on, and a little more; and that, if we thought she was napping, we were quite mistaken. Then, very peculiar bass notes would be heard, heightening the effect of the melodious "jour de bonheur," and then, there was no disguising the fact—Mademoiselle de Merveille slept! Still, she had a knack of waking up in a marvellously unexpected way, and fixing her eye full on some one who happened, by the merest chance in the world, of course, to be smiling, or *something* improper, in such an awfully startling way, that no one ever dared to go to any lengths, however apparently safe they might have been supposed to be, if the loudness of the deep notes from behind the door was any criterion; but it was firmly believed by the little ones, that she saw and heard *everything*, in spite of closed eyes, and presumed closed ears.

I, myself, have had great misgivings as to the genuineness of those slumbers at all times, though the snores were decidedly too good to be anything but the real thing, as a general rule.

Her figure was ample, and so was her face. The former had apparently never been spoilt by "Un corset;" the latter was always set off to advantage by the adornment of an ordinary "bonnet," by no chance ever too clean. I used to fancy she must get some one to give this article of head gear a wear or two before she put it on, as I never remember seeing her with *quite* a clean one. She was exceedingly sparing in the way of drapery. A single skirted, very scanty robe of some dingy hue, being, to all appearance, her only garment. A large shawl, summer and winter, completed her toilette.

Poor Mademoiselle de Merveille! Unfortunately for her, and unfortuately for those who happened to be

fastidious, she was of an affectionate disposition, and having been once a "Maîtresse" in the school, and not considered even then in the light of an ordinary housekeeper, she was at all times admitted to the table at which Mademoiselle de Garaye presided; but it was rather hard to have to kiss her of an evening when that ceremony was performed with the other "Maîtresses," more especially as she had a decided predilection for garlic. Poor Mademoiselle de Merveille!

I had taken my first singing lesson; and after it was over had rushed away, half stunned, to Miss Jackson's room, to ask her if, in case I could finish what I had to do in the school-room speedily, that afternoon, she could manage to have an hour's quiet drawing with me.

She and I had become rather fast friends, considering the short time since we first met; but, if one meets with any one the least congenial, under such circumstances, a friendship is much more rapidly cemented than it probably would be at another time.

At first she took pity on me, as "a new girl," rather shy, and not at home there yet, and so she kindly invited me to her room, out of compassion; and then our intimacy increased at the drawing lessons: she being very fond of drawing, and so was I. And so it went on.

I had arranged the drawing intention with her, and was hastening back to the "classe," when, on passing the little "Salle," the scene of my first introduction to Mademoiselle de Garaye, I happened to glance in, and saw a gentleman and two ladies, one elderly, the other apparently quite young. The gentleman turned round as my footfall sounded on the stone stair, and I recognised my fellow passenger, and the owner of the warm wrap bestowed upon me in my misery. At the same moment Mademoiselle de Garaye passed into the room, and I continued on my way to the school-room.

In about a quarter of an hour Mademoiselle de Garaye entered the room, followed by the youngest of the ladies I had seen.

I had heard almost immediately on my arrival at Arrés, that another "anglaise" was shortly expected, but I had not given it an after thought. This, then, was the lady in question.

Mabel Rylstone was about my own age, but appeared years younger. She was a fragile-looking creature; and at first, glanced round the room with almost an appealing look on all the strange, new faces. She stayed but a short time after the formal introduction to her future companions (not many of them very companionable I fear, though), and then, after saying something in a low tone to Mademoiselle de Garaye, left the room. After I had done drawing, I ran up to the "Grenier" for something I wanted, and the first thing I saw was Miss Rylstone kneeling before one of her boxes. She had apparently some trouble in unlocking it, and looked flushed and hot. Seeing she seemed to be perplexed, I advanced towards her, saying—

"Can I help you?"

"Thank you," she replied, with a pleasant sunny smile.

"I suppose I must not expect the servants to do much for me here, and I am afraid I am very helpless."

"No, indeed!" I laughingly answered; "one must be very self-reliant here."

Having her now within ken of my visual organs, I could better judge what she was like *externally*.

I was more than ever struck by the fragility of her look. She was about the middle height, but seemed taller from the extreme slightness and girlishness of her figure. She possessed a quantity of fair hair, and clear gray eyes; still with her extremely youthful look, there was an air of quiet dignity that quite prevented any idea of childishness being associated with her.

I helped her out of her difficulty, and left her still in the "Grenier." On my way down I met Miss Jackson.

"Well?" was her query.

"Well!" I answered, "they must not be allowed to send her down to the pump in the mornings."

"No fear of that," was her rejoinder; "she is to have a room to herself, and will only take some of the lessons just as an amusement, when she feels up to occupation!"

"Oh," I interjectioned, and passed on to the "classe."

It happened that Mademoiselle de Rivière was not in the room when Mademoiselle de Garaye had introduced Miss Rylstone, as it was the afternoon on which Made-

moiselle Couësnon attended, and the presence of the former was not then necessary, so that she had not seen Miss Rylston. Study was over when I entered the room, and Mademoiselle Revière was taking the opportunity to satisfy her curiosity by cross-questioning Clarine Féchamp as to what the new comer was like.

"Dis donc, Clarine est elle bien?"

"Trés bien, Mademoiselle, très gentille."

"Bien Mise?" continued Mademoiselle.

"Mais non," was the reply, "très simplement, vous savez Mademoiselle que les Anglaises s'habillent toujours affreusement, et surtout se font laides á faire peur pour voyager!"

"C'est vrai!" was unanimously chorused by all the French who were within hearing, whilst the English girls only *looked* their reply to the calumny (?), seeming to think silent contempt the best reply to the insult.

I sat down to my desk, paying but little heed to what was passing around me, and thinking still less how the arrival thus discussed would affect me and my future; how should I.

CHAPTER XI.

"Oh, that thy creed were sound!"

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

'One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,
One God, and Father of all."

"How shall I name thee, Light of the wide West,
Or heinous error seat."

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

TRINITY SUNDAY had fallen on the Sunday before my arrival. This was rather a disappointment to me, as, being the day of the "Fête Dieu," I was anxious to have witnessed it. However, the ceremony is repeated on the following Sunday; and on that succeeding my arrival, we all turned out to be present at it.

In the morning and afternoon, the English girls attended the two services of our own church, in charge of Miss Jackson.

There was a rival school in the town, which mustered a strong force of English pupils, who sat on the opposite side, in the room where our English service was held, and a shocking amount of bad feeling existed between the two establishments.

Sometimes, on coming out after the service, a collision would occur, such as a stupid girl from either side getting into the opposite ranks.

Their uniform consisted of black beaver bonnets, and dark claret coloured merino dresses, in winter, and green trimmings in summer. Ours (much the prettiest) dark purple in winter, and "rose tendre" in summer. The entrance to the room where the English service was held was up a flight of narrow stone steps, so there could be no marching out in orderly rows, as would have been all right and proper, and the thing; but the girls had to file down singly, and wait at the bottom to fall into rank, and then it sometimes happened that the black beaver and dark purple would get mixed up together, till finally

Miss Jackson would face about to the right, with her battalion, and Miss Smith, the "maîtresse Anglaise" on the rival side, would right about march to the left!

As soon as we came in from the afternoon service on this first Sunday after Trinity, we joined forces with the French girls, who had been to mass, and marched off.

Most of the English, and all the French girls wore white dresses, with simple black scarves, and the regulation "capote" in "rose tendre." We encountered the *greens* "en route," and amicable glances were exchanged. We decidedly carried the day as regarded la toilette, which being a French woman's primary consideration, was, of course, a great point.

Our first rendezvous was on the "Place," opposite the church St. Sauveur. There we patiently waited to see the procession issue. The greens were drawn up also on the Place, in full view. The stern stalwart figure of one of France's greatest heroes looked down from its pedestal, in the centre of the square, on all that vast assembly (for the place was crowded.) How strange and novel it all was to me! It was a beautiful day; and when the procession came forth from beneath the broad western door, the banners and richly ornamented vestments of the priests glittered in the bright sunlight, till the eye could scarcely bear it.

A great many girls, in pure white, principally the schools of the sisterhoods, each line marshalled by "une sœur," an equal number of little boys in blue, a great number of priests and banner-bearers, came first. Then "the Host," borne under a canopy, a lovely little boy, dressed to represent an angel, following. He was the only brother of Rosalie Le Briton, one of our "externes." It was with much more of pity than of admiration that I looked at him, poor little fellow, his part seemed such a complete mockery, if not actually profane.

As the procession wound slowly through the square in sight of the people, they all fell on their knees. The Briton is the most truly devotional of Roman Catholics. Every act of devotion comes from his heart. Even "as a little child" does he honour every ceremony enjoined by his church, and he is very tenacious of seeing such treated with irreverence or disrespect.

Some Englishmen near us continued standing, so did we; but, when every head was uncovered but theirs, they kept on their hats; and not only so, but looked rudely about them, and laughed, and talked loudly. Instinctively we had bent our heads, and of course remained quite still as the "Host" past. But the behaviour of my countrymen (I blushed to own them such) had drawn the attention of a great many to us, as we unfortunately happened to be near them; and very dark, and angry looks, and some murmurs ensued.

Miss Jackson whispered hurriedly, "I think we had better kneel."

I had felt in a false position all the time, as one must feel in like circumstances—one is conscious of having no business there.

Immediately we knelt, a "paysanne," who had been kneeling before me, with no amicable look from out the corner of her eye, said, making room for me to the front—

"Tenez, Mademoiselle," and smiled.

The grand old time darkened houses, solemn. and sombre—the square, with its national hero—the kneeling crowd so still, so reverent—the bright sun glinting down upon their quaint costumes—the women with bowed heads—the men holding their graceful broad brimmed beavers in their hands, their long flowing locks falling on their shoulders—and the gorgeous procession moving slowly past: all formed a striking scene. And, yet, somehow to my Anglo-Catholicism, it was but that, nothing more.

On our return to the "Pension" we found the entrance hidden beneath a large *sheet;* and all along the streets nearly every one of the quaint old windows was decorated by having a piece of bright carpeting, or some gay drapery hung out. The streets were strewn with flowers and leaves; and, in some places, where the supply seemed to have fallen short, newly mown grass was spread thickly. "Reposoirs" were erected at almost every available place. One very handsome one, placed just outside the school, mainly ornamented with the offerings of our Roman Catholic girls. I looked in vain for one of these temporary altars, where there was nothing that could offend

good taste, but they were all more or less alike; tawdry smartness, and every thing to produce a showy effect seemed the only aim. But I have learnt to view altars of this kind with a much more lenient eye, since I found that the vulgar ornaments so offensive to the eye, particularly to be observed in small village churches, was nearly always the heart-offering of the poor, often the very poor, to "*our* church," as they felt it to be. Ah! there lies the difference. The churches there belong to the people; they feel they do, one and all; they can enter them when they like, and kneel *where* they like. And the offerings they may make, no matter how trifling, if merely a bit of tinsel or a flower to decorate a "reposoir," or assist the *getting* up of a procession, is accepted and used in the service of the church. They feel that "they have done what they could," and it was not despised or thrown aside.

If things were a little more like this (God forbid that we should ever copy them *too* closely) with us in England, is it not probable that we might then complain less, and have less reason to complain, of the lack of interest shewn by the poor in the church? Do we try to make them *feel* interest? May we not, perhaps, take "too much upon ourselves?"

CHAPTER XII.

"If thou wouldst read a lesson that will keep
Thy heart from fainting, and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the woods and hills."

LONGFELLOW.

"There stood the broad wheeled wains, and the antique ploughs, and the harrows."

EVANGELINE.

THE following Thursday (Thursdays were always holidays there) I was busy drawing; for Mademoiselle de Garaye finding this was my favourite "accomplishment," and about the best thing I did, had asked me to try to complete a large showy subject I had commenced on my coming to Arrés, in time for the "Distribution," now very near.

I was all alone, most of the girls having gone out to visit their friends, when the door was opened, and Mabel Rylstone came in.

"My aunt and cousin are just come for me to go up the river with them," she said, "and I want you, too, to join us; will you?" she added, as I hesitated what to say. "It is only ourselves and the Maurices, people I know you will like; do come."

It was hard to resist that kind, winning tone, even had I felt inclined, which I did not; so I gladly acceded.

"If Mademoiselle de Garaye permits me," I said.

"Oh, no fear," she replied, "my aunt has already asked her; and, of course, she said 'yes, if you liked.'"

"If I liked!" as if there could be any choice between sailing up the river and sitting alone in that dull room.

"I must introduce you," she said; "may I?" and without waiting for an assent, off she was, crying back—

"I may bring them here, mayn't I?"

Now, everybody who draws large subjects in chalk, will agree with me, I'm sure, that it is very dirty work; and, somehow, when I first began to draw in that style,

I used to get myself into an awful mess. Not only my hands and arms, but my face also would be adorned with striking looking spots of black smut. Perhaps an impudent fly would settle on my nose. Naturally, my hand would instinctively find its way to that organ, and as naturally leave a mark behind. Or, putting up my hand to push back my hair, I should adorn my brow with it. Lo! sure as I drew, so sure was I to find myself an *object* afterwards.

Now, when one has been sitting for an hour or more drawing in chalk, with a large apron on, and remembers having just stuck one's hair back behind one's ears—it was bothering so, and all in the way on such a hot afternoon, and you are pop on the moment to be introduced to two strangers—one's movement is instantly to set oneself a bit to rights. So up went my smutty hands to pull my hair into place; and, of course, in "smoothing" it down, I could not well avoid touching my cheeks.

When I went up to put on my bonnet, I felt convinced that none but English people "les Anglais" could have kept such decorous, grave faces on seeing my ornamented one, as Mrs. Rylstone and her son did. The former, a kind, good-natured looking person (Scotch by birth), went through the ceremony of an introduction first; then cousin Walter and Miss Heaton bowed ceremoniously to each other, in a way I am sure the old chronicler would have thought highly creditable to our nationality.

And then Mabel burst out laughing—at what, I could not conceive; and said—

"Oh! what a"—then stopping short.

"We had better put on our bonnets, quickly. Come, Miss Heaton."

No sooner were we outside the door than she recommenced laughing, and in answer to my reiterated "What *are* you laughing about?" only continued to drag me up stairs to my "Dortoir." Then, pulling me up short before the mirror, that made us look *crooked* at the best of times, she said, "Look!" And look I did; and looked more like a chimney sweep about the forehead and eyes than anything else. My mouth had apparently "clean escaped" at first, till at last I had embellished my upper lip with a moustache. What an object I looked! No

wonder, when I came down, Walter Rylstone should bow as if he thought I was some strange lady just walked in, and pretended he had not been introduced, and did not know me; and when Mabel said, "What are we waiting for?" reply—looking pefectly grave about the mouth, but very comical around the eyes—

"Miss Heaton."

Mrs. Rylstone was the wife of a younger brother of Mabel's father, colonel Rylstone, so she and Walter were first cousins. Mabel had not long come home from India, on the death of her father, the only parent she had ever known. Her mother had died at such an early age that she had no recollection of her. Married, when quite a girl to colonel Rylstone, she had gone out with him to India immediately after; and, after giving birth to several children—who all died in babyhood, except Mabel—she had been laid beside them beneath the spreading trees in that quiet graveyard where they had all been borne before her.

After keeping Mabel, the "only one," with him much longer than she should have stayed there, colonel Rylstone was at last obliged to part with her, and send her home to England.

His brother, the clergyman, had been dead some time, and it was to his widow that he confided his darling. She was a kind, but judicious person, with a large share of good, sound, Scotch sense; and having no daughter of her own, Mabel soon became as her own child to her.

Good, plain, common sense is a thing much more rarely met with than people generally imagine, and Mrs. Edward Rylstone had this one talent, and *traded with it*, much for Mabel's good; who, with highly susceptible and likely to be led-away feelings, might have turned out very differently in other hands than her aunt's. She remained with her until she had finished her education, or rather until her father thought she ought to have done so, and wrote for her to return to him.

In vain did his sister-in-law beg that she might be left a little longer, and say that in England at the present day a girl's education is not considered finished until much later than it was at one period the fashion for a girl to leave school.

No, he *must* have her. Some friends of his were about to sail for India, and the opportunity for her to come out with them was much too good to be lost. But he did not have her with him long, the climate had done its work; and soon he was lying beside his wife and little ones, and Mabel was an orphan. Back to her aunt-mother she came, but the short time she had been in India had told upon her constitution, never robust, and soon symptoms appeared of the fatal disease that she most probably inherited from her mother.

It had been an arranged plan long ago, that so soon as Walter Rylstone came of age, he was to go out to his uncle, and that Mrs. Rylstone should take up her residence with some relations in the north of Scotland.

Every arrangement to this effect had been made, the date of Walter Rylstone's sailing for India was fixed, and preparations for his departure begun, when the letter came announcing his uncle's death, and that Mabel would, ere they received the announcement, have sailed on her return home to England. Everything was undecided and unsettled until her return, and then it was found that his uncle's death need not interfere with Walter Rylstone's future.

He would, therefore, go out as was first intended. But Mabel? It was perfectly out of the question to think of her going to the north of Scotland, even could such an arrangement have been made, which was doubtful. What was to be done? Mrs. Rylstone had set her heart on settling down among her own people, in her "ain countree." Still, she would have sacrificed much for Mabel. But Mabel was too unselfish to hear of that. Doctors had strongly recommended her residing abroad for a time.

"Let me go somewhere in France, aunt Jeanette," she said. "I should like it, and it may do me good." It seemed cruel to leave her alone, a poor lonely invalid among strangers. But yet what could be done?

Finally, it was arranged that inquiries as to a desirable locality should be set on foot. Their friends, the Maurices, were remembered to be at Arrés, were written to, and in answer sent such enticing accounts of the neighbourhood and salubrity of the place, that it was

decided it should be tried. They were obliged to come to some decision, as Walter Rylstone had to leave shortly.

So Mrs. Rylstone and Mabel started for Arrés to try it for three months. At the expiration of that time, she seemed wonderfully improved; it decidedly agreed with her, though it was not so far south as they could have wished. It had been a great sacrifice on Mrs. Rylstone's part, to pass this last three months of her son's remaining in England away from him, instead of being with him, and helping in all his preparations. But Mabel was very near to her too. Everything seemed satisfactory; the Maurices appeared to be pleasant friends, and inclined to be very kind to Mabel; and when it came to be decided where she was to be located, had recommended her going as "Dame en chambre" with Mademoiselle de Garaye.

The arrangement was made. Her cousin had come over to see her before he sailed for India, and to escort his mother to Scotland.

What a pleasant afternoon was that Thursday one! The river is very beautiful above Arrés; the scenery on both sides exquisite: now trees sweep down to the river's brim, now a château peers from among masses of foliage, now a little village is seen, perched on a steep point, now a picturesque church bursts in view. We floated over large beds of the yellow and white water lily in full flower; now swept under an old bridge, and anon came to one of the numerous "enclos," which are the only things that mar that beautiful stream. These were invariably opened by women. It seemed so odd at first; but I soon became accustomed to see them do more masculine work than that—ploughing, tilling, reaping, cider making, all seemed left to the females. I used often to wonder what was the men's occupation, or what could be left for them to do. We landed several times to inspect the numerous little churches we saw; and, at last, halted at a farm-house, where we procured some "lait doux." It appeared to contain but one large room, fitted up as "kitchen, chamber, and a'." The beds were ranged round the sides of the apartment, much in the same manner as on board a steamer, only they were closed in with sliding wooden doors—and when shut, looked like presses.

It was much too close and oppressive to stay in the house, so we sat down outside, and watched a number of people taking flax out of the water, where it had been lying some time to soak, kept down by large pieces of wood. After they had waded into the stream to take it out, it was arranged in little hollow "shoks" along the banks. A little further on were several groups of washerwomen, kneeling close to the water's brink, in the funny little wooden box, shaped much like a coal-skuttle, they use to keep them dry. Their cheerful voices, and the noise of the flat wooden "battoir" they beat the clothes with, all adding to the din and clatter of the scene. Ah! but that day up the river at Arrés was a happy, happy tide!

CHAPTER XIII.

"Every white will have its blacke,
And every sweete its sowre,
Thus founde the ladye Christabelle
In an untimely houre."

IMAGINE that "grenier" full of girls, giving out "Le Linge." No! you cannot imagine it! it is impossible!

Thirty girls, or more, each one beside a pile of soiled linen, on a broiling August day. Two red-faced, sunburnt "blanchisseuses" counting over the things as they are delivered; whilst each girl compared her naming with the list. Ah! those lists! they were at first tremendous puzzles! Here would be a poor English girl, with a face of hopeless despair, seated on a box, or on the floor, with a slip of paper and a portable inkstand, her face of utter hopelessness would lead you to suppose that it must be made out in Greek. "Oh! however am I to do it! Oh! do somebody help me!" How do you call this in French; how do you write it? "Trois pair de bas; six mouchoirs." "Oh! bother the lists! Here goes! I shan't make it out! If I lose my things I can't help it."

"You'd better!" some one would answer. "If you don't, old Merveille will give it you in grand style when the linen comes home."

Then somebody else would be found to have more than the permitted number of articles. And there would be a scene; and sundry sarcastic inuendos would follow on the part of the offender, always an English girl—the French never transgressed in that line—on the difference between what an English person and a French one thought requisite for that virtue which is said to be next to godliness.

I had taken a great deal of trouble to render my injunctions to the blanchisseuse quite intelligible, which I gave as regarded a particular white muslin dress I

wanted for the "Distribution." My mind was perfectly at ease on the matter; gloves and ribbons prepared, and the dress beautifully "got up" was, I thought, to be brought the morning of the important day. She could not well bring it before. And, I, not having any convenient place where I could deposit it, and its numerous flounces, cared not to have it all crushed and tumbled, and spoilt by hanging in the "grenier."

At last the important day is come. "Le jour de bonheur" is arrived. For two days previously, drawings, and broderie, and tapestrie, and all the shew productions of the "Année Scolaire" of the pupils had been conveyed to the "Mairie," and hung all about the hall to the best advantage; for it was there that this great event came off. Platforms were erected, hundreds of invitations issued, and preparations carried on on a grand scale.

Proceedings commenced at two; but from nine a.m. till close upon the hour for forming the procession to walk thither, there was nothing but confusion and din.

The "seconde classe" had been converted into a dressing-room for the "coiffing" operations to be carried on in.

Two operators were there toiling hard to make us all astonished at our own appearance. How I pitied those who had been performed upon the first! When I was released from the coiffeur's clutches, behold me with my hair sticking out in bandeaux, short, and puffy, and formal, as French taste could desire. They had been smoothed, or rather *deluged* with some sticky stuff, a thousand times more detestable than "bandoline;" and, lo! when, about ten minutes after, I ventured to gently put my hand to the fabric, I found it all as stiff as if I had something cut out of mill-board stuck on each side of my head. Not a hair *could* get deranged; it was like a petrified wig one sees sometimes as a curiosity, stuck on my poor cranium.

I heard the announcement of the "blanchisseuse" with great satisfaction; and with head very erect in the consciousness of being "parfaitement coiffée," I walked into the room where the linen was laid out.

"Où, est ma robe?" I asked.

"Là, Mademoiselle!"

There! that my dress! a heap of flabby, unstarched,

yellow looking muslin! Imagine my state of mind! my utter despair! What *could* it mean?

The stupid woman had quite misunderstood my orders. I had told her to *wash* my dress, but had not said a word about starching and ironing it. Sending a dress to be washed, in English means having it sent home ready to put on again. Not so in French! So she had taken me "au pied de la lettre," and had indeed *washed* it, but that was all. Oh, dear! oh, dear! was ever such a stupid woman! was ever such "un malheur!" No other dress would do, for the uniform must be white.

As I was standing ruefully, wrathfully contemplating "ma belle robe," Miss Jackson chanced to come in.

I told her all my trouble; and she kindly helped me out of my slough of despond, by offering me a dress of her own. We were, fortunately for me, much of a size.

How I blest the friends who had invited her out to a "grande soirée" but a few evenings before. Thanks to that, the dress was all ready to wear, only a little rumpled by the one wear it had had.

Marie, the washerwoman, was really sorry at the "contre temps," and offered to "repasser" it. But, dear me, my troubles were not nearly over. This said dress was "décoltée," and that was an outrage to all propriety!

Crossing the corridor from my room to Miss Jackson's with the unhappy "décoltment" on, I happened to come in contact with Mademoiselle Revière. She stopped. So did I, of course.

She contemplated me as if she could not believe her own eyes.

At last, in a shocked voice, she said, with a face expressing the greatest astonishment and horror:—

"Mademoiselle Heaton, j'espère que vous n'avez pas l'intention d'aller comme cela!"

I could not resist the opportunity of showing her how outrageously improperly the English were brought up. So, with a very innocent face, I said—

"Pourquoi pas, Mademoiselle."

A shrug, and "comme les Anglaises!"

"Plait-il, Mademoiselle?" I asked.

"Et vous avez vraiment l'idée d'aller avec cette robe."

"Mais oui, Mademoiselle!"

"Vous n'irez, pas."

"Pardon, Mademoiselle."

"Non, vous n'irez pas, je le repète."

"Pourquoi, Mademoiselle?" I asked, spreading out "la belle robe," with an air of self-complacency; "elle est trés belle de grace dites moi pourquoi cette charmante robe vous déplait tiens!" and I pointed to the low bodice, and next to no sleeves. "It is in the last London fashion, Mademoiselle."

"She shrugged her shoulders. "Je n'y vois rien de merveilleux;" and, with a grimace and shudder of outraged modesty, she pointed to my bare neck.

"C'est indécent, Mademoiselle! Je suis désolée, Mademoiselle!" I said; "but, nevertheless, I must wear it."

She eyed me wrathfully.

"Come with me to Mademoiselle de Garaye," she said at last.

"Volontiers, Mademoiselle," I replied; "but would you have the goodness to wait just one moment, whilst I finish my toilette. I am 'en route' to fetch a jacket, a thick muslin jacket! *very* thick!" I added, emphatically, "that I am going to wear."

I tried to look dignifiedly astonished when she glared on me, and growled—

"Pourquoi ne l'avez vous pas dit au commencement."

I answered that had I known she took an interest in my dress; if she had only asked me what I intended to wear, I would have told her with the greatest pleasure in the world."

She turned on her heel, so did I. I felt *rather* ashamed of myself, I must confess; but her tone and look were so supremely insolent, that I could not resist the temptation. Besides, I was further incited to it by having overheard some of her heartless unkindness to a poor English girl not long before. It was a case in which I could not, of course, interfere, but my blood boiled; more especially as the object of her unjustifiable attack was what the French call "bien bête et bien bornée," and could not, had she dared, defend herself. And when Mademoiselle wound up with a flourish of writhing sarcasm at "tous les Anglais en general," I inwardly vowed to show her, at the earliest opportunity, that we

were not to be bullied in any such way. She was a complete despot; and hated the English in a way that would have been amusing under other circumstances; but to us it was downright tyranny—as, of course, in her position as "Maîtresse," the girls could not "fight it out" with her. But she was one of those cowards who, on seeing *one* daring enough to stand out against her, would on that account let the others alone.

"Now," thought I, as I turned away, "you won't make poor Peggy Sawden's face burn again in a hurry; at least, you shan't, if I can help it. We are avowedly open enemies now, and I am much the happier that you know in what estimation I hold you. I have plucked up the daring to take up your gage, and I will go on with the joust, *if needs be.*"

The hall was a large room, fitted up at the end with a raised stage, for the chair of state of Mademoiselle de Garaye, and seats for the "professeurs and les maîtresses." Several gentlemen were there as well, some of them the parents of pupils, and three or four priests. A table laden with prizes was placed in the centre. It was a pretty sight. The walls were hung with wreaths, drawings, maps, tapesserie, &c.

Mademoiselle de Garaye looked so handsome, and excited, and "*parfaitment mise;*" the maîtresses all so smiling and pleasant; parents must have thought it quite a privilege to place their children under the care of such nice amiable-looking people! The professors all smirks and light kid gloves.

And then, row after row of girls, "externes" and "internes." Altogether, more than a hundred and thirty; all in white: each smoothly arranged head as like its neighbour as possible, (for that matter, inside as well as outside), all, "si bien gantées" all so proper and orderly.

One great additional interest to the day's proceedings was the *crowning* three pupils, who had carried off prizes in every division and branch of study. In short, gone so high, they could go no higher. The pretty wreaths were placed conspicuously in front of Mademoiselle de Garaye, and many an eye was turned on them, wondering whether it might not be their turn next.

Proceedings commenced by the "Sous-Préfet" (I

remember he had *such* wristbands!) reading a very eloquent little speech, in which Mademoiselle de Garaye was nothing short of the regenerator of the feminine population of Arrés.

And then Mademoiselle de Garaye herself rose and read a neat address, in which we were all "mes enfants" and "mes chères enfants," and there was a great display of pocket handkerchiefs on the benches, and her voice trembled, and her lip quivered, and she was greatly *emotioned*, all very prettily and naturally, but above all *becomingly*. However I really believe she did feel it, for the girls could not have become so attached to her as they all were, without there being attachment on her side also. And then there were one or two more oratorial displays from the assemblers on the dais, and at last real proceedings began.

Those girls, whose parents were present. had their prizes put into their father's hand by Mademoiselle de Garaye, and received it from him.

Those who had not parents there (by far the greater number) received them from the hand of their priest. The English girls had theirs given to them by Mademoiselle de Garaye.

It was altogether an exceedingly pretty sight. The prizes were so numerous, that at last some of the good girls sat with a pile of gilded volumes on their lap, reaching almost to their chins, and then some one more "gauche" than the rest, would every now and then let a book come down with a *plop* on the head of a girl lower down, and then on and on, from row to row, till it came bang on to the floor. And though Mademoiselle Revière never looked at the offenders, I felt perfectly sure she knew well enough who it was, and did not at all envy them what I felt pretty sure their "gaucherie" would get them, when they were safely back again in the schoolroom.

The crowning was very pretty; only it was a pity the cleverest girl of all should have been so fat. It quite marred the sentiment of the proceeding. She ought to have been like the usher, that

> "Much study had made him very lean,
> And pale, and leadened eyed!"

But instead, she was unnecessarily fat and *heavy* looking. Several girls, most of them English ones, had, like myself, arrived at the school not long before the vacation, and, of course, could not compete for prizes; and as we were all arranged by sizes, (they were mostly rather big girls,) the tall ones at the very top, dwindling down "small by degrees and beautifully less," till it came to the least; we had the pleasure of being perched in the most conspicuous places, and what was the worst, *staying* there, never descending once for a single prize. It was dreadfully humiliating; but then we could not help it!

Mademoiselle de Garaye had said she should explain it. But in the press of business we were forgotten; and, to our lasting disgrace, were never known but as the row of big stupid girls who did not win a single prize. It was certainly very distressing! Even the grand drawing I had so unsparingly exerted myself to achieve, was not known as the production of "our row!"

At last, the awarding the prizes came to an end. The musical girls grouped (as French girls alone could group) round the piano, at which Signor Morōsus presided in grand state, and the "jour de bonheur" was performed as the finale, little Miss Johnson, the prima donna of the school, heading the foremost group. She was decidedly short, and had a peculiar way of rising on her *tiptoes* when she sang. As the note ascended, so did she, up, up, up, till one felt impelled to rush forward and hold her down. As the last notes of the song went up the scale, higher, higher, still more high! so did she rise in proportion, physically and vocally, till at the final b-o-n-h-e-u-r! one almost expected to see her mount up and disappear from sight.

At last it was over, and then row after row of bonnetless girls filed back to the "Pension," blushing with honours under the shelter of their parasols (all but our row.) A soirée concluded the day. The "année scolaire" was at an end, and the holidays begun.

Miss Jackson, Mademoiselle de Merveille, some half dozen English girls, and the servants, were, at the end of the week, the only occupants of l'Hôtel du Côtes du Nord.

Although Mabel Rylstone was nominally domiciled at

the "Pension," most of her time was still spent with her aunt. And now the holidays had released me from the school-room, I found myself a good deal there as well. Mrs. Rylstone had found out that she and my mother had been at school together, and this was the ostensible cause of her taking a good deal of notice of me, and inviting me out.

But, with all due credit to her kindness in taking pity on me, I cannot quite put away the belief that it was a little interested. She was glad to find a friend for Mabel in the school; and having found out that I was likely to be the only one there who would or could stand in that connection to her, she wanted to see and judge for herself what I was like. All honour to her for it—she was quite right.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A sacred burden is the life ye bear.
Look on it! Lift it, bear it solemnly;
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly!
Fail not for sorrow."

THE day was come when Mabel Rylstone was to be left alone. Mrs. Rylstone and her son must go. I was up in Miss Jackson's room, which overlooked the "cour," and saw mother and son pass out at the door of the house.

There was a little rustle, a swift speeding of light feet down the stone stairs, and Mabel's slight figure emerged in sight. They turned on hearing footsteps; and running up to her aunt, she kissed her passionately over and over. She hung about her as if the full consciousness of her utter loneliness had only then come home to her. "Auntie, auntie, I *can't* let you go!"

"Dearest Mabel, it is as hard for me as it is for you;" and so indeed it seemed. Poor Mrs. Rylstone was quite overcome, and looked at her son with an appealing glance.

He came to Mabel's side. I had always admired the tender manliness of Walter Rylstone's manner to his mother and cousin, and used to think it little wonder they were both so proudly fond of him. And now no gentle woman's touch could have been more tender than his, as he loosened Mabel's hold on his mother. Softly, very softly, but *very* firmly and decidedly, he unclasped her hands, whispering low, kind words the while. Miss Jackson and I had drawn back from the window as far as we could, but we could not very well help either hearing or seeing what passed.

"Dear, dear Mabel, it *must* be, you know, it *must* be."

"Only for a short time, my darling," said her aunt. "You know I have promised to come over in the spring. You must write often, darling, *very* often."

There was that in Walter Rylstone that *made* one feel confidence in him. A firm, *very* quiet, very, very quiet, but thoroughly decided manner. Gentle, and heart-courteous, but thoroughly determined. His simple hand-touch told. There was that indescribable *something* in it that made one look up confidingly at him, and let one's hand *rest* in his. You felt he was worthy to be trusted; and his quiet, gentle, tenderly, *very* tenderly uttered, "Dear Mabel, it *must* be so," did more than an hour's persuasive eloquence.

She let them take her back into the house. I opened the door of the room we were in, intending to go to her; but Miss Jackson held me back.

"I promised Mrs. Rylstone to be with her," I said.

"Better leave her alone a little time," she answered. "Go to her by and bye."

I supposed she knew best, and sat down; but my heart bled for the poor lonely girl.

When I did go to her, I found her lying on her bed, utterly prostrated. After a deal of difficulty, I got her some tea. She had a little private stock of her own, but had not thought of providing herself with a tea-pot. I made my way down to the kitchen, and found Margaridd apparently as busy as ever; but this day, probably because she had really less than usual to do, decidedly cross.

She was very fond of Mabel, so I began by trying the touchingly pathetic, in order to coax from her a non-descript affair I had happened to see one day, that I thought might serve for the nonce.

She was like an old flint! I could have shaken her! At last I out boldly with the request.

"She did not know anything about it!" Had never seen it! (Fie! Margaridd, to fib like that!) I described it minutely! Mentioned when, and where, and how I had seen it. All in vain! If there was such a thing in the house—which she did not believe—it was in an "armoire," of which Mademoiselle de Merveille had the key, and she was gone out for the day; gone to—. It sounded like somebody I would rather not suppose Margaridd knew anything about—"for aught she knew or cared." Margarida dearly loved Mademoiselle de Merveille! I turned my back upon her in extreme disgust.

Five minutes later Margaridd was after me with the coveted article in her hand. Ten minutes after, she was up again with a kettle of boiling water (what a queer affair, by the bye, that kettle was). Half an hour after, Margaridd was in the best of tempers; petting, praising, and pitying Mabel, turn by turn.

I stayed with her all the rest of the afternoon and evening.

It was—I so well remember!—the 21st of September, St. Matthew's day. And one of those still, calm evenings, when every sound, even the falling of a leaf is heard.

We listened to the call to vespers at St. Pierre, and could even hear the words of the evening office. We sat without speaking a word till it was all over. Then she said, "Would you be so kind, Millie, as to read our hymn for to-day?" and she held out a volume of "The Christian Year," which she had evidently taken up to try to read, but could not. She repeated the words "Hope to meet above," after me.

"Hope to meet on earth," I said, cheerfully.

"I don't know," she said, half to herself, as it were, more than to me.

"God willing, dear Mabel; surely you *hope* for that?"

"I don't know," was again the reply, in the same tone. Then, after a minute—"Hope! yes I do! But I don't *think* we shall."

I did not know what to say. I did not know her well enough then to understand how deeply rooted in her mind was the belief that she should never see them again. I fancied it was merely temporary depression, for there was something particularly bright and *hopeful* about her in general.

I did not leave her though, till I left her sleeping; and then it was I first discovered how very deeply-chiselled were the lines of suffering on that young face.

CHAPTER XV.

"Many centuries have been numbered
Since in death the Lady slumbered,
By the convent's sculptured portal,
Mingling with the common dust.
But the good deeds through all ages
Living in historic pages,
Brighter grow, and gleam immortal,
Unconsumed by moth or rust."

"We must contrive an excursion to-day, somewhere, Miss Jackson. Where?"

"Do you think her up to it?"

"She *must* be roused," I replied.

"Another day like yesterday, and she will be ill."

Miss Jackson and I were standing at the "Salle à Manger" window deliberating, breakfast being just over, when Mademoiselle de Merveille entered the room. To our great satisfaction she did not, now discipline was somewhat relaxed, honour us with her presence at the morning meal. We by no means regretted the circumstance.

"Ask her," I suggested.

"Oh! there were dozens of interesting places around Arrés we could visit."

We were perfectly aware of the fact, thanked her all the same; but it was *one* place we wanted.

"Eh, bien! what say you of Beaumanoir?"

"The very place!" we both exclaimed. "Now, then, for the donkeys!"

Margaridd was called upon to hasten out to old Mère La Motte, who, by the bye, was a personage of no small importance in the establishment. She was the ally of Margaridd, diving into the mysteries of "Casseroles" and "Poêles," alias pots and pans, on extra busy days; and going on "commissions" whenever they were wanted in

a hurry. Her daughter, a buxom "paysanne," with a bright, sunny face, very like one of her own peaches, was the "bien-venu" of the school On Thursdays—just as dinner was nearly over on these days—she used to walk in at the lower end of the room, and station herself in the deep window embrasure with, in summer, a large flat basket filled with fruit, slung round her neck by a broad leather band, and nicely balanced by resting against her waist in front: in winter, a large tray of "patisserie" and other "friandise" was substituted. This was the only time the girls could have the pleasure of bargaining for themselves. All purchases of any kind having to be made by the governesses when they happened to go into the town, or by Justine "la bonne," who daily made her appearance on the threshold of the "classe" at four precisely, and asked, "Avez vous des commissions, Mesdemoiselles?" Her hands in the pockets of her large, clean, white apron, with a snowy "bonnet" and neatly plaited frill, and her gold cross at her throat, looking so trim and spruce for her afternoon's "course en ville." Letters were then given to be posted (Mademoiselle de Garaye generally giving a wary glance at the addresses before they left the room). Justine walked down each row of desks to collect them, and any list of commissions that had been made out all ready. So Rose La Motte's presence was hailed with delight; the traffic went on briskly, and the weekly allowance paid on Thursdays to those whose prudent parents had objected to giving it all in a lump, soon found its way to Rose's capacious pocket.

The moment grace was said, and Mademoiselle de Garaye had left the room, all crowded round the deep window recess where Rose had ensconsed herself; "Maîtresses" and all, they were just as bad as the girls.

And as Rose carried on a brisk trade in fruit and good things with the establishment, so did her mother during the summer months—when excursions, of which we often had one, were in season—drive a flourishing business in the donkey line; equally lucrative, I have no doubt, as that of her daughter.

The result of Margaridd's mission was the entrée into the court, about an hour later, of some half dozen donkeys smartly caparisoned.

Owing partly to the situation of Arrés, donkeys are in great request there. Its position precluding much "promenade en voiture," so "promenade à la donkey" is substituted. Groups of them are to be seen almost everywhere. Waiting on the quay to carry lazy people up the hill, on their arrival from the steamboat. On the "Place," yea! clustered round the statue of the stern warrior hero there; or winding up and down the narrow paths that play at hide and seek among the trees that circle in the "Fontaine."

One or two of those brought for our accommodation had English saddles, as a sort of superior thing. The rest were furnished with the comfortable substitute of the country. More like a low backed, low sided, well cushioned easy chair than any thing else.

I chose one of the latter; and it had evidently been, in days of old, a gorgeous affair—all crimson velvet and stamped leather. Mabel had selected another such, and we jogged out of the "cour" side by side; but she was very soon left in the rear, my animal being decidedly of an ambitious "go-a-head" turn of mind, and *would* lead the way, pertinaciously keeping on before all the others. All my efforts to persuade him to be sociable were unavailing. Keep along side of the others! not he, indeed! So at last, finding all my efforts to make him do so useless, I resignedly gave in, and allowed him to have it all his own way. As regarded directing him, I might as well let him choose for himself, for he doubtless knew where we were going quite as well as I did —and better—for I knew nothing about it, and most likely he had been to Beaumanoir dozens of times. Besides, unless you give in entirely to your beast, a Brittany saddle is not a comfortable seat. It obliges one to sit quite sideways, both feet resting on a little ledge placed for them; and this position, and also the arms of the seat, prevent that attention to the head of the animal you are riding, and to the road before you, generally considered essential to an equestrian's well-being. One side

of the route is all that one can see comfortably; and as long as the views are one-sided and *left*-sided, it does very well. So on we jogged. How pleasant it was! Luxuriance on every side! The very corn fields planted with rows and groups of apple trees, so that one seemed to be journeying on through continuous orchards. Heavily laden branches hung over the road with a most enticing "Come and gather me" air.

For some time our route lay along the river, winding in and out among that lavish luxuriance of greenery like a silver ribbon. Huge heaps of apples and shocks of corn stood side by side in what was half orchard, half harvest field. We saw them carting away the former for cider-making, in wholesale fashion, just as we should see potatoes dealt with in England.

Groups of men and women, in costumes that would have made most charming "tableaux vivants," without the accessories of foliage, and winding river, and fruit-laden boughs, would occasionally vary the scene. Or, perhaps, a family party would be seen threshing out some of the new corn before their dwelling, itself looking not at all better than a respectable, well to do English barn.

In one place we came upon a group clustered around a "Trouveur." We all drew up to listen and watch. Even my self-willed animal being willing to give in so far, as to stand a-head a few minutes. Wrinkled faces, toil-worn old women, men who had probably reaped the successive crops of fifty years or more from those same fields, young men and maidens, children who seemed made for nothing but to tumble among the sheaves and munch apples; all gathered round in groupings that would have charmed an artist.

These were the kaleidescope views that enchanted us all the length of the way to Beaumanoir. On our arrival there we procured "galettes," and fresh fruit, and "petit lait," and took our "collation" under the trees. Afterwards we wandered among the ruins, trying to picture what the place must have been like long ago. Beaumanoir had been an edifice of comparatively modern date, and a very beautiful specimen of architectural magnificence it must have been. Unfortunately all the ruins

around Arrés are ruined ruins. It is rare to find a good specimen of past splendour; still, ruinous and desolate as it then was, there was yet enough remaining whereby to trace much of its former beauty.

Here, a graceful, slender column, ivy wreathed, and weather-stained, rose aloft unsupported and unsupporting. There, the remains of an exquisite window still retained enough of its beautiful tracery to make one mourn its destruction.

Of course there is a tradition connected with Beaumanoir; and this it is.

The Lord of Beaumanoir and his wife had but one child, and this one treasure they loved beyond what was good for it and them. And so, God took it back again, in this wise. When about twelve or fourteen years of age, he was allowed one day to follow the wolf-hunt, and on his return, riding by his father's side, within sight of his fond, proud mother, who stood at a window, watching their approach, his horse stumbled—fell—dashed his rider against the parapet—and he never breathed again. One evening, some months after, when the almost heart-broken father was sitting alone, gloomily brooding over his bereavement, his wife entered the room, looking almost as crushed as her husband; and going up to him, said, laying her hand upon his shoulder—

"Mon Mari."

He heeded her not at first; but, with a trembling voice and quivering lip, she continued—

"The good God has taken back 'notre petit,' our little one, our only one; we are no longer parents. Shall we fill his place with little ones who have no parents?"

At first her proposal was merely limited to a few poor orphans; but, somehow, the one or two rooms appropriated to them soon became too crowded, and other apartments were devoted to the purpose. And then a gallery, and then a wing of that large building was the orphans' home, until at last their time, and attention, and money, and home, were entirely given up to their use.

The father did not very long survive his child; but the mother lived to a very old age, devoting herself to those she had taken home to her mother's heart.

It is not difficult to fill in the outline, after she was gone. And then came the revolution, and Beaumanoir became the property of some farmer; and, at last, it came to what we saw it. Mabel and I sat under the chestnut trees and tried to picture the resigned, patient mother, moving from place to place, loving and cherishing each little one for the sake of "notre petit."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Up! do thy own allotted task!
Lift up the drooping head!
'That they go onward!' were the words
The God of Israel said!

"Thy path is straight before thee laid,
Up! up! and do thy best!
'Tis all thy God requires of thee,
Leave unto Him the rest!"

OCTOBER the 10th did not come a bit too soon. Holiday time was very pleasant, doubtless; but still no regular occupations made the days drag towards the end of the vacation. We had so few books, and "broderie," and chit chat, with a little desultory practising and drawing, and a confabulation "for the sake of speaking French," as was constantly affirmed, with Margaridd, whenever we were too lazy to do anything else, was not the most satisfactory mode of passing the time we had come there to devote to our improvement.

So that I for one was heartily glad to hail Mademoiselle de Garaye's return as "avant coureur" of the entire staff of personages requisite to carry out the coming "Année Scolaire," wherein I hoped to achieve so much, fit myself to be a first rate governess, and perform prodigies.

Some new faces appeared among us, principally French. Only two more English girls were added to our number. These were the daughters of a colonel in the Indian army, good girls in the main, but woefully ignorant and "bornées." Such girls as they were, physically—enormous! Nearly, if not quite six feet high.

One morning, soon after school duties had recommenced, it was whispered that the "inspectors" were coming that day. How anybody knew it, was a mystery—for these said officials were supposed to come quite

unawares—but still the whisper went round, and certain symptoms during the course of the day made suspicion almost certainly. For instance, on going up to the "Dortoir at midi," I was startled, electrified, at the sight of a snow-white toilette cover where I had hitherto seen nothing but a bare unpainted board, and Margaridd and Justine were both of them unusually busy, and consequently uncommonly cross. And Mademoiselle de Merveille at dinner, had on a clean cap—at least her cleanest—and her shawl pinned neatly. And it was particularly impressed upon everybody, "externes!" and all, that we were to be "très soignées." Oh! yes, decidedly there was truth in the rumour. The inspectors were coming, and come they did. The two grenadier new English girls occupied desks near the door, in a very prominent place on entering the room. And, to their horror, they were told the inspectors always pounced upon the first row inside the door, and the biggest girls, and questioned them and cross-questioned them on everything imaginable and unimaginable, leaving them at last half dead with fright. Their consternation was ludicrous; and when the door was opened, and a tall man in spectacles, followed by a little fierce-looking fat man, and a highly bemoustached "monsieur" walked solemnly in; and, after the rustle caused by all the girls rising "en masse" to salute them had subsided, stalked right up to their desks, I thought they would both have bolted for the door.

However, they turned out to be very harmless specimens of the inspector species, limiting their awful investigations to merely inquiring what were the books used, the hours of study, and daily routine; all principally addressed to Mademoiselle de Garaye and Mademoiselle Rivière, who was her "aid-de-camp" on the occasion. And "oui monsieured," and wriggled, and writhed most bewitchingly. She kept her face in such a constant pucker, that her mean little nose got twisted and wrinkled up, till it looked for all the world like nothing but a button.

Then there was another rise "en masse," and deep curtsey all round, and they vanished through the great folding doors. Mademoiselle de Merville conducted

them upstairs and downstairs, and all about; and, of course, they were perfectly satisfied—how shouldn't they be, when everything had been done to make them so?

One morning, as soon as all the girls were come back, and we had all settled in, we were told to prepare to accompany Mademoiselle de Garaye to hear a mass at St. Pierre, for the health and prosperity of the school during the coming "Année Scolaire." She did not wish to oblige the English to attend; but she would rather we did so. And I do not think there was one there who felt that there could be any reason for not going. But I wonder what would be thought of an English school setting aside a day for the same purpose; and yet would it not be better if they did? I am quite sure that we were none of us the worse; nay, surely we were all the better for attending mass that morning at St. Pierre. Not one girl was missing, "externes" as well as "pensionaires," all went as a matter of course duty.

And now, for the next three months, one day was much like another.

> "To-morrow marvellous like to yesterday,
> Brother and brother.'

Regular school routine went on. The machine had been set in motion, and it kept agoing with great regularity and *monotony*.

I used to keep close to the school-room all day, with just a snatch at Mabel during recreation hours. It used to refresh me to run up and have a peep at her, and then away down to work again.

My general time for a minute or two's stay with her was at five, when the afternoon's study was over, and the huge pieces of bread and butter were distributed as "collation."

It was a scene of dire confusion and din in all the classes, but most particularly so in the "première division," where the best example ought to have been set; but, I declare, the big girls at that time made more noise than all the little one's put together. It was a regular squabble as to who should get at the hearth first, and there set up the substantial slice to grill: the clasp knife,

the invariable pocket companion of every French girl serving as a toasting fork.

I used to run away from the din with my quontam, and go and eat it quietly by Mabel's peaceful fire. I was always fond of making myself comfortable; and, after the hard, stiff desk-form all day, it was deliciously enjoyable to lean back at mine ease in one of Mabel's cosy little chairs her aunt had provided her with; and, like the sailor's wife, "munch, munch, munch." But all pleasures come to an end, and so would mine. The bell would clang, and down I must go to "l'etude," till eight o'clock and supper, so called, but in reality it was dinner; hot meat roasted or stewed being regularly served, excepting on "maigre" days. Generally we had veal nearly all the year round. I used to wonder where all the calves came from.

CHAPTER XVII.

"How can I keep my Christmas fast
In its due festive shew?
A stranger in a foreign land."

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

"Soon will a thousand bells ring out,
A thousand roofs the choral shout
Prolong—where king with shepherd meet,
His manger with their gifts to greet—
What shall we do?
How shall we serve Him, thou and I?"

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

SINCE the intensely severe weather had set in, a cold had been running riot all through the establishment, and to it were attributed Mabel's pale looks and feebleness. I used to wish I could believe it.

She had not been to church for many weeks; but her heart was set on going there on Christmas day, and receiving the holy communion. We had both looked forward to it for a long time; and clung to the thought, as they alone, who have been situated as we were, can fully understand.

I remembered getting out of bed, as usual, when the bell rung, on the morning of Christmas eve. And then, suddenly, I remembered nothing more—until I found myself unaccountably back there again—and felt stunned and bewildered, as if I had been knocked into it. Everything seemed queer and confused; and, on opening my eyes, to my great astonishment there was a droll figure in an exceedingly dirty "camisole" and a crimson and yellow "foularde" on the head, bending over me with an anxious look, and, what seemed to me for the moment, like dozens of people about my bed. But these, when I recovered my single sight, and no longer saw things doubled and multiplied by a high number, reduced themselves to Mademoiselle de Merveille, the owner of

the "camisole" and horrid head-gear, Miss Jackson, and Margaridd.

"What's the matter?" was my very natural inquiry.

But I was told to "*Chut*," as only French people can make that very curious noise, quite peculiar to themselves, and to "lie still," and not talk.

I somehow felt very inclined to do as I was told, and obeyed the imperative orders. I had had a fainting fit of rather long duration. When a girl, I had been subject to them, particularly in the winter; and so I suppose the extreme cold that morning, *or something*, had been the cause of my suddenly lurching head foremost on the floor, as I was afterwards told I had done, and nearly frightening Mademoiselle Josephine and the girls out of their wits, and lying there stiff and still till they picked me up. And, finding all the contents of the Lilliputian jugs insufficient to bring me round (it could not have been a very deep swoon if it had), they had rushed simultaneously for Mademoiselle de Merveille, Miss Jackson, and Margaridd. They *would* keep me in bed all day, where I chafed in vain. The only result was to keep me warm without a fire. I am afraid I was decidedly "mechante."

I called Mademoiselle de Merveille an old goose, and she went and asked Miss Jackson what it meant; but as she had not caught the exact pronunciation, Miss Jackson could not interpret it for her, and so she was none the wiser.

But I was really very vexed; for here was an end of my going to the "Masse de Minuit," and I had so set my heart upon it. Besides, it really did seem absurd to give me "Tisaune" and "Bain de pieds" for a little faintness.

Mabel wanted to come and sit with me; but I sent her word that if she did, I would not speak one syllable to her, and she knew I should be ugly tempered enough to keep my word. But, if she had come, Mademoiselle de Merveille, or Margaridd, would have sent her to the right about. A cold fireless, yawning "dortoir" was no place for her, where temper alone kept me warm, well covered up in bed as I was. So I had plenty of time to "think it over" and recover myself. And well I did,

or else I had better have remained there all the next day too.

I was allowed to get up the following morning, and what was better, permitted to go to church. Mabel and I received the holy Sacrament, with Miss Jackson and one or two other English girls. We forgot we were not home in dear old England. We forgot we were assembled in a little, mean, shabby building, kneeling behind a row of rustle-bottomed chairs. What mattered it then?

It was a bitterly cold day. And though Mabel was well wrapped up, she was chilled and numb, when we got back; wan and colourless.

As I was getting her up to her room, she whispered, "I am so glad, so thankful, Millie!" My heart was very full, full of many things—of home, and long ago. Somehow, all the way back from church—although I felt so thankful, so very thankful, all the Christmas days I could remember came welling up one after the other, until my heart felt very aching and very sore.

I could only press Mabel's arm, and say, chokingly, "So am I."

There was a grand musical service at St. Sauveur in the afternoon, and all the girls were to go. Mabel had tried hard to make me join them, and I had at first felt sorely tempted; but at last I decided I would stay at home with her.

Besides, in spite of the attack of the preceding day, being "nothing but a little faintness," I was feeling far from quite well. In short, as it afterwards proved, the reigning cold had taken *grip* of me.

When I came, after everybody was gone, and we were left quite quiet and alone, to look for the wherewithal to make up as respectable a Christmas fire as I could, I found Justine had forgotten to replenish the stock usually placed in a little arched recess that had probably at one time held a Madonna, just outside Mabel's room in the corridor—so I made my way down to the "cave," where the enormous piles of logs and "mottes" were kept, and brought up a famous supply. Mabel meanwhile lying on her bed, and watching proceedings, looking very white, but with her own cheery smile. "Now,

then," she said, as soon as I had piled up the fuel, and set it in a fair way to roar away merrily, "come and sit here, Millie."

She made room for me to place myself on the bed beside her; and there we sat all through the afternoon, and talked of home, and all there.

There was no sound in the house. Everybody seemed to be gone out but ourselves. Mabel had a piano in her room; and, after a while, she asked me to go and play some of our favourite chants. I think she saw that tears were in my eyes, and wanted to drive them, and the sad thoughts that brought them there, away.

Suddenly we heard the heavy "cour" door clang, and on looking out, I saw the "Facteur." I don't know what made me do it, but I opened our door and listened. I could not *hear* if there were any letters for us; but open the door I did, and stood there expectant, with it ajar.

I heard him pull the inner bell impatiently—a sign that there was no one to be seen below. Mademoiselle de Merveille had been left in charge; but she, doubtless, had gone to her room for meditation.

I then heard him say impatiently—

"Personne à la maison!"

I was down the stairs in a twinkling. Took the letters from his hand; and was making my way to Mademoiselle de Merveille's room with them, when my eye fell on one of them addressed to Mademoiselle de Garaye, deeply borded with black, and having the post mark of S——. That was the post town near which Mrs Rylstone resided.

An uncomfortable presentiment seized me. It was not Mrs. Rylstone's handwriting; and, besides, she was not in mourning. But, still, Mademoiselle de Garaye knew no one in Scotland but her. What could it mean?

I rapped at Mademoiselle de Merveille's door, at which she shortly appeared with a large "foularde" on her head, and her shawl awry, plainly evincing of what kind her meditations had been.

I rarely loitered at her door when necessitated to present myself at it, for she had an extra-national antipathy

to ventilation; and to open her window was the exception, not the rule.

But, to-day, seeing I lingered unusually, she asked:

"Est ce qu'il y en a pour vous?"

I had been so startled on seeing the letter from Scotland, that I had entirely forgotton how anxiously I was on the look out for one from home, and knew nothing of the addresses except that one.

Now, seeing all the letters, before they were distributed, was a point on which I knew Mademoiselle de Garaye much insisted. I was, therefore, rather surprised when my own (for there was one for me) was put into my hand with—

"La voilà chou, chou!"

Whether her kind old heart could not resist my anxious face (though she mistook the cause), or whether Mademoiselle de Garaye had given permission to let us have our letters, if any came for us, as it was "Noël," I know not. I had it, and that was all I cared for. My joy was so great on receiving my letter—a joint production from Alice and Maggie, with a long postscript from papa—to which I had been looking forward for some time; *hoping*, but not quite sure it would come on Christmas day: for somehow, when Alice's and Maggie's letters were to have the addition of a few lines from papa, they generally missed a post or two waiting for him to find the time, which, alas! poor dear papa, always seemed so woefully put to to find. So that, in my joy at getting it, I for the moment quite forgot that Mabel had looked forward to getting one as well as myself, and that there was none for her. *She* had felt sure of having one from her aunt. *I* had only hoped. What a sore disappointment for her! I opened my fat, thickly packed envelope, so full of closely written sheets of next to tissue paper as I walked back to her room. But when the recollection of her flashed upon me, I stopped short in the middle of the corridor.

No good though, she must know. Her hand was stretched out eagerly as I came in. It seemed so hard not to be able to make over to her one of those crammed sheets that filled my hands.

"No letter!" she exclaimed, as I shook my head. "No letter! She must be ill."

I felt so sick at heart. What *could* that black bordered letter from Scotland mean!

"Perhaps they missed the post," I said, trying to treat it lightly. "You know it so often happens; it may come to-morrow."

She was now lying back on the bed, trying to keep back the tears that were ready to gush forth. But *she* was not strong though her will was; so it was useless to try. Up went her hands, and hot tears *would* come thick and fast through her thin fingers.

How I longed for Mademoiselle de Garaye's return! I felt quite dizzy with dread.

I could not read my letter then. It would have burnt my fingers. I slid it into my pocket, and attempted to comfort her.

She tried to look cheerful, and smiled—such a poor make-believe smile though, in spite of her best efforts—and said she knew "she was very foolish and childish." But it was quite a relief to hear the clatter and rush up the stone steps that announced their return from church. Yes! "a relief," though I dreaded it. It would be a relief either way to know what that letter meant. In a few minutes some one tapped at the door, and Miss Jackson answered our "entrez."

She had come to ask how we had got on, she said; but she seemed scared and agitated.

"It is so cold," she said; so cold!" and she stooped down to warm her hands; turning away from Mabel, and keeping her face from her.

She made me a sign towards the door, which I could not misunderstand. It meant "go out!" I went.

On the landing was Mademoiselle de Garaye, who beckoned to me to follow her out of ear-shot. And, then, putting a letter into my hand, she said—

"Madame Rylstone est morte!" Poor little one, poor little one, what must be done?

I was stunned! "Morte," I repeated, "morte!"

A severe cold, a few days of violent inflammation, and she was dead.

Poor Mabel! poor Mabel!

Mademoiselle de Garaye was very agitated (she had got to love Mabel—who there had not?) and for the moment I felt inclined to offer to take the terrible task of telling Mabel, on myself. But it was her place to do so, and so she felt. She made towards her own room, signing me to follow, and took off her walking things.

All tender feeling, kind-hearted woman as she that moment was, she was a *French* woman still though; and it exasperated me—*aggravated* me, in short—to see her stand before the glass and fastidiously adjust the coquettish little affair of lace and ribbon she wore as a head dress. Stepping back a pace or two to see the full effect, and re-adjusting the large pins that fastened it to her hair again and again. Talking all the while most feelingly of how she had better break the sad tidings to Mabel.

"When *will* you have done!" I inwardly ejaculated. "*Do* finish staring in the glass."

She finished at last; took the letter in her hand, and went towards Mabel's room. I followed her to the door, and there cowering, stayed. She entered. Miss Jackson was still there. A few instants after I heard a low wail from Mabel, and the next moment I was at her side.

She stretched out her arms, and flinging them around my neck, leant her head against me with a low, heart-breaking wail of sorrow; an agonizing, stricken cry that went to our hearts more than the most violent outburst of grief could have done. We could scarcely bear it.

I held her close, close, close; and softly stroked her hair. At last, the arms that had clasped me so tightly relaxed a little, and sobs and then tears came freely. I was very thankful to see them. Mademoiselle de Garaye left the room and quickly returned with something in a glass. I held it to her lips, saying, "Drink, dear Mabel." She obeyed like a little child. It was an opiate; and I still held her in my arms till she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Hush! still! be silent!—
Thinkest thou that this is sent for nought?
Must not the clay be moulded, formed,
And into fashion wrought?

"Hush! still! be silent! There is one
Who watcheth o'er the strife—
One who himself has walked alone
The thorny road of life."

THE morning awakening was what I most dreaded. That hour of bitterness, when sorrow—which has been knocked on the head and stunned overnight—recovers from the blow, and knaws with redoubled venom. That terrible hour of struggle and temptation, when the daily life around begins to throb and palpitate with renewed energy and activity, and seems to bid us be up and doing, and not lie grovelling and useless there!

The awakening to the consciousness of some great grief—at first, vaguely, dimly outlined—then, at last, filled in and completed in all its minutest details, is about the most terrible of all sorrow phases. And now, when I yearned to be with Mabel in this hour, I found myself tied to my bed and helpless. I had passed a restless, weary night, tossing and tumbling about in my narrow bed, to the imminent peril of tossing myself out of it—envying Mademoiselle Josephine her snores.

And when I did at last fall into a heavy, stupor of a a dose, it was to awake with my limbs aching, and my head heavy and dizzy. The rampant cold cried, "Ah! ah!" over me, "there you are!" And there I was.

They removed me as quickly as possible into a small adjoining room, where I could be quiet, and not disturb any one.

Mademoiselle de Garaye came to see me; and to my first inquiry about Mabel, replied that she still slept. Miss Jackson promised to be at hand as soon as she awoke, and to remain with her through the day.

When she came again to see me, a few hours later, she told me that Mabel awoke with a start and a shiver. And, on seeing Miss Jackson by her bedside, held out her hand to her, and asked if she might see the letter.

Miss Jackson hurried to Mademoiselle to get it from Mademoiselle de Garaye, and Mabel read it through without a tear.

This unnatural calmness rather frightened Miss Jackson. She then asked for me; and on being told how the case was, said, "I must go and nurse her," and at once prepared to get up.

"She is dressing now," Miss Jackson added; "and will be here presently."

There was a fire lit in my room, so there was no fear for her in coming; and all thought it better to let her be with me.

She entered with her soft, gentle movement; and, coming up to me, stooped down and kissed me. Margaridd was bathing my head at the time; and she turned to her and asked if she might take her place. I could scarcely lift my heavy lids, and could not distinguish her plainly, when I tried to look at her.

I whispered, "Mabel?" holding out my hand.

She took it, and then let me hold one hand, whilst she bathed my head with the other.

Miss Jackson's tact shewed her she would do better to leave us alone, so she slipped away in the rear of Margaridd.

I never felt more thankful for anything in my life than I did for that bad cold. I quite blessed my aches and pains.

Nursing me was about the best thing Mabel could do. It took her thoughts away from all self, and occupied her time and attention. I kept her fully employed—now in want of "Tisanne," now asking to have my head bathed, I did not leave her a moment's leisure.

It could not last for ever, it was true; but it was doing something to mitigate the blow.

I would not talk; and indeed could not, all through the day. I would only be as troublesome and "exigeante" as possible; and when the evening came, Margaridd stalked up, and ordered Mabel off to bed.

early, taking charge of me herself, now "La Cuisine" left her free. The next day was the trial; but she restrained herself as much as possible, not to worry me. After that day, and as I got better, we were able to talk about it unreservedly and calmly. A long letter to her cousin, Walter Rylstone, occupied her for a day or two; and by that time I was up and almost well again, and able to prevent her from brooding.

There was no sleeping after day-break on New-Year's Day. The girls were rushing from "Dortoir" to "Dortoir" like mad things; each one trying to be the first to wish "La Bonne Année." Everybody had a present for everybody. All the girls rushed to Mademoiselle de Garaye's room so soon as they were dressed. I am sure she must have been heartily glad when they left her at peace to get up.

I had been at Mabel's room door three times, and each time my heart failed me. How could I wish her "Bonne Année?" it seemed a mockery. And yet, and yet, might it not be one to her? A sowing in tears, a reaping in joy? Yes! let it have a sad and sorrowful beginning, a gloomy and darkly shadowed close even—it would still be "Bonne Année," for it was God's Année.

At last I knocked.

She stretched out her hands as I came in; and, as soon as I was near enough, drew me down upon the bed, and kissed me again and again.

Of course, it was to be a general holiday. There was to be a soirée in the evening; and, immediately after breakfast, the New-Year's gift to Mademoiselle de Garaye was presented.

It consisted of a very pretty piece of plate. Little Marie le Briton was to present it; the youngest and prettiest child in the school.

All the girls and the governesses assembled in the "Salle à manger," dressed in their best, with bouquets, &c.; and the governesses, and Mademoiselle de Merveille had each their own particular little offering to present.

Little Marie was put to rehearsal, to see if the set speech and "grimacerie" were perfectly learnt by heart. Then a message was sent to Mademoiselle de Garaye,

requesting her presence in the "Salle à manger." Of course, she was perfectly unconscious of anything of the kind. Of course, such a thing had never once crossed her. Of course, it had never even occurred to her that such a thing *might* possibly happen; and, of course, she was quite taken by surprise. And when offering after offering was made, exclaimed—"tout cela pour moi?" in the most naturally astonished tone and manner possible. She then kissed us all (Mademoiselle de Merveille included) on both cheeks. How I pitied her!

We all afterwards went into the town to see the shops. We were filed off in detachments, so many with each governess. I am not sure whether this was not the prettiest sight of the day.

The "trottoirs" were crowded with people gazing in at the shop-windows, and the shops were brimful of purchasers. The streets were covered thickly with snow, and it was piercingly cold; but everything, and everybody looked so bright and joyous, that the temperature was well-nigh forgotten. Besides, at no time, with all due respect to it, is the weather of such consideration, or at all events, not so talked of, in France as in England.

The side walks under the overhanging upper stories were pleasant for "promenading," though the summery "capotes" there displayed were to me very shivery-looking. Light blue, pink, and white bonnets at Christmas are so very unseasonable.

Pert-looking little "bonnes," with their large white apron pockets, filled with "cornichons" of "bon bons," leading little men and women laden with packets tied up with bright-coloured ribbons, groups of "collégians" from the "Lycée," looking so smart and trim in their uniforms and impudent little gold banded "casquettes" set so jauntily on their heads; grown up people, whose day for "sweets" one would suppose long over, all perambulated the streets laden with "bonbonnières" and "cornichons."

The soirée in the evening was a very grand affair. We had decorated the "classes" with wreaths and garlands, and hung festoons wherever they could be put.

After having chocolate (the most delicious that was ever drunk, it seemed to us) and "brioches," instead of

the usual collation of thick bread and butter, dancing commenced. However heavy or dull a Briton or Britonne may be in general, set them to dance, and they seem to be different creatures. The transformation is wonderful! The heavy lumping girls, who seemed endowed with just vitality enough to move from place to place; and with apparently no particular power or propensity for anything but eating an unlimited supply of *anything*, now perform the most astonishing feats of activity. The favourite dance was the "Ronde," seemingly consisting of nothing but a continuous and complicated *whirl*. Round and round, with fast linked hands they spun—sometimes at a speed I should have thought it impossible to attain, much less keep at for any length of time.

CHAPTER XIX.

"But He who pierced very sore
Was pitiful; she felt
Around her spirit melt
A calm unknown before.

"It circled round with might unseen,
Deep filling the pure air,
Giving her strength to bear—
An arm whereon to lean."

EVERYBODY got the better of their cold but Mabel, and she still looked pale and thin; and, what was worse, had a troublesome cough, which at times was very trying to her.

At her own wish, it had been decided that she should still remain at Arrés. Now her aunt was dead, there was more inducement than ever for her to stay abroad. Every one at the "Pension" petted her. Mademoiselle de Garaye was exceedingly kind to her; and, situated as she was, she could not have gone elsewhere and found so many friends. But she cared but little for any one outside the great doors of L'Hôtel Côtes du Nord.

Several of the English residents had called on her. Some of whom she had known when her aunt was at Arrés; amongst others, Mr. and Mrs. Grey, the resident English clergyman and his wife. But as she became more and more confined to the house, she saw less and less of these "acquaintances"—all but Mr. Grey, who called from time to time, sometimes accompanied by his wife, oftener not. He was a pleasant, kind-hearted man; somehow always giving one the idea, that as he had no definite sphere and clearly defined duties as a clergyman, that he thought his clerical office must be altogether kept in the back ground.

The poor, mean look of everything pertaining to our church at Arrés had been a great source of regret to Mabel; and, as soon as she found heart to set about

anything, she had began an altar-cloth, intending it to be an Easter offering. It was a beautiful design, and she worked at it most assiduously. Almost the only thing that could tempt her out, was the want of materials for her work, which, if the weather was fit for her to venture out of doors, she would start off to procure, well wrapped up, and packed in a sedan-chair, the most comical affair conceivable. "Voitures" were things known to *be* at Arrés; but no one used those high, perched-up, springless, paintless, and comfortless affairs, if they could help it. So three or four old sedan-chairs, that were always stowed away out of sight during the summer, when "*donkeys were in season*," emerged boldly into daylight when the winter came on, and were in constant request for evening parties and invalids. Mabel was conveyed to church in one, her "chauffe-pied" accompanying her, as long as she could go out, but that was but for a short time. The quaint sedan-chair, with its bloused and broad-brimmed beavered bearers, clattering along in sabots, was much more in keeping with the picturesque old streets, than a smart, dashing, comfortable "cabriolet" would have been—though I don't think an affair of the kind could have found its way there, or if it did, would never have survived—it would have been so out of place and out of keeping with those quaintly carved old overhanging houses and winding streets, all up and down, and in and out, and everywhere but right on to a place. But the time came when Mabel could not go out even in the sedan-chair, borne carefully along, well packed, and provided with "chauffrette."

She bore up very patiently, and cheerfully resigned herself to the limits of her own room. It was wondrous —though she was seldom seen outside that one corridor, and only visited by the very few—how her unconscious influence penetrated to every corner of that large busy house. Not a face there but wore a softened look when in her presence. The harshest, loudest, brusquest girl there toned down when by her side. The shrillest voice was subdued and gentle. Girls who rushed chattering and jabbering up those noisy stone stairs, as a general rule, trod softly and whispered low as they passed her door.

Margaridd and Justine would stop their squabbling on approaching that corridor, and be off as fast as possible to go on with it further away. Often, after working all day in the busy, buzzing "classe," my head aching, my heart heavy, and my spirit flagging—for about this time letters from home were far from soothing or satisfactory—did I run up to her quiet presence; the pure, unworldly, peaceful atmosphere that surrounded her acting like balm on my weariness. O Mabel! Mabel! often have I come there, exclaiming, "all is vexation and fruitless; of what good is it all?" And as often have I left it, feeling that nothing that has been done heartily, and with God's blessing asked upon it, is done uselessly or for nothing. It is or will be for some good, we may rest quite assured. So I used to go back to torture the old piano up in the "Grenier;" I always tried in the winter to go there to practise, because no one could hear me, though there was hardly anything like music to be drawn from its wires; and it had been consigned to a sort of "Ante Grenier," where boxes, &c., were kept, because it was not wanted; and my fingers ached and stiffened with the cold, and I came down, looking blue and wretched, in spite of the great thick woollen shawl—a real Scotch plaid of the most comfortable kind—Mabel used to make me wear when I was up there; and often with the additional warmth afforded by a "chaufferette" under my feet, which brought my knees on an uncomfortable level with the piano, and greatly interfered with the pedals! But, at the best of times, and under the happiest circumstances, it requires a good deal of courage to make a noise; and when one is anything but a proficient in music, one feels doubly sensitive on the matter. I used to feel that I would rather go through fire and water than practise within earshot. There is nothing more horrible than to be ploughing away at some easy piece for anybody but yourself, and to *feel*, if you don't *hear*, the grinning of a number of school girls.

I suppose it is from the recollection of what I have gone through, in the way of tingling ears and burning cheeks, that makes me, to the present day, feel inclined to commit an aggravated, "and with malicious intent to mischief" assault upon people, who so far forget them-

selves as to smile and look unbearably satirical, when what they consider bad musical performance is going on for their amusement.

I should go to Mabel, feeling all down-hearted and *dumpy;* and if I felt so, it was of no use to try and hypocritically hide it from her. She was sure to find it out. I had always a horribly tell-tale face. But she was sure to smooth me down the right way. She never by any chance ruffed me up backwards, and so caused electric sparks to appear. She was always bright, always cheerful. What a place of rest was that quiet chamber! with its little white draperied bed. Its few prints and drawings hung round on the white washed walls, and the abundant supply of fresh flowers—for nearly every "externe" brought almost daily a few violets, or winter roses, according to her means. But, above all, that quite face, so wan, so pale, so full of death, so plainly marked by Him as His, for whom He would come by and bye. For there was no disguising the fact, she might linger for a long time, but she would never get well again. A clever English physician, who happened to be at Arrés for a short time, had been consulted, and his opinion was a very hopeless one, and she knew it.

I used to try to get exemption from the school-room as much as possible, to be with her; and generally was allowed to pass the time devoted to "l'etude" with her, when there was nothing but preparation for the next day going on. I easily made it up in the time between breakfast and school hour. The contrast from the "classe" to that sanctuary was sometimes more than I could well bear. I used to feel a choking, strangling, suffocating feeling, as if my heart would burst. A longing, oh! such a longing! that I could lie down beside her, and go home too. Hours have I stayed there, with a feeling of utter hopelessness and prostrated energy, with a yearning longing in my heart, almost amounting to despair; silent and still, too done up to talk even. But she always understood me. She never thought me glum and sulky, or stupid. She knew how it was; her true, tender, unerring instinct telling her what no word of mine could or would. And her thin hand would silently caress my hair and fondle my cheek in her own indis-

cribably tender way:—I cannot bear to be touched by some people. As for their kissing me! I would a deal sooner they bit me! I am afraid I cannot be what is generally termed "warm-hearted and affectionate;" for I am not at all fond of demonstrative love. I would rather some persons beat me than fondled me. So, come to think of it, I am sure I cannot be of an affectionate disposition. In the first place, great troubles don't make me cry. They half strangle me sometimes, and nearly suffocate me; but make me cry! very, very rarely! Little sorrows bring tears to my eyes quickly; and little joys bring them more quickly still; and little words of kindness, and little deeds of love will cause them to spring to my eyes as the hidden streamlet gushes upward when the ground is pierced. Now, crying, and giving oneself up to despair is what we ought to do—according to all received laws of propriety—whenever sorrow comes with drooping head and clasped hands, and silently seats herself at our side.

Then there are few, very few, people I am fond of. I am sorry to make such a confession. It is very sad I feel; still I cannot help it, for it is the truth—and I never call people "my dear"—no, not even my own dearest, and I can't endure being called so. And then, again, I never "*feel it dreadfully*," and am quite inconsolable, when my friends die; but, on the contrary, I often experience a sentiment of joy and thankfulness that they are at rest, and are permitted to "go Home." I cannot mourn when I think that one who loves them, far better than I do, has taken them to himself; so that, as I do not take these things to heart in the way affectionate people do, and don't think in the bottom I much like "dear people," I am afraid it is painfully conclusive that I don't belong to them—no, decidedly, I am not affectionate. But still, I could bear Mabel's caresses; *they* always soothed me, and her touch seemed to drive the dark, black gloom away, and to let in warmth, and light, and brightness. Mabel never made me shiver and shrink away, when she touched me.

CHAPTER XX.

"The goat must browse where she is tied."

"Corn is cleansed with the wind, and the soul with chastenings."

"Though you rise early, yet the day comes at his time, *and not till then.*"

I HAD had a sad piece of news from home just at that time; poor old nurse Truan was dead! And what they would do without her I did not know; and, besides this, Alice's last letter was unsatisfactory and fidgetting. She did not exactly "speak out" despondingly; but I could not but see that it was written under other depression than the loss of old nurse, great as this was.

I tried not to chafe or worry, but it was no good. I either could not help it, or did not try enough. Chafe and worry I did.

I was getting all out of heart and spiritless—just in that state when we sit with folded hands, cowering and *skrumped* together. The back all rounded up to the ears, too dispirited to make any effort, not even the one of "sitting up." We go slinking about our daily duties, slouching and dawdling on, dragging one foot after the other, and hanging down the head with a whipped-dog look and a "don't care" spirit, instead of being up and doing with all our heart whatever our hand findeth to do, with a hopeful look on our face, held up bravely towards heaven, in the sight of all men, feeling that within us which makes us walk on boldly, straight as an arrow, with a firm tread, and open hearty bearing.

We were sitting one Thursday in the twilight, the *gloaming*, as Mabel loved to call it, as we often sat now, her head resting against me, as it somehow nearly always did when we were alone together. I saw she was busy thinking—busy, maybe, with thoughts of what I was not pure enough, or freed enough, from earthli-

ness to share in. When, all at once, her soft, weak voice broke the hush. "Millie, how much there is in the simple words, 'It's all right!'"

"Yes," I answered, in a doubtful, hesitating tone. My conscience whispered that I could not say it truthfully, with heartiness, else I should not have been so over careful about many things, as I had been of late.

"Don't you think," she continued, "it is a great comfort to be able to just lie still, and let God take care for us; do with us just what he thinks best?"

"Yes."

"Millie, you won't be vexed with me, will you?" (who could be, I thought,) she continued, keeping her face still buried out of sight on my shoulder, "but it goes to my heart to see you looking so anxious and worried."

"If I was only with them, Mabel," I hurriedly replied, "only on the spot to know the worst! But I can do nothing in the matter; can't take it all upon me, and try to set things to rights."

"Do you think God wants you to, Millie? Don't you think if He did, that you would be there?"

It had never so occurred to me.

"Don't you think," she continued, "He can set all things to rights for them better than you can?"

"Yes, Mabel, I know that; but then, you know, we must put our shoulder to the stuck wheel too. 'Aid toi et Dieu t'aidera.'"

"I know that," she said; "but since you are not on the road where the wheel stuck, or anywhere near, don't you think your not being able to help it out of the rut is 'All right?' Besides, may not distance from them make you think things are worse than they are? The wheel may not be stuck half so fast as you think," she added, playfully.

"Alice would not write as she does were it not."

"I am not sure of that. You say, she is naturally inclined to look the dark side of things; and, you know, her not being very strong, would make her feel dispirited, and perhaps unnecessarily nervous and foreboding."

"Yes, I fear so. Still I know there is something more than usual amiss. I am convinced of it. Oh, Mabel! if it were only some great trouble, or care, that I could

lay hold of and grapple with, and have done with, strangle it, and throw it from me, and breathe freely again."

"It's all right, Millie, that it is not so. Little things are harder to bear than great things."

"Yes; and, somehow, one feels with little things, that though they are harder to put up with, yet, somehow, we daren't go for help to bear them where we do in the hour of great sorrow."

"And there is the reason very often," Mabel answered, "why, I believe, they *are* harder to bear. If we would only take our little troubles, and cares, and crosses to God, as well as our great ones, much misery should we escape. If we would only, like Hezekiah of old, take the letter that we know not how to answer, and the little annoyances that, like the constant dropping, is wearing us down, slowly, maybe, but surely, and spread it before the Lord, how much happier we should be. I know the thought will arise, that acting thus would be irreverent, insulting to God, and that He surely cannot deign to care for such little things. But, surely, whatever we are not ashamed to be anxious, and careful, and cumbered about, we should not be ashamed to pray about, and to be *open* with our God about. We are not ashamed to *think* of them in His sight, why then should we be ashamed to speak unreservedly to Him?"

It was something new to hear Mabel speak "unreservedly;" but I fancy she had been wanting to break the ice with me for days. Dear Mabel! it must have cost her no little effort to do so. A rap at the door interrupted us, and somehow the subject was never taken up again. But the extreme edge of the wedge had been inserted.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Nocht's to be gained at woman's hand,
Unless ye gie her a' the plea!"

"Now, Margaridd, don't be cross! Do, like a good creature, advise me how Mademoiselle Mabel had better take this nasty, oily mixture.

I was standing within the yawning chimney, where, even in warm weather, my chilly nature always enticed me when I came into the kitchen, consulting with Margaridd how best to give Mabel her medicine, whilst she was demolishing a huge loaf and great conical pile of butter for our collation.

"Tenez, Mademoiselle, laissez moi faire!"

"Volontiers," I said, giving her the draught; but how, Margaridd? For good nurse as she was, I had some misgivings as to how she would administer the nauseous potion. Had it been for herself, she would have probably mixed it with a quantity of cider. But Margaridd would not say; she knew how Mademoiselle Mabel would like it she said, and would bring it up "tout de suite."

Not very assured or satisfied, I returned to Mabel's room to await Margaridd and the mixture.

"Look, Millie!" was Mabel's exclamation as I entered, "Justine has brought me this since you went down. A letter from Walter. He is coming home."

"Coming home!" I repeated, "how is that?"

"It seems he must do so, as there is some dispute about property which may make a great difference to him. I don't know the full particulars of the case, but I believe Aunt Janette's death has something to do with it. At least, I fancy that has hastened law proceedings; but I know, before he left England, there was a great deal of unpleasantness about some property. Things did not seem to be quite straight. Walter says," she continued,

referring to the letter, "he shall have sailed by the time I get this."

"Why, he has scarcely had time to get settled there," I said.

"No. I hope it is no hasty resolve on his part; but he surely knows best."

I thought she spoke as if she was a little hurt at my apparent insinuation; but it seemed such a sudden thing —and so in the bottom I am sure she thought it, and was a little bit doubtful.

"I know," she continued, "Walter is very quick in coming to a conclusion, and when he has once decided on a thing, he loses no time in carrying it out. Still, he is always sure to be in the right. I don't think I ever knew him have once to regret his rapid impulsive decisions. Somehow, he seems gifted with an unerring instinct as to the right course."

Now, all this pretty little preamble made me feel sure that *just this once*, cousin Mabel felt a little doubtful as to the infallibility of cousin Walter's "unerring instinct," else why need she prove it so logically? A sturdy, "Of course, Walter is right," would have been quite assurance enough to her sceptical little heart if she had been quite, quite leal to her faith in him. So I only smiled to myself, and said nothing; and, of course, Mabel expected I should assent strongly to what she had just said of Walter Rylestone's "unerring instinct." But, instead of getting it, she declared I had on, what she always called, "my most determinedly unconvincible look."

I declare, she added, half in fun, half in earnest, "I don't believe you half appreciate him."

Perhaps I didn't, perhaps I did; however, I was not going to encourage her unlimited partiality for her infallible cousin—and, luckily for me, a knock at the door put an end to the subject.

Tap, tap, tap! and in came Margaridd, her red face beaming with one of her best smiles, and bearing in her hand a small basin.

"La violá! je suis sure que Mademoiselle l'aimera comme ça;" and, approaching the bed, she displayed a drab-coloured mixture, whereof the basin was brimful.

"Buvez, Mademoiselle."

Mabel took the bowl in her hands, put her lips to it, and turned very white and disgusted looking.

"Take it, please! oh, *please* take it!" and the bowl was hastily returned to Margaridd.

She had thought there was nothing in the world the English liked so well as tea, and happening to have some I had chanced to leave in the kitchen, she had boiled it in a "casserole," well sweetened it (Mabel detested sugar in her tea), and pouring the oily medicine into it, stirred it well up together! Poor Margaridd! She looked excessively annoyed on finding Mabel could not take it. She could not understand it; and, decidedly, thought it all obstinacy.

Mabel's work progressed but slowly. She could not now do much to it, and Easter was drawing very near, and it was far from completed.

Time glided by, with nothing to vary the usual course of events within the "Pension," until the carnival, when we had several days' holiday, and all sorts of practical jokes and fun going on from morning till night. Margaridd was sent to market with a long stream of white ribbons floating, like a pennon, from her "bonnet;" which, if she had only been angry at, the English girls would have resented also, for they had no hand in the matter, and Margaridd was under our especial protection; but she took it all in good part. One evening we went to see "les Marrionettes," a private representation being commanded for our especial benefit. There was a brigand scene and a murder I remember, enacted with wonderful success. And another day we went to witness Ponchinello, also a private representation; and we walked daily on the "Place"—an out of the question proceeding as a general rule—an elysium that the girls used to long after with straining eyes, when we were marched down a narrow, unfrequented, cross-road that brought us down just in sight of the "Place," a walk we used to often take—on purpose to tantalise us, it was declared—and it was always observable that the order was given to "allez plus vite, Medemoiselles!" when we turned up the corner that afforded us a peep at the naughty, fashionable world; but now, during carnival, we were allowed to walk boldly on to the "Place," and *stay* there. Then, one evening

we had a "bal masque," the two grenadier English girls producing a great effect as a couple of gentlemen Turks —that being the most convenient character for them as regarded costume. Just when fun and frolic were at their highest, Turk number one, gallopading with a Spanish lady, who looked very well when coquetishly flirting her fan, but rather remarkable frisking about the room with her black lace mantilla floating behind her; and Turk number two was whirling off her feet a little stuggy body, who had unaccountably attired herself as a lady of the middle ages; and flower-girls and chimney-sweeps, milk-maids and vivandierès, were all mixed up péle méle, it was announced that two ladies inquired for Mademoiselle de Garaye; and, before she could leave the room where she had been sitting in a little recess arranged for her, and a few "mammas" who were present, two ladies, apparently owing to the blundering of "mere La Motte," were ushered into our midst. They seemed a little embarrassed—as well they might be—and Mademoiselle de Garaye hastened forward with her most "empressée" manner, to beg they would come up the room and be seated at the higher end with the "select few," very politely placing one—an elderly looking lady, judging from size and figure (for they were both closely veiled), in her own especial "fauteuil." And then the stout old lady begged, in a very queer voice, to have the honour of a waltz with Mademoiselle de Garaye, who looked as if she thought her visitor must be an escaped lunatic; but her "Pardon! Madame!!!" was scarcely uttered, before peals of laughter rung through the room. The quasi-visitors had been recognised. They were Margaridd and Justine, dressed in some of the governesses' garments. Nothing would do, of course, but that they must dance with nearly every one in the room, till poor old Margaridd was fain to sue for rest, Mademoiselle de Garaye enjoying the fun quite as much as little Marie Le Briton; and it was truly a sight to make the gravest smile, to see them whirled about to the measure of the fastest waltz that could be played, looking so comical in the fashionable little "capotes," things they had never had put on their heads until then.

Lent had come and gone; but little marked in its course by the English, though the French girls were constantly attending extra services at St. Pierre.

On Palm Sunday they all took branches of bay—the only substitute our garden afforded for palm—to church, to have them sprinkled and blest; and on their return they placed them at the head of their beds, above the little "bénitiers," or crucifix, that most of them had suspended there. Mademoiselle Aigredou brought a branch to Mabel, veiling the kind thought for the poor invalid by a more than usually snarlish manner.

"She had brought it; but she didn't suppose she would care anything about it, though it *was* blessed!"

"Indeed I shall," Mabel said. "It was very good of you, Mademoiselle."

"Well, then, shall I put it here?" pointing to a little devotional picture over the chimney-piece.

"Do, please," was the answer.

She placed it there, muttering the while, "I suppose Justine's broom will sweep it away to-morrow."

"Indeed it won't," Mabel said.

"Nous verrons."

"Oui! nous verrons," replied Mabel, smiling at her. "Now, do come," she continued, "and sit down and have a chat. You never come to see me now?"

"No! she could not stay. She could not lose her time, like *some* people;" and she turned a vixen look on me—and the next moment she was out at the door and off, as if she had been shot.

But when I went down to dinner I was surprised at not seeing her at table; and, on going back to Mabel's room afterwards, I found her there, talking to and amusing Mabel.

"Mademoiselle Aigredou has been sitting with me, Millie; she has a sick head-ache, and could not suffer the smell of the *rôti*. I wish you would ask Margaridd to make her a cup of coffee."

Of course, I would—though Mademoiselle protested, and said it was nothing—"Rien du tout, la migraine voilà tout."

But my eyes very much deceived me, if I did not see

Mademoiselle, half an hour after, standing in the kitchen eating what looked for all the world like rôti. Perhaps her sick head-ache was gone.

The next evening I had some rather difficult exercises to prepare, and was obliged to spend part of the study time in the "classe."

I was busy puzzling over them, my hair getting pushed further and further back over my ears—a sign by which all the girls said they knew Millie was getting deeper and deeper into a "fix"—when, suddenly, I heard a step behind me, and some one gruffly said,

"What do you? Shew me, then!"

And Mademoiselle Aigredou perched herself down by my side, and set to help me. I quickly got on then—that is, so soon as I had recovered from my astonishment—and when the exercises were done, she cut short my thanks for her assistance by saying,

"Bah! tais toi! et va-t-en en haut!"

CHAPTER XXII.

"Alas! our memories may retrace
Each circumstance of time and place,
Season and scene come back again,
And outward things unchanged remain;
The rest we cannot reinstate."

ARNOLD.

"The flower is but a little thing,
It perfumes all the gales of spring.
God feeds it with his dewdrops bright,
And never yet the heart that beat
Too poor, too lowly, too unmeet
To do its proper work aright;
Nor hand has been too weak, too small,
To work for Him who works for all."

BARON'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.

"A word, a look of shame or sadness,
May check a sin, ere sin be wrought;
A kinder tone; a purer gladness
May lure to Heaven a wanderer's thought."

SEWEL.

"How stupid of Margaridd to send up this water so; really, it is barely tepid. It is very careless; she did the same thing yesterday. I shall go down and give her a scolding."

"Don't get put out about it, Millie. I can do without tea to-night."

"Indeed you can't, and you won't! So here I go—does she call that toast? Why it is nothing but charred bread! only fit to make toast and water. I'll take it down, just as it is, and shew it to her."

So, taking up the huge toasting-fork, more like a trident than an inoffensive domestic implement, in one hand, and the great awkward "bouillor" in the other, I stalked out of the room, and down stairs—rather flouncingly, I am afraid. It was late in the evening, and nearly dark on the staircase, which was only lighted by little loop-holes, like an old watch-tower. Going down

it at night always made me think of winding down a well—not that I had ever done so.

Just as I got to the foot of the stairs, and was turning off to the kitchen, I heard, as I thought, Margaridd's step coming up from below. I think I have before said, that the staircase, from bottom to top of the house, wound up a side sort of round tower, and also that the ground floor was only cellarage. So I supposed that Margaridd (I knew it could not be Justine, having seen her in the next room to Mabel's as I came out) was coming up with the cider for supper, as it was just about that time, and I had often come across her returning from that errand before.

Thinking she was come just in the nick of time, I brandished the trident, with the slice of burnt bread stuck on it, towards her; and holding out the kettle at the same time, I said—

"Prenez les s'-il vous plaît, Margaridd; it is really too bad to serve poor Mademoiselle Rylstone so."

They were taken from me, but no reply was made.

I supposed she was sulky, and being really very vexed —for Mabel had already waited beyond her usual hour for her tea, and was suffering from the carelessness—I summoned all my best scolding French to the tilt, and rushed to the combat, rather surprised when I stopped for want of breath and suitable expressions, that she had not said a word.

"Now, Margaridd, do *please* be quick and get some more ready. I will come down again for it in a few minutes," and I turned to re-ascend the stairs, calling out, as a parting caution—

"Do please make the water quite boiling; and, pray, don't burn the bread again."

"I should be very happy to try to oblige Miss Heaton on both points if I could; but I neither know the whereabouts of the kitchen, nor where Margaridd is to be found," said, to my great astonishment, a masculine voice in English—voice and tone both well known to me.

"Mr Rylstone," I exclaimed.

Fortunately, in the dusk he could not *see* how foolish I looked; but I never *felt* more so in my life.

"My both hands being engaged in your service," he continued, "I cannot beg to have the pleasure of shaking hands with you, Miss Heaton, till I can set them free. May I ask where I shall deposit my load for you?"

"Oh! give them to me, please."

"Indeed, no; you have committed them to my charge. Please tell me what to do with them?"

"Not to *your* charge," I mentally ejaculated, as I moved on towards the kitchen, not caring to discuss the point—if he chose to carry them he might—so I said, "This way, please," in answer to his question.

He gravely followed, "Bouilloir" and trident in hand.

Margaridd looked amazed on our entering.

"Now," he said, setting them both down on the hearth at her feet (toasting fork as well as kettle), "we can shake hands. How is Mabel?"

I shook my head. "Wait," I said, "till I have given my orders over again, and to the right person this time. Won't you go and present yourself to Mademoiselle de Garaye, the first thing? She is there," I added, pointing to the door of the salon, discernible from the kitchen. "Margaridd," I continued, "conduct Monsieur to Mademoiselle de Garaye."

He made a grimace, as he looked at his travelling dress. "I did not mean to see her to-night."

"Better," I replied; and, with a shrug, he followed Margaridd.

We did not expect him until the next week. And it had been arranged that when he came, Mademoiselle de Garaye should prepare him before he saw Mabel, she had got so much worse since he could have heard of her last.

"She shall have her tea before she knows he is here," I thought.

"If the gentleman should come out very quickly, Margaridd, say he must not go up to see Mademoiselle Rylston just yet."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Whenever sorrow lays her hand
Upon thy lip, and on thy brow;
Do not her gentle touch withstand,
But trustingly beneath it bow.

There's healing in her slightest touch,
And rest beneath her outspread wing;
From Him who loveth thee full much,
She doth a tender message bring.

"So have I seen some tender flower,
Prized above all the vernal bower;
Sheltered beneath the closest shade,
Embosomed in the greenest glade:
So frail a gem, it scarce may bear
The playful touch of evening air."

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

IT was a trying meeting, though better than we had dared hope it would be; and, on the whole, Mabel bore up bravely.

Walter Rylstone arrived on a Wednesday evening. The next day being the usual holiday, I went into the town with Miss Jackson.

Just as we started, Walter Rylstone came up with us, and asked if he might accompany us.

We could not very well say "no;" but I saw plainly Miss Jackson would rather he had not come in our way just then. And I remembered how, one day having dined at Mr. and Mrs. Grey's, I had gone on the "Place" to hear the band, with Mr. Grey and three of his children—the eldest daughter, a womanly girl of seventeen; a son some year and a-half older, and another sister. Mrs. Grey did not go with us, not being very well. And, when on my return home, on Mademoiselle de Garaye asking if I had spent a pleasant day, I had told her where I had been, and how accompanied, she looked

unspeakably shocked and displeased, and begged I would never do so again.

I was completely dumbfounded! and felt as if I had committed some fearful misdemeanour, but still *what*, I could not very clearly see. Nevertheless, I hung down my head, and looked and felt very guilty; feeling that there must be something terribly wrong in what I had done, whether I could see it or not; for Mâdemoiselle de Garaye would never look so dreadful, else. And when she at last murmured something half under her breath, as if it was too distressing to bring out boldly—about "no chaperon," no married lady, I began to dimly perceive in what my offence lay. But if I might not be seen with a grave, elderly clergyman without its being improper, what would she say to our walking from one end to the other of Arrés, with a tall, striking-looking young gentleman? And she was herself gone into the town that afternoon—what if we should meet her?

But I suspected what was the truth, that Walter Rylstone wanted to talk to me about Mabel; and knowing how few opportunities I should probably have of seeing him to speak to, I felt, in spite of my misgivings as to its being quite right and proper, very glad to have the opportunity for a chat.

Miss Jackson had a difficult commission to execute in the way of matching some wools. We went to a shop in the "*Passage*" for the purpose; this being a long, glass-domed sort of arcade, where "Boutiques," "à quatres sous," á six sous," "á dix sous." In short, at every amount of "sous," were ranged on each side.

Walter Rylstone and I stood near the door of the shop whilst the wools were being matched at the counter.

He seemed to be greatly shocked at the change he found in Mabel, he was so totally unprepared to find her so very frail and ill.

After speaking of her a short time, he asked:

"How long is it since she has ventured out?"

"Not for some time," I answered. "Not since long before Easter."

"Not even to church?"

"Not even to church, though it is so near. She cannot sit up so long without feeling faint, and suffering

sorely from it after. She felt the deprivation very much at first; but now, I think, Sunday morning is her happiest time. We settle her at the open window, with her favourite books, and there she stays reading and listening to the music at St. Pierre, and joining in spirit in the Te Deum and chants; which, you know, she can hear as well as if she were in the church. On Easter Sunday Mr. Grey came to her and administered the Holy Sacrament. She hesitated a long time before she could make up her mind to ask him, though she so yearned for it; but, at last, she let Miss Jackson go to Mr. Grey. He was very nice and kind about it. Mrs. Grey came with him, and she, and Miss Jackson, and I, received it with her."

"Poor Mabel!"

"Don't say that."

"No, perhaps I am wrong."

"I am sure you are," I said.

"She, who so longed, so yearned," he continued, "to lead a useful life, to be cut off in her young days, in life's morning, like this!"

"She has led, she does lead, a useful life," I exclaimed, almost choked by tears, that I tried to keep back. "You do not know, you never can know, all she has done. I believe, in after years, when all in that great busy house are scattered far and wide, that Mabel's influence will work more or less on all. You do not know how the great rough Britonne girls are softened when near her; how, as long as she could come out into the garden, they would cling around her as she paced the alley, or cluster about her, when, too tired to walk, she would sit down on the old well. None of those who have come in contact with her, can look back and think of their life here without remembering her, and I feel sure the recollection will work on many of them." I felt how it would work on me, though I could not tell him so.

He continued standing silently by my side, at the shop door, in a musing way, not speaking for some instants.

"How blind we are!" he said, after a while. "How, sooner or later, we learn how little we can really judge of any one! I used to look on Mabel as a dear little creature, to be loved and petted, but with little character;

as something pleasant to guide and look after. But the idea that she would ever guide and support was the last one I should have entertained."

"So should I," I thought; and mentally went back to the first time I saw her up in the dreary "Grenier," looking so hopeless and so helpless, as she knelt before her box.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"With thankful true content, I know
This is the better way;
Is not a faithful spirit mine—
Mine still—at close of day?
Yet will my foolish heart repine
For that bright morning dream of mine."

It was a painful subject, and one I did not care that Mabel should talk to me about; but, from what she did say, I gathered that Walter Rylstone's return home was not likely to do the good he seemed to have hoped it would, in the way of satisfactorily arranging the law business then in hand. He was obliged to get back to England as soon as he could; but, before leaving Arrés, he was very anxious to persuade Mabel to decide on accompanying some friends who, he had heard, intended wintering at Nice. At first, she was very averse to it. I think she felt that it would do her no good, and she shrunk from going among comparative strangers; but she also felt that it was her duty to live as long as she could, and to try any means that might, with God's blessing, tend to lengthen her days. So, at last, she consented; and then Walter Rylstone decided to go back to England—settle matters there as well and as speedily as he could—return to Arrés to take Mabel to M——, where it was arranged she should meet the friends with whom she was to travel, and then he would again sail for India.

Mabel was holding my hands firmly in her own, and squeezing them more tightly than I thought she had strength for.

"Oh, Millie! Millie! I am so glad!" she said, over and over again.

And, for a wonder, I let her go on, and never a word said I in reply; but sat with her head nestling up against me, with my head resting on that soft, fair hair. For a wonder, I was very quiet, very subdued, but very happy

though; but my heart was so full, that if I had spoken, I should have burst into tears. For I had promised Walter Rylstone, that one day, though it must be very, very far away, I would be his wife. I am sure I scarcely know to this day how it came about. But so it was. I had told him why I had come to Arrés; and that that purpose must be fulfilled. But, if he would wait a few years, that then, perhaps.

In short, I was engaged.

We were, both of us, comparatively young; and were, what was better still, "hopeful!"

He had his work to do, for the next few years, and I had mine; and we both felt that we must do it, and after we had done our work apart, then, if God so pleased, we would work on through life together—and so we parted.

I was sitting in the "classe," trying to write a matter of fact communication of the same to them at home, when a letter from Alice was brought to me.

It was wretchedly desponding, and sent a chill to my very heart. She said, she could not tell how it was. She tried to be as economical as possible, and of that I felt no doubt; but still papa always seemed embarrassed, and short of money.

She added, that she did not wish to harass me, or to make me anxious and uneasy; nor even, altogether, did she like to write what were but mere surmises on her part; but yet she did not like to keep them from me, as she knew there was nothing I disliked so much as concealment in such things; and so, she told me, she feared papa had been drawn into some imprudence again—either as regarded a speculation or investment. That there was *something* she was sure, for he had said he could not afford to keep Maggie longer at school, nor even to allow her to have any of the lessons she had been taking from masters; and, withal, he seemed to be more reserved and uncommunicative than ever.

I pushed aside my half-written sheet. I could not finish then. How could I tell them of my own happiness, and write of self in answer to such a cheerless letter? Alice, too, complained of her own health, and enumerated so many of her old symptoms, that I felt

altogether that her letter was most dispiriting. What could I do? I knew not! I took the letter in my hand, and was hurrying—no, not hurrying—for, somehow, it seemed to have leadened my feet. I was going up to Mabel with it, when the thought crossed me that soon I must bear the burden of my cares alone. She would not be by to go to. Besides, was it fair, that the short time we should be together, she should be weighed down by my load? No! I must learn to carry it alone, and had better begin then. I knew it would make her unhappy and anxious; and she had enough of her own to bear, just then. Thought for her cousin, and sadness at leaving Arrés, were sufficient for her share, without any of my load added to it. So I must e'en lift it up, and place it upon my own shoulders, and sturdily march on with it, without any help from her. And no one else there would have cared to touch it with their little finger, even if I had cared to ask them, which I did not. Besides, has not "every cross its own inscription?" This one was inscribed with my name, and it would be made to suit my shoulders; but it bore not Mabel's name. And why should I go and, Procustes like, try to make her take it up, and fit her stature to it? No! There is noreason, because God sends us a cross, that we should insist on our friends having one too. So I folded up the letter, and went back to the classe, and sat there all through the weary study hour, with "Noël et Chapsal" open upside down before me.

CHAPTER XXV.

"If thou should'st never see my face again,
Pray for my soul—more things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of—wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain;
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves, and those whom they call friend."

TENNYSON.

"Go from me—yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow;
And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two."

MRS. E. B. BROWNING.

"THIS won't do, Millie."

"I know it won't, Miss Jackson; and, what's more, I don't mean it to. But you must let me alone awhile."

"How long, Millie?"

"I'm sure I don't know." And, hereupon, I burst out anew.

Mabel was gone. Walter Rylstone was gone. And I was very miserable.

Mabel and I had parted as those part who know that the days of one are numbered, and that there will be no more meeting for them on earth.

Walter Rylstone was the only one who did not see it, or rather, who *would* not see it. I had tried, once or twice, to open his eyes to the fact that Mabel was slowly, but surely, passing away from us. But he had been so resolute to hope, that at last I said no more.

And now they were gone. And, instead of going back to the "classe" at once, I had sought refuge with Miss Jackson. But soon the clang of the dinner bell announced that all the sorrow every one in the house felt at parting from Mabel, was not to interfere with their appetites—and that I, as well as the others, must

go down, and partake of the "soupe aux choux," that Miss Jackson said, was seasoned with Margaridd's briny tears—for she had gone into the kitchen, and found her blinded by them, vainly endeavouring to see down to the depths of the huge cauldron—and Justine came into Miss Jackson's room and inserted her hand in the hole in the centre of the *paillasse*, with a sniff and a sob, and convulsively shook up the straw, as if her heart were half broken. Every one there loved Mabel. And now she was gone—and we should never see her more!

When Mrs. Rylstone was at Arrés, I had latterly spent all my Thursday holidays with her and Mabel, at their lodgings, and she, knowing what a treat it was for me to have a walk, a real walk—something quite different from the formal school constitutionals—used invariably to send us, Mabel, myself, and Walter Rylstone out, to have a pleasant stroll before tea. They dined early on Mabel's account.

Those pleasant teas! So thoroughly English, and cosey, such a treat for me. The very sight of the cups and saucers, was a pleasure; and I used to regard the little chased silver tea-pot as one would look on some rare specimen of refined art.

Somehow, set off in which ever direction we might for our walk, we nearly always found our way home through one particular street, so as to enable us to stand a few minutes at the window of a print shop at the corner, our favourite haunt. Instead of seeing the same things over and over again, as we generally did in the other shop windows, there was always something new and pretty here. It was evidently a shop much frequented, and had the best assortment in the town. Walter Rylstone was particularly fond of art. He could never pass a print shop, far less enter one, without being pulled two ways. Inclination would say, "How pretty —buy!" Prudence would answer, "you have already such a number of prints and outlines, don't be tempted!"

It was something ludicrous to see him. He was just like a child; and would go back again and again, and stand irresolute, and generally at last gave way.

Mabel used to say it was the vulnerable place in the heel of Achilles, and would banter him not a little about

it. He, the firm, decided, prudent mentor, to be so weak!

Secretly I sympathised with him. I knew what it was to be so tempted with an empty purse. How far harder, then, to resist temptation with a pretty well filled one.

I used to pretend to be indifferent, and say—

"Yes! very pretty; very graceful! very good!" and then turn away. But he was fully aware of my shaming, and would reply, "It's of no use, Millie! I know you are longing to ask the price of it, and thinking, 'should it happen to be a bargain, what a pity not to secure it!'"

"No such thing!" I should exclaim, pretending to be very indignant.

"Don't fib, Millie!"

"Come, we have stayed here quite long enough, we shall leave you here alone."

"No, you won't."

"See, then!"

"Stop, Mabel, I want some writing paper; at least, I think I do."

"No, you don't, Walter."

No notice would be taken of the flat contradiction; but he would say—

"You won't mind coming in whilst I buy some paper, will you? I really must get it."

"What, the paper? Yes, we do mind," &c.; generally ending by our walking off, only for him to return alone later in the day, and afterwards produce it triumphantly.

Quite in the early period of those old days, we had all very much admired one particular engraving. Time after time we stood and gazed at it. After a while it disappeared; but we often wondered if it were merely withdrawn to give place to something newer, or sold; and, if the latter, wondered into whose hands it had passed. It was rather an uncommon *genre* of picture, not at all in the affected French style, nor what would be likely to strike every one, or tempt an ordinary purchaser to pay the price demanded for it. For, of course, Walter Rylstone had inquired the price of the print; but having just

then been more than usually extravagant in the purchase of some beautiful outlines, he had to make a grimace, and, with a shrug, deny himself. We used sometimes to amuse ourselves by fancying what the purchaser must be like. I used to say I thought it was a stern, beetle-browed man who was constantly seen in the shop. He had just the rugged hard outside, I affirmed, to be all soft and full of the beautiful within; but Mabel would never agree to this.

On going up to my "dortoir" before dinner, there, suspended on the wall, was the print we had together admired long ago.

"From Mabel and Walter," was written on a slip of paper underneath it. My bed happened to be up in a corner of the room, close against the wall, and the white calico drapery formed a little pointed arch, as it were, wherein my print hung.

I answered Alice's letter without saying a word of my engagement. I was wretchedly depressed and full of foreboding. And, somehow, with the perfect consciousness that I was not acting straightforwardly and open, I yet could not summon courage to tell them.

Ah! there it was! My great failing was again betraying me. Moral coward that I ever was, I shivered, and hesitated, and hung back till I had a push that sent me me in, head foremost.

A few weeks later, and a letter reached me from my father. Alice had been ill; and though he said there was no imminent danger to be apprehended, and he did not say anything about my coming home at once, I felt he longed for me to be with them. I did not hesitate a moment, my decision was soon taken.

I was up in the "grenier" busy packing, when Justine brought me a parcel just sent from the "messagerie." It puzzled me greatly. I undid the string; and, on opening the outer paper, found a black edged note, addressed in an unknown handwriting. I was not in ignorance long. Mabel was dead. The note was from one of her friends at Nice, informing me when it happened; and forwarding, at Mabel's request, a parcel and a letter.

The former contained the altar cloth which she had

began at Arrés. The letter was not very long; and, at the end, she wrote—

"I have nearly finished my work for Mr. Grey; but my fingers have trembled so much the last few days, when I have attempted to work, and my sight has been so dim I cannot see to count the threads, so I must e'en lay it aside for the time. If I am able, I hope to finish it still; but if I cannot, you will put the finishing stitches to it when it reaches you, will you not?" I had heard from her but ten days before, when she said she felt rather weaker, but otherwise as well as she had been for some time. The note was written only two days before her death, which had been almost sudden at last.

She had got up and walked about the house, and even been driven out as usual, until the very last day; when, almost as soon as she was up in the morning, she said she felt "so very, very tired!" Soon after she had spoken, a fit of coughing seized her, then hemorrhage ensued, and she sank gradually till late in the same day, when her sufferings were over for ever, and she was at rest, and would never, never say again she felt "so very, very tired!"

She had also left a small sum—she could not do more, as her property was only an annuity—for Mr. Grey to lay out as he thought best in the room at Arrés.

The needle was still stuck in the work as she had left it when her eye grew dim with the gathering mists of death, and she laid it down, still threaded with a long piece of silk, as if she had just taken a fresh needlefull, and had gone on as long as possible ere she gave it up. After I had finished my packing, I sat down on my box in the "grenier," and in about two hours I finished it.

It was a queer place in which to complete such a piece of work. The rays of the setting sun came in at the dusty cracked window, high up on one side, and played about my hands, and glanced upon the gold thread passing through my fingers. But the glittering, sun-gilded thread was tarnished, I fear, by the tears which trickled fast and thick. I could not have found a quieter place if I had tried. And so, odd as it was, it was the best one.

Mabel's bequest to me was some of her favourite

books; favourite authors that we had read together in the early days of our friendship, with the margins filled with pencilled notes we had then made; and some were books that had been read when her head rested on my shoulder, in those quiet after days, when research and reference were too much for her, and she only rested there and listened. A marker, with a favourite motto, a thread of coloured wool or silk, so familiar in its hue or shade, still marked the page where many a well remembered reading had been closed.

I made up the packet for Mr. Grey, and Miss Jackson promised to take it, and a note I had written to Mr. Grey, on the following day. Mademoiselle de Garaye had tried to hear of some one with whom I could travel, but unsuccessfully, and I was obliged to set off alone; and the next morning saw me down on the little pier where I had first landed, and been met by Mademoiselle Josephine.

I had to be up very early in order to be on board the steamer in time; and whilst I was dressing I remembered that I had forgotten to say good-bye to Margaridd overnight. I had bade adieu to Mademoiselle de Garaye, and all the girls who were not in my "dortoir;" and when Justine brought me in my early breakfast of coffee and roll, I asked where Margaridd was.

"Not yet up," was the answer; and I fancied it was very odd that Justine should smile when she added that "she had gone to bed, a little indisposed, the night before."

At another time, I suppose I should have guessed how the matter was; for all knew, more or less, that Margaridd was subject to these occasional indispositions, and had our suspicions from what cause they arose. In fact, it was Margaridd's indispositions that had often been the reason of her "going to leave." But now, it never crossed me that it was anything but a right proper indisposition; and I felt quite sorry, and determined on my way down to tap at her door, and say good bye to her. Justine occupied a room on the same flat as the "dortoirs," to be within hearing, if anything happened at night; but Margaridd slept down stairs in a little room opening out of the kitchen. Miss Jackson was

going down to the boat with me, so, asking her to wait a few minutes, I knocked at the door—no answer. I knocked again, and again. At last, becoming impatient, I pushed it open; for, rather to my surprise, it was ajar—and the first thing that presented itself to my astonished gaze, was Margaridd's blue-stockinged feet, in all their ample proportions, stretched out towards me! She, herself, lay extended at full length on the floor! and there she had evidently lain all night. Calm and sound, and, apparently in spite of her hard and uncomfortable position and couch, comfortable were her slumbers. I was afraid I should have to tell what Margaridd's one great failing was. Poor Margaridd!

Miss Jackson afterwards told me that she regularly cried when she found I was really gone, and without having said good bye. But, then, that was her fault, not mine.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Leave God to order all thy ways,
And hope in Him whate'er betide,
Thou'lt find Him in the evil days,
Thy all-sufficient strength and guide—
Who trusts in His unchanging love,
Builds on the rock that nought can move;

Only, thy restless heart keep still,
And wait in cheerful hope; content
To take whate'er his gracious will,
His all-descerning love hath sent;
Nor doubt, our inmost wants are known
To Him who choose us for His own."

LYRA GERMANICA.

"I'M glad you are come, Millie," Alice said, as she made room for me on the couch where she lay.

"I'm glad you are come, Millie," said my father, as he kissed me on my arrival.

"I'm glad you are come, Millie; oh! so glad!" was Maggie's ejaculation, more than a dozen times in the course of the evening.

And, "I'm glad you are come, Millie," was what I said to myself, as I was undressing that night. Yes, decidedly, it was right I had come.

The low feverish attack, which had seized Alice, was not in itself serious; but the extreme depression and languor that continued to hang about her, and keep her on the couch, were bad symptoms, particularly in her case; and she had fallen back into her old fretful irritability and determination to be an invalid. In fact, she *would'nt* get better, by rousing herself and trying to throw off the depression of spirits she felt; but would lie all day on the sofa, reading light books, and doing a little embroidery, and would be put out for all the day if my father but hinted at her want of energy, by saying, "Come Alice, don't you think you might take a turn or two in the sun, this bright morning? Just try!"

A few days after my arrival, my father asked me to take a walk with him. We turned up a long shady lane that led on to the open downs, and from whence the sea was clearly discernible.

We walked on rather silently for some time. Then, at last, I began to ask questions about Alice; and then my own hasty return was discussed. But, I could see all the time that my father was pre-occupied, and ill at ease. I was a little startled by his suddenly asking if I had any intention of going back to France?

"If Alice gets strong enough for me to do so, I do," I said; and I was about to add, "but not to Arrés;" but I checked myself. The plan I had formed in my head since I came home was as yet too visionary to speak of.

"I thought," he continued, "you might, perhaps, manage to get a few pupils here; and, at the same time, undertake Maggie's education. I am sure every one of our friends would exert themselves to procure a few nice pupils for you."

Query! I thought; besides, save me from my friends!

"I cannot," he still continued, "send Maggie to school any longer—cannot afford it."

Why? I thought.

I did not say anything—I could not well, if he only gave me half confidences in that way—I couldn't, and wouldn't. It was not fair to me, just to tell me bare facts, that I could quite well see for myself, without assigning any cause. I knew, without his telling me, that he did not send Maggie to school; but I could not know without his telling me, "*why* he did not." At last I felt that I must summon courage, and out with it. So I said—

"Papa, you must not mind my saying that I have always laboured under great disadvantages in regard to my education; and the short time that I have been at Arrés is not nearly sufficient to atone for the deficiences of years." (For, I must confess, I thought it rather unreasonable, that because I had been a few months in France, I was supposed to be quite up to taking pupils, and educating Maggie); and, I continued, "I am neither

able to teach Maggie, or any one else, yet; and, therefore, I *must* go abroad again. And the sooner the better;" I added. I paused there; and then I said, "I have a scheme in my head, as regards Maggie; but, I think, we had better not talk of it just yet." Whether it was that my speaking, rather decidedly and firmly, gave him the conviction that I was no longer a child, or that I had acquired a more womanly manner and tone, I do not know—but, decidedly, *something* told—for I saw him look at me with a queer, half-astonished look, like one just awakened to a curious fact; and which, at another time, would have greatly amused me. And, then, after pondering awhile, he seemed to think that Millie, who used to be either "knees and nose together" over a book, or "up in the clouds," might be trusted and treated somewhat like a reasonable being; for he entered more into detail on business matters than I had ever known him do before—and bad enough they were in all conscience.

The lane had been a favourite resort of my mother; and I remembered so well the many walks I had taken with her there, but most distinctly the last one. It used to be a favourite arrangement for me to serve as her support. She was tall and slight, and for a long time I was just the height for her to lean on my shoulder; but just before her death, I had grown away rapidly. And I know the last time I had walked there with her, I had laughed, and said, "she would soon be able to take my arm."

"You won't be able to use me for a walking-stick, much longer, Mamma!" I said.

I did not think much of it at the time; but I remembered it after.

She paused, as if to draw breath, and pretended to push back my hair, which had fallen over my forehead; but I felt it was only an excuse to give me a caress—and said, in her sweet, bright-toned voice, that one would almost have mistaken for nothing but hopefulness:

"Well, Millie dear, I sometimes think I shan't require you to be my prop, much longer; but you will always be a prop though, won't you, darling?"

I know such a choking knot came up in my throat,

that I could only *look* my answer; but she did not need words. And such a rush of terrible foreboding fears surged through my mind, that I felt I must drive them all back and not let one remain, else their name would soon be "legion," and I should know no more peace of mind.

When we were about to enter the house on our return, my father said—

"Better not let Alice know how things are, just yet; and Maggie is but a child. Millie, I look to you."

"Here's a letter for you, Millie," Alice said, as I came in. It was from Arrés. Miss Jackson had undertaken to send on my letters, and this one was from Walter Rylstone.

I felt quite sick at heart! There was not one bit of pleasure in the emotion I felt on seeing his handwriting. Poor Walter! he, of course, knew not, when he wrote, that Mabel was taken from us. He referred to the last letter he had received from her, in which she had told him that she thought she felt better; and had apparently written to him one of her bright, funny letters, so cheerful and full of pleasant little incident, as I so well knew her letters always were.

When Alice was first taken ill, Maggie had installed herself in a wee little cupboard, yclept a dressing room, opening out of the room in which Alice slept; and when I returned, she insisted on remaining there and giving up her own little room entirely to me. I sat for a few minutes talking to Alice, with the letter in my hand, as unconcernedly as I could, whilst my heart beat as if it would burst. At last, I escaped up to my room; and, bolting the door, sat down and read it.

It was a hopeful, happy letter. I remember every word of it so well—how should I not?—for it was the last happy, hopeful letter I ever had from him.

He said he had a much better appointment than he had expected; "And now," he added, "what prevents your coming out to me? Some friends of mine (old and well loved ones of my mother and Mabel) will sail from England in the autumn for Calcutta. I would meet you there. He then referred to the determination I had told him I had made with regard to what I con-

sidered to be my duty, for the next few years at least, and for which I had gone to Arrés.—I am afraid his reasonings were more loverly than logical.

Truly, I was "entre l'arbre et l'ecorce," and knew not what to do—where to lean for counsel and help. I sat hopelessly, despondingly on the bed where I had seated myself on entering the room, as being the place nearest at hand, with the open letter in my hand. My conversation with my father so lately, the recollection of my last walk with my mother, and those few words then uttered, which I had afterwards found were intended to convey so much. The little incident of my father having as it were turned to me, young as I then was, on that evening when she was passing away from us. All came before me with terrible distinctness! And, then, Alice's present state. And, besides her weak health, I could see how she and Maggie looked to me. What was I to do? I did not, could not feel that it was just or fair to Walter Rylstone to ask him to wait for an indefinite period. It was different when I had thought a few years were all that were required of me. But now, I had no right to try to persuade him into that worst of all things, a long and indefinite engagement. And, then, I remembered so well what Mabel had one day said.

"Millie, I do hope yours will not be a very long engagement; indeed, you must promise me it shall not be. It would never do for Walter. You don't want me to tell you all he is, Millie; still, you know he is not quite perfection, though we may think him pretty nearly so," she added, in a half playful, half serious tone, "but he has always had aunt Janette to turn to, and now he must have you so soon as he can."

Now promise me?—holding me tightly all the time. And I know I thought her manner unnecessary grave and serious.

"I can't, Mabel," I replied. "Indeed, as far as I can see, it *must* be, and I have told Walter so."

"It must *not* be," she continued; and I think she would have said yet more, but some one came into the room, and the subject was never recurred to.

I tried to reason the thing over calmly—to look at it from all points.

I said to myself—that now I was plighted to Walter Rylstone, I owed to him a duty as well as to others.

"True!" was the reply, "but not your *first* duty; Besides, he can do without you, they can't!"

"Stuff!" I answered; "I am making myself out to be of more importance than I really am."

"No, you are not, and you know it." Walter Rylstone has got on all his life without you; he only knew you for a short time, and he will get on without you again. They can't at present, and you don't know that they ever will. Walter Rylstone may meet with another quite equal to yourself. Don't imagine you are a non-such. And you have no business to wish for a moment to tie him to a wife in the abstract.

One thing I felt, that what was to be done must be done at once. I had no idea of protracted agonies. If the execution *must* take place; if the sentence pronounced was felt to be strictly just, why then put it in force without delay. Don't torture the victim. See that the hatchet is sharp and true, and have the head off *surely*, entirely, at one blow, clean!

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Within her spirit
A far off land was seen,
A home which might have held her,
A love which might have been—
And life—not the mere being
Of daily ebb and flow;
But life itself had claimed her,
And she had let it go."

"Could it have cost such anguish
To bid this vision go?
Was this her faith?
Did it need all this struggle
To bid a dream depart?"

Oh that letter, that terrible letter! how was I to answer it? One moment I longed to write without an instant's delay, to try to comfort him for Mabel's loss: the next, I felt it would be better not to write at all, than to send the stiff, cold epistle I felt my carefulness not to betray all I felt, would produce.

And so it went on, day after day. I lost one mail; and should have let another go without an answer to him, if I had not at last felt that such shilly-shallying was perfectly contemptible and weak. Of one thing I only felt more and more convinced the longer I delayed writing, that was, that it *must* be. My *first* duty was very close at hand—that, the experience of every day but shewed me clearer.

So one night I determined the letter should be written before I went to bed, and it was.

Did I feel elated, self-satisfied, conscious of having made a great sacrifice? Not one bit. Some may wonder at my suggesting such a question, but all will not; for, I believe, there will be those who will agree with me, that it is almost humanly impossible not to be self-conscious, and to know when a great sacrifice has been made by us. It is the checking it, and guarding against

a *martyr* feeling, that is often the hardest thing to do at such a time. I should not be true to myself if I were not to confess that I now consider I made a sacrifice for which, it appeared to me at the time, nothing could atone. I loved Walter Rylestone with my whole heart, and it almost broke it to give him up.

After I had written and sealed my letter that night, I felt more miserable than I had ever done in my life before. I felt out of heart, spiritless, wretched. I pushed the letter from me, and bent down my head upon my folded arms on the table, with a hard, bitter, angry swelling in my heart, and a feeling as if I did not care if I ever moved from there again.

I felt too *down-hearted* to undress even, or to do anything but just stay there and give way. If any one had come and spoken to me then, I should have snapped out on them in my surliest tone.

How long I should have remained there so, I know not. All night, most likely, if my candle had been long enough; but it was the remnant of wick sputtering out in the melted grease that first roused me—too late, though, to save it; for whilst I was listlessly making an effort to try to keep it alive, it went out, leaving me in utter darkness. And chill, and shivering, and wretched, I rose up, and groping my way to the bedside undressed as best I could. I know I could have cried like a great child when a string got into a knot, and I could not for a long time undo it. I felt as if I must wrench it off, and fling the garment passionately from me. And when, on getting into bed, I gave myself a tremendous thump, I was reduced to that weak state, that—like a baby who has been crying so long that now it cannot help it, and has not the least bit of self-control—I could have beaten the post, because I knocked my head against it.

It is not bed-posts only that we often *turn upon* when we have heedlessly run our heads up against them, and get a thump.

It was very hard to keep up appearances the next morning. My heavy eyes too plainly told tales as to what sort of a night I had passed; and I was too glad to be able to evade too close inquiries, by avowing that I

had a head-ache, and had slept badly. I was up, however, and dressed earlier than usual; for so soon as day dawned, I was so restless that I could not stay in bed. I was in the habit of taking a long early morning walk, no matter what the weather might be like. Alice used to say, she thought I imagined that if I staid in the house one whole day, I should be suffocated; and I believe I did think something of the sort. At all events, I was, and am still, so constitutionally restless, that I am perfectly miserable if I cannot get out, and bemoan the circumstance almost as piteously as Sterne's poor starling. But most particularly if "I have anything on my mind," I must walk it off. I never then seem to be able to breathe freely, or think rationally, till I have put on my bonnet and started. So, to-day, I hurried breakfast as much as possible; ran up, as usual, to see Alice for a few minutes, feeling all the time as if the roof of the house was pressing down upon my head, and the walls hemming me in on all sides. At last, I was free. Alice settled with her books for her morning reading, Maggie consigned to the piano. I rushed up to my room, took up the letter, and looked at the address for the last time.

I tried to put on my walking things; but my fingers trembled so, I could not, by any possibility, lace my boots—I poked, and poked, and poked again at the holes—no! the lace would not go through them. I sat down for a few minutes to try to steady my nerves; and, as my eye was listlessly wandering over the dressing-table, it fell on a little volume of "Thomas-à-Kempis," in French—Mabel's gift. I stretched out my hand to take it up; and then I remembered when she gave it to me, and how she then said—

"Millie, I hope you may find half the comfort in it I have. I don't think I ever took it up without finding the exact thing I wanted."

I mechanically turned to the fly-leaf, and read my name and her's written there by her, with the words—

"Without me ye can do nothing."

I knelt down by the side of the bed; and though not a single word came, and it all seemed confusion and chaos, and nothing at all like prayer, yet the dull, heavy

feeling passed away, and when I rose from my knees, I felt very, very differently from what I did when I came up stairs.

To reach the post-office I had either to go all through the town, as our house and the post-office were at the two extreme ends of it, or to take a road that wound round outside, and from whence I could get to it by a short cut up a retired street. I chose the latter.

I suppose it was the habit I had acquired, when at Arrés, of going into St. Pierre, on my way to and from the town, more particularly when I was sad, that led me, without premeditation, to return home through the church-yard. This I had often purposely done before, instead of continuing my road along the street which skirted it. And so, to-day, I mechanically turned in that way, and as mechanically paused on seeing the little chancel door open, and then entered.

I believe there was no one in the church, and that it was merely left open to air; but I don't think I thought of that, but instinctively walked in. It was an intensely hot day, and I was feeling spent and worn. I had slept but little the night before; and now, when I had dropt my letter, and turned away homeward, with, perhaps, for the first time, the full realisation of what I had done, I felt completely unnerved, and sitting down on the end of one of the open benches, felt so weary—oh! so weary!—both in body and mind.

There are some moments when we feel so worn and spent, that it is almost a trouble to think—to do so with anything like *order* seems impossible—and so we sit, and let our hands hang listless, and our fancies roam whither they will. It is often in such an hour that the sorest temptations assail us; and despondency, for the time, reigns paramount. But it is also at such times that, as if to shew us, our God will not let us be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape; that all the *beautiful* and good we have read of, or seen, or even pictured to ourselves, comes surging, like a refreshing tide, back over the weary spirit, bathing it in its reviving waters, and purifying the soiled and world-stained soul, washing away the earthly dye, as it would soiled footprints from some pure

white beach. They say that drowning men live over all their past lives in the course of a few short minutes; that years of weal and woe repass in review before them with all the distinctness of reality. And thus, much in the same way, when one is sinking in the strong tide of daily stern reality—almost carried away by the strong current of sin and sorrow—we, in an incredibly short space of time, live over all the holy, and pure, and gentle influences we have ever experienced. Noble, though simple deeds, kind words, tender tones, holy aspirations, longings for the good and true, come back, like the past life of the drowning wretch, flooding the soul, like the spring-tide of the strong sea, baptizing the spirit with their mighty and mysterious powers.

It was thus that I felt. I could almost have drawn a long breath, and cried "saved!" like the man who has escaped "so far" from shipwreck, and pauses a moment with one hand clinging to some frail tuft of grass, whilst he, at the same time seeks, further up, some place for his next step. Although he could shout "saved!" he did not mean to stop there—he was safe so far, but still he must get on further and higher yet—he must still climb upward and onward!

"So must I," I thought, as I rose to leave the church; and I *will* too!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Woo'd and married! and a'!"

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hussie, die?—
She may gae to—France, for me!"

BURNS.

AND, to make matters worse or *better*, (which was it?) I had promised to take the part of principal bridesmaid at Edith Polrudon's wedding. A nice cheerful-hearted, sunny-faced bridesmaid, truly; but there was no help for it. I had not been home many days; nay, come to think of it, I do not think it was many hours, before I was told I was come in the very nick of time. Edith was going to be married to a cousin, a young medical man, who had been her brother's fast friend; first at school, and then all through the period of their medical pupilage. And now he had just commenced practising in London, with sufficiently promising prospects, he considered, to marry his cousin Edith; and as regarded himself, personally, I believed he was worthy of her, which was saying a good deal.

I tried at first to escape, and proposed Maggie as my substitute; but, when I saw how surprised and hurt Edith was at my attempt to shirk the office, for which I could give no sufficient excuse, I was obliged to yield; and, instead of moodily brooding over my own secret griefs, be *really* interested in all the preparatives for a wedding; and talk of the becoming, and suitable, as regarded my own adornment for the occasion; and be martyred by tryings-on and trimmings. Well, I believe, after all the trouble, and no end of unheard of difficulty, I had to match some unmatchable fringe, did me a world of good. And, really, the wedding did more towards rousing Alice, and getting her to throw off the depression and languor that nothing had been

able to remove, than if both the doctors who were to be present had attended her a twelvemonth. For Philip was to come home to the wedding; and he as groomsman, and I as principal bridesmaid, would, unavoidably, be thrown much together. Well! there was no preventative, so I must e'en make the best of it!

So, one evening, when we were all assembled at Mrs. Polrudon's, discussing the important subject of what flowers was the bride's wreath to be composed—in walked Philip, the mail-coach having just set him down at the door. He could not stay an hour more than necessary after the wedding was over; and had hard work to get the time he did. And as every one always has more than they know how to get through with, when a wedding is coming off, I hoped there was not much fear of our not having something better to do than to get much in each other's way.

We were very ceremonious and proper at first; and I flattered myself everything was going on well, till, unfortunately, the day before the wedding, when no one could be stiff and cold—but all were as friendly and kind as possible, for Edith's sake—and then, somehow, Miss Heaton was replaced by the "Millie" of old days. And I caught myself up short in a "Phil;" but I saw he meant mischief from that moment. There was a look in "the tail of his eye" that betokened it. It was no good for me to purse up my mouth and be prim, and take good care not to slip again.

The wedding was over, and the bride and bridegroom had gone; and every body was as dull and stupid as is generally the case on such an occasion. Mrs. Polrudon had gone to her room thoroughly knocked up. The bridesmaids, all but myself, had gone home; for the party assembled had dispersed as speedily as possible for Mrs. Polrudon's sake. Philip had gone out somewhere, and Alice and I had undertaken to remain, and direct and seal the cards. I was upstairs in the drawing-room where Alice had been helping me, but she had just left the room, when, greatly to my surprise, Philip entered the apartment, as it was only ten minutes or a quarter of an hour since I had heard him

say he was going out, and should only return in time to say "good-bye," and mount the coach which passed their door.

"Can I help you?"

"No, thank you."

He then came and leant his elbow on the low chimney-shelf. Not a word for some time.

I went on, like the kingly scribe of old, in the herdsman's hut, "scrat," "scrat," "scrat," with a grey goose quill over the smooth, satiny, disagreeable paper.

A long pause. Several envelopes directed, sealed, and put with methodical precision one after the other in a row before me.

"Millie, I'm going to-day, you know."

"Yes, I know. Very soon, are you not?"

No direct reply, (very rude indeed.)

"Millie," he said; and poor Philip's voice trembled the while, "I—I—I did not mean to be selfish, and to trouble you again; but it is very hard Millie, to give up a long, long cherished dream. We have grown up together from little children; and you don't know, you *can't* know, Millie, how you have been mixed up with all my life's dreams, and aims, and lookings-forward-to. I did so hope," he continued, "that, that—Well," he said, suddenly checking himself, and looking up, for he had hitherto kept his head bent low over the chimney-shelf. "I must be brave—forgive me."

It was no good. I must look up now or never, and stop him. I ought not to have let him say what he had.

I went up close to him. He mistook the movement; and, drawing near to me, held out his hand.

I took it. But as I did so, and he saw my face, he also saw his mistake.

So, still letting him hold my hand, I blurted out straight-forwardly—

"Philip, no one knows it here, not even my father; but since I left England I have promised some one to be their wife; and, though it will never be now—we are nothing to each other now; yet, yet—." He interrupted my stupid, stammering explanation.

"I understand you, Millie, thank you," and my hand was held as if it were in a vice, and then let go.

"I have no *right* to trouble you with my hopes now Good-bye, Millie."

He said, "Good bye, Millie," and yet he was no going away that minute.

Ah! I thought, as I caught a glimpse of his burning glowing face, you *will* be brave, Philip; I know you are not the one to fold your hands for a little cross like this at life's onset. For you know too well that life has for you more to do than to try to win Millie Heaton's love.

"I may never have the opportunity for saying so much again," he added, after a pause. "But, Millie, you have no brother, and—and—I want you to promise, that should you ever wish you had, you will only, for the sake of old days, let me be as one to you," he continued, hurriedly, as if afraid I might speak. "Don't be angry, Millie; but I think I know something of some things you have to make you anxious now; and a woman often wants something more than her own judgment to rely upon, in a time when peculiar difficulties thicken. You will promise, Millie?"

Brave, true-hearted Philip—God bless him! But if Philip was brave, I showed myself anything but that. I know I was an egregious goose; but I had only just parted from Edith, and, of course, that was the cause—I *will* have it so. But I burst out crying—I, who never cried! Dear, noble-hearted, chivalrous old Philip! I was never so near loving him in my life as I was then. There was nothing to be afraid of "in the tail of his eye," as he tried to brace me up again.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Nature has assigned
Two sovereign remedies for human grief.
Religion, surest, firmest, first, and best,
Strength to the weak, and to the wounded balm;
And strenuous action next."

SOUTHEY.

LITTLE as I felt fitted for it, I had undertaken to teach Maggie whilst I remained at home; and this kept me, in some small measure, from thinking as much as I probably should have done, if I had nothing to do.

It was quite settled that I was not to go back to Arrés. Mademoiselle de Garaye had been written to, to that effect, and I had had more than one discussion with my father relative to the scheme I had formed. It was quite wonderful how bold I had become since the talk in the lane.

The scheme was just this—that I should go back to France as English governess in some school where my services as teacher would be accepted in part, if not entirely, as compensation for Maggie's education.

Alice still continued languid and ailing; but not sufficiently ill to keep me at home, and prevent my carrying out my intention. One thing was decided upon, that housekeeping should be given up, and that the coming winter should be spent by Alice and papa, in some cheap, mild part of Devon or Cornwall, and after that—well, we should see.

So, what with arranging their plans, and looking after my own, time sped by; and one day, through the medium of post-office and postman, brought me a reply from Walter.

I have often thought since, how fortunate it was that I was the first to see the letters that morning. What my father, or Alice, would have thought of my receiving an Indian letter I know not; but it had never once

occurred to me that the letter (for that there would be one I never doubted) might fall into their hands. It was only after I had it that it flashed across me. It was pretty much what I expected, though it cut me to the quick—angry, expostulating, and justly indignant—and I deserved it all. He had full right to complain, and to be angry. He urgently pleaded that the engagement should continue the same as ever; he would wait until he came home—longer even.

But I had made up my mind that "it *must*" be at an end—altogether, entirely—and I was right. I did doubt once whether I had been so, but I know now that I was. I wrote once more; and in my letter said I was going on the continent again, but where I did not know. And truly thankful was I that I did not, and could say so.

I also added that our home was to be broken up, and that no letters would ever come to hand if addressed to our present residence, for papa and Alice would shortly leave there also.

I did not hesitate to tell him frankly (why should I?) that it was hard to part; but I entreated him not to write to my father. I was afraid he might attempt to do so. I was very thankful I had asked him not to, at the time of our engagement; not that I then had any wish that there should be concealment, but I wanted to tell them myself. He did not give in very willingly; but at last said he would wait until I told him he might.

Mrs. Polrudon had been brought up "a Friend," and in her early days had been on intimate terms with Elizabeth Fry; and she would tell us stories by the hour about her, and her early girlhood, and love of finery and gaiety; and, what she loved best to speak of, her beautiful after life.

She had been "read out" of the society on her marriage with Mr. Polrudon, and she was now an earnest thorough church-woman in heart and practise, but the language of old long ago days still clung to her; and though she never used it in ordinary daily life, it would come out unawares as it were, when she was more than usually loving and affectionate—and "thee" and "thou" her favourites.

Squatting on the hearth-rug was always a favourite

position of mine; and I was thus *floored* one evening, not long after Edith's marriage, when I had been taking tea with Mrs. Polrudon. There I sat, staring hard at the red fire; which hot and glaring as it was, I don't think I either felt or saw. I had stayed thus all the time Mrs. Polrudon, who had been called out of the room, had been away. My thoughts were very busy; for I had that day received a letter which would probably determine where next, for a time, would be my lot—when, Mrs. Polrudon, re-entering the room, brought me back again to the present. She sat down in her low chair by the side of the fire-place, and drew my head on to her lap.

"Ah!" I said, "this is nice, and like old days. I used to often long for it when I had an Arrés head-ache."

The smooth hand was shedding back my hair from off my forehead, (somehow, it always *would* fall about my face), just like Mabel used to do—it brought her to my recollection—and I suppose, she saw a passing shadow cloud my face.

"Why need thee have any more Arrés head-aches, Millie?"

I am not likely to have any more *Arrés* head-aches," I said; "and that reminds me I want to talk to you about the letter I have received to day; so let us discuss my plans."

"But, why need thee have any of *thy* plans? Millie thee need not; let others plan for thee, they will gladly."

"I must," I said.

"Nay! thee need not."

I looked up at her.

"I know, Millie!"

I suppose, I looked as if I thought Philip might have kept his own counsel.

"He could not help himself, Millie. I saw there was something amiss, and made him tell me. I got it out of him!"

"You'd get anything out of anybody," I said.

"Then let me get a promise out of thee; that thee will take Edith's place, here at our hearth; for Philip thinks of settling down where all his father's friends are."

"No, no! it can't be."

"I want to ask you about papa and Alice," I hurriedly continued. "Then this letter," I said, rattling on as fast as I could. "I really think it will just do. You see, they offer to take Maggie for much less than their full terms, on my throwing my services into the scale; and the inquiries I have made about it are very satisfactory. Winter is settling in. These September evenings are already chilly; and I think the sooner we all "*flit*," the better. Papa and Alice into Devon or Cornwall, to take up their winter quarters at some nice, mild, cheap place; and Maggie and I off for France, and, who knows." I continued talking arrant nonsense, so that we might not again touch on dangerous subjects.

"Devonshire squab pye, or the Cornish pye, which is squabbler than squab," as Southey has it; "may go a wonderful way towards bringing back Alice's appetite, if she can only be persuaded to try them."

She laughed. "Ah, Millie! do thee think I can't see through thee, child? I am afraid thee art become artful since thee went to France."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Avec le devoir pour point d'appui, la volonté est un levier qui peut, sinon, soulever des montagnes, du moins les etager sans etre ecrasé."

"Every ant on the hill carries its load; and its home is but made by the burdens that it bears."

> And with a lighter heart she went her way,
> Trusting at God's own time some golden ray
> Would gleam on *her*, and touch her dark to-day.

> Thou shalt not be alone;
> Have but an eye on God, as surely God will have an eye on thee!

READER! did you ever have a fish's cold tail laid in your hand? If so, you can realize, or at least imagine, tolerably precisely what Madame Duboisjolin's shake of the hand was like.

Her hand (it was *always* cool) was laid on yours for an imperceptible instant, and then slid off; "à la fish tail." No kindly pressure; no hearty grasp; none of that indescribable "something" that conveys an instinctive assurance of welcome. There is a great deal in the way people shake hands. Some win you, as it were, at once. With others, you feel only too thankful if you happen fortunately to have gloves on; and you hope and trust that you will never have to undergo the penalty again. You scarcely know why or wherefore, but you recoil from their touch; for which feeling of repulsion we can only give the reason, which is no reason at all, for not liking "Doctor Fell."

I always seem to know at once if I am welcome or not; glad to be seen, or otherwise, by the way people shake hands with me. I have felt all my courage ooze out at my finger tips, by the manner in which said digits have been taken—the sort of touch that conveyed as plainly as the owner of the hand had spoken—

"Oh! dear me! You is it! What a bore!"

And, again, many a time a hearty grasp has seemed to say—

"Courage, and cheer up!" putting new heart into one. Just like a sunny, brave, true smile, sends one on the way rejoicing, with a glow at the heart; and three times the "go" in us that we had before. We feel as if we should rather like to give our cap a fling in the air, or take the next five-barred gate at a flying leap.

Two days and a night in the "Diligence" had not added to the composure of our nerves, or presentability of our appearance.

Maggie was in a complete tremor. Poor child! her little heart palpitated to such a degree, that I told her it was well that she had a very stout "vicaire" on one side and myself on the other, to wedge her into her seat, else she would surely have throbbed off it. But, the look of awful expectation on her face, too plainly shewed she thought it no laughing matter. And I must own to a considerable share of come-overishness myself, when we found ourselves ascending the "perron" in front of the château.

Though I only knew Madame Duboisjolin through the medium of her references and letters, yet these had been so satisfactory, that it seemed as if the post I was about to undertake had been made on purpose to oblige me.

A Mrs. Drayton had occupied the position of English instructress with Madame Duboisjolin, a lady, of whom she wrote "She had the highest regard. A most estimable person." But whose health had been much affected of late; and, therefore, she wished to meet with a young lady who would assist Mrs. Drayton, and also devote a small portion of her time to the English education of Madame's own little girl. The whole of the duties were to occupy but three hours daily. The rest of the time was to be entirely my own; and I was to have the advantage of all the professors' lessons.

This "estimable" Mrs. Drayton had been my "cauchemer" ever since I had first heard of her. I had such a horror of estimable people.

We were met by a "bonne," and followed her in fear

and trembling to the château, our luggage being trundled at our heels.

We pressed through the usual "porte cochère," ascended a flight of wide, low steps, extending all along the front of the house, and entered the latter at the centre of three glass half-windows, half-doors, which formed a sort of entrance-hall. This was flanked on each side by two little wings, each containing a glass door. The apartment into which we were ushered occupied the whole breadth of the house; and at first sight seemed to be nothing but doors and windows, having the three windows before mentioned on the entrance side, with three precisely similar ones facing, looking out into a garden behind. Large folding doors took up almost one end of the room; and a fire-place, flanked on each side by doors, the other. The floor was paved with black and white marble squares. The walls painted; and what space there was left by the time doors and windows had been considered, hung thickly with paintings in oil, and highly-finished chalk drawings.

It was just at the mid-day recreation hour that we arrived, and all the pupils were out in the garden at the back of the house, and were plainly visible to us.

Madame Duboisjolin did not keep us waiting long; but I had time to take a glance at my future pupils, and Maggie's future companions.

They did not appear to be anything like the number of pupils at Arrés, and were most of them tall and old-looking. I caught a glimpse of one or two fine-looking girls, who proved to be specimens of the pure Norman type.

The garden had none of the picturesque beauty of the one at Arrés. No flying buttresses to be seen above its walls. No quaint old well in its centre. It was a large square, and had a broad walk running all around it, broken at the furthest end by a short path under some lime-trees, which formed, with their interlaced branches, a "*berceau*," where the girls clustered in summer. But they now walk round and round, girls in twos and threes, row after row, eating large slices of bread, and apples. The large clasp knifes in hand, which, with sabots, constitutes a portion of every French girl's

belongings. Some few of them clattering along in the latter, for a slight shower had fallen, and French girls are in every respect as much afraid of water as cats, indeed more so, for the latter *do* wash their faces, whilst the former generally content themselves with an indefinite touch over with the minute corner of a minute towel. Ugh! the hands I have seen!

Certainly the formal, ill-kept old garden looked its best that morning to welcome us. It had its "pavillon" of course, up in one corner. I never saw a French garden that had not one; and hideous as it was it actually looked picturesque, as seen from where we were, half hidden among the shrubs which occupied a portion of the centre of the garden nearest the house. It was one of those "April" days, of shower one minute and sunshine the next, one sees sometimes in October, and the gush of golden light and flickering sheen that fell upon the old summer-house, and athwart the changing leaves, with all their varied hues, and exquisite graduating shades of green, and brown, and red, looked gloriously lovely after our long imprisonment inside the diligence. But I could never find that loveliness again.

But, behold a door opens to the right, and forth issues Madame Duboisjolin from the room beyond, very tall, very plain, with grey hair arranged in a large sort of puffy curl on each side of her face, a very high, square forehead, rather small nose, large mouth, and such eyes! keen—no, not keen—sharp, cold, and glittering. A stately, sweeping march, and such a back! Ah! that was Madame's killing point. No one could look at that back without awe—straight, and flat, and unbending, as a back could well be. It looked as if it were *planed* every morning of her life.

She received us very *graciously*—that is the exact term—*conversed* a short time with us. Madame "could never do such a thing as *chat*"—and then we were conducted to our room. I had stipulated that we should have one to ourselves.

Maggie was gone out with the other pupils on the following afternoon, and I had remained at home to write an account of our safe arrival to papa and Alice.

I had nearly finished my letter when some one tapped at my door, and Mrs. Drayton entered, and asked me if I should like to come to her room where there was a fire. It was a small apartment; and, although on the second storey, had a brick floor—this, however, was partly covered with matting. The bed was in an alcove at the end of the room, and sleeping soundly in it was a dear little fellow of about five. "My little boy," she said, as I glanced that way. A strange announcement it appeared to me. It seemed rather odd, that one in her position in the school should have a comparative infant with her there.

I was very glad of this opportunity of seeing Mrs. Drayton alone, as there was much connected with my new duties I wanted to ask her about. Madame Duboisjolin had formally introduced us to each other the preceding day, and I had thought her prepossessing and particularly lady-like. I had seen the little boy, in going to my room, during the day; and had been surprised at seeing him, having been led to understand that the little girl I was about in some measure to have the education of, was Madam Duboisjolin's only child.

Scantily, and almost meanly, as the room was furnished, it yet had an air of refinement and taste. A few beautifully executed chalk drawings were hung on the walls. One in particular, in coloured crayons, struck me exceedingly. Mrs. Drayton explained that it was copied from an oil painting of Monsieur Dessiné's, the drawing master at the school. It represented the east end of the exterior of one of the most beautiful churches there, and Carrière is rich in noble specimens of ecclesiastical architecture. The picture was taken at midnight on Christmas eve, during the celebration of the midnight mass. It was very striking—the clear, cold midnight sky, with some far off, heavy, snow-charged clouds, contrasting finely with the rich, deep glow of the exquisite window, illuminated from within; the long lines of broken, burning light, falling in gleams against the walls in deep shadow, broken here and there by a snow-drift, or flakes, and patches of the same. A few graceful little statuettes, that can be bought so cheaply there, were placed about the room; but its

most beautiful ornament was a simple, but perfectly proportioned cross calvary, of the beautiful Caen stone, with its three emblematical steps, "Faith, Hope, and Charity." There were also a good many books scattered about. I opened one, and on the fly-leaf was written the name, "Wymonde Kilmore," which I supposed had been Mrs. Drayton's maiden name.

She had apparently been correcting a pile of exercises which were on the table; and, after we had talked awhile, she asked me to excuse her going on chatting and finishing her corrections at the same time.

"Let me help you," I said. "The sooner I begin my work the better."

Some of the exercises were most absurdly blundering, and highly amusing. The attempts of some to write an English letter had produced the most comical compositions conceivable.

It really does seem impossible for French girls as a general rule to attain to anything like a proficiency in our language. I had heard Miss Jackson say it was sheer waste of time in most cases she had had to deal with, and Mrs. Drayton's piles of "cahiers" did not appear to bear witness to a different conclusion as regarded her experience.

"I sometimes feel it almost a hopeless task," Mrs. Drayton remarked, "and I am afraid you will too; but you must not get disheartened—though, certainly, what I have just said does not seem very encouraging; but we have a few really bright, clever girls, who are learning English, and they make up for the others; still, there are those attempting to take lessons, with regard to whom it is only a pity that they should waste their own time and mine in the attempt."

"Oh dear!" I groaned, "I begin to think the whole system of education is rotten to the very core. See—parents waste their money, and children waste their time, and often their health; and teachers waste their time and energy, and wear away their lives, and what is done first and quickest"—their tempers, smilingly interrupted Mrs. Drayton—"and tempers," I continued, "all to no purpose. What is attained in the end? Look, for instance, at half the girls here; for I do not suppose

they are different from others similarly placed. Years have some of them been grinding at school, drilled and tread-milled, and tread-milled and drilled, and what is the result?"

"I believe the first and chiefest thing that *all* should be taught is entirely left out at schools," Mrs. Drayton replied. "Teachers undertake to teach a girl three or four languages, and all the no end of things that are at the present day included in a 'good general education;' but I have not yet met with the school where to teach a girl '*to think*' was esteemed a matter to be taken into consideration—still, I cannot but hope some satisfactory ends are ultimately attained, if teachers work with anything like single-mindedness, and are truly in earnest, surely *some* good results, however defective may be the system that they are obliged to pursue. Then, again, a girl at school is in a transition state; and it is far more difficult than we are generally inclined to think, to predicate how that girl may turn out."

"I think, perhaps," I said, "that you are speaking more particularly of *education*, but I meant *instruction* only."

"True," she replied; "and there comes the knot. It unfortunately happens, at the present day, that parents and friends imagine that all children must have the same tastes, pursuits, and inclinations, leaving out that a graduating scale of ability is a thing never thought of, particularly as regards girls. I believe it is sometimes admitted, that boys *may* be differently endowed, and that some are more gifted than others; but as regards their sisters, they must all be linguists, musicians, artistes, and well-informed women all alike, all in the same proportion—no one must excel the other. It is not a poor girl's *misfortune*, but her *fault*, if she does not come up to the required standard; and C. D. is not to have any allowance made for her, if she is not up in every respect with A. B."

"What a pity it is," I said, "people won't be stupid with grace and dignity; and, after all, what is cleverness compared with goodness? Now people, let them be as stupid and '*bornés*' as they well can be, are always respectable and to be respected, and have a certain indi-

vidual dignity pertaining to them, so long as they don't make any pretension, and are natural, and unaffected, just as it pleased God they should be. It is only when they begin to attempt to pass for what they are not that they become contemptible."

"Yes," Mrs. Drayton answered, "there is something in plain, simple truth, that always tells; it is only when falsehood begins, that the feeling of something mean and despicable, something to be pitied and deplored, by those who feel too sadly to laugh at it, is first felt."

"I don't think any right-minded person," I said, "*could* laugh at, or feel contempt for, a person, simply because they were not clever, or of a high tone of mind."

"I believe people can have a high tone of mind without being clever."

"Do you think," I continued, "you could feel that reverence and respect for a poor, ignorant, but good simple-minded person, you would for a good—mind. I expressly say *good*, and also refined and intellectual person?"

"H'm!" Then, after a pause, "Yes! I am sure I should—the same in *kind*, but not in degree."

"That just answers my question," I replied. "Oh!" I burst out; for, come to think of it, I believe I was set a going, and must have been rather pathetic. "It is a sickening thought! Here am I going, as it is commonly called, 'out as a governess,' one day soon. Well! I want so to try to make noble-minded girls—good women of those entrusted to me—I don't want simply to cram so much into them, at so much per annum (that being the lowest amount possible), and then, most likely, beat down by parents, if they can; at all events, they will try—*that*, I may be sure of. I do not want simply that they shall speak so many languages, or rather, pretend to do so, play so well, sing so well, draw and paint so well. If they have talent for all these things (and, of course, they all will), well and good, I shall be the very first to beg parents to let it be cultivated to the fullest extent. I shall want to try to 'educate;' and all they will most likely care for will be that I shall 'instruct.' I may be a Hindoo, as regards creed, for aught they will

care, can I only, professing that faith, or any other similar one, in my heart, go to church twice on Sundays—nothing more will be required. Nobody will ask a single question about that, or yet what kind of morality I profess; but enough will be asked as regards what I can teach, where I have acquired accomplishments, and for how small a sum will I work, and worry myself into a consumption."

Mrs. Drayton seemed amused at my vehemence.

"You have not tried it yet; and when you do, it may not prove so bad as you think," she said.

"But others have, and found it so," I answered. "But, I declare, I have nearly awakened your little boy. I had better be off, and leave you and him in peace. Good night."

"I like her," I thought, as I threaded my way back to my own room. "Of one thing I am very sure, she is a lady."

How strange that I should talk to her in that unfettered style at once! I am sure I shall never do so to Madame Duboisjolin. No! never!

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Art thou dejected? is thy mind o'ercast?
Thy gloom to chase, go, fix some weighty truth;
Chain down some passion; do some gen'rous good;
Teach ignorance to see, or grief to smile!
Correct thy friend, befriend thy greatest foe;
Or, with warm heart, and confidence divine,
Spring up, and lay strong hold on him who made thee—
Thy gloom is scattered."

My pupil, "in particular," was a tall, gaunt girl of ten, sallow-faced, and dark-eyed, with her straight black hair worn drawn tightly off her face, dressed in a "blouse," close up to the throat, and down to the wrists, while black stuff legs terminated her costume, and, generally, coloured stockings. She was quick and sharp, and *could* learn well; but indolent and self-willed. Added to this, there was nothing to work upon. She could be pleasing and "*amiable*," in the French acceptation of the word, which is widely different from the English version of the same, and piquante, and full of sparkling repartee, beyond her years. But she did not *ring;* there was no true tone in her that pronounced her to be sound and genuine; and so, on the whole, she was a troublesome pupil, but I consoled myself by thinking she might have been worse.

The morning after our arrival, "Madame"—she was never called by any other style within the château. It seemed to be a sort of title awarded her. Monsieur Duboisjolin invariably called her "Madame," the governesses called her "Madame," and so did the pupils, and so did the servants. One got so accustomed to call her by this style only, that it really rather puzzled us sometimes when we heard Madame Duboisjolin named; and for the moment one felt as if some stranger was meant. Well, the morning after we came, Madame requested my presence in the "salon," to tell me about my

principal pupil, Angélique. She was such an uncommon child (and there I quite agreed with her), so clever and "remplie d'esprit," but so sensitive and finely organised, with nerves so delicately strung, etc., etc., that it required the greatest tact and "ménagement" to guide her, and so on, "ad infinitum." Really it made one tremble to undertake such a charge. Madame was seated in a large throne-like "fauteuil;" her invariable seat, I afterwards found. And she had motioned me to a chair just opposite to her. And awfully formidable it was. Madame was so courteous, and so calm and self-possessed, and I was so awkward and perturbed; and the more nervous and flurried I got, the more suave and "à son aise" she seemed to be, as if she delighted in the contrast. I verily believe if she had not, just in time, said, "She would not detain me any longer, we should have many opportunities of referring to the subject"—to which I mentally ejaculated, "Not if I can help it!"—that I should have been seized with an attack of the nerves, and obliged precipitately to retire.

There was nothing a girl dreaded so much as a summons to that awful "salon." Madame took no part in the tuition—she was merely "Directrice"—and a short visit to the classes daily was all she condescended; but somehow, marvellous to relate, she nevertheless seemed to know every thing that occurred there, and, "Madame vous demande au salon," used to send a spasm through every one to whom it was ever addressed. I never went there, thus summoned, without feeling "goosy-flesh" all over. Madame never scolded, never lost her temper, never raised her voice, never *fired* up (very different from Mademoiselle de Garaye, whose voice would sometimes, when we deserved it, resound through the classe till we shook in our shoes, and her eyes would flash, and she would gesticulate till one wondered her hand did not fall off). Not so, Madame. She never forgot herself. And if any difference, her voice was lower and more modulated, and her words better chosen, if that could be, and more elegantly expressed. It was really wonderful—nay, not only so, but *admirable*—the perfect self-command she had. You could not help admiring her for it, for there was no

hiding the inward temper from a keen observer. She was a remarkable compound of the very strong and the very weak.

The girls used to declare that they shuddered when her clear, cold, more than usually soft tones greeted them. They would rather any time have been pinched black and blue, than feel her smooth soft hand resting so tenderly and gently on their shoulder, whilst the sharp cold eyes gleamed on them with the sort of mesmeric influence the snake exercises over its victim. At least the English girls, of whom there were but few, said so; the French girls thought Madame perfection.

Our dinner hour was five; and from half-past six until eight, there was the evening preparation for the next day. There were not more than one half the number of pupils there were at Arrés, and these were all boarders, there were no "*externes*." It was entirely a *finishing* school, and took no very young pupils. There was but one resident French governess, and she did little more than to see that the lessons were prepared for the masters. The instruction was on a rather different plan from that at Arrés; it was nearly entirely given by lectures. For instance, in history, we should have to make a "resumé" from what we could rapidly note down during the lesson, and read up, and arrange in chronological order, a certain portion against the next lesson, always taking the history of two or three countries together, and connecting them through their wars, principal events, etc.

Old Professor Cerveau was the terror of every lazy girl. There was no taking things easy with him; he was for ever whipping them up to their work, with unflagging zeal, and unflinching determination. To see him enter the classe with a large roll of "notes" under his arm, was dreadful; but when you knew that 'ere he left it, they would one by one be strewed like Autumn leaves about his feet, it was terrible! particularly, in the dog-days; and, above all, to remember that before they lay scattered there, you would be cross-examined on them all, under the fire of the fiercest eyes that ever gleamed beneath spectacles. As each leaf was done with, he would fling it down on the ground. And the

hottest day that ever dawned made no difference to him—he always looked the same—cool, and bloodless, as if he lived underground, where no light ever by any chance penetrated. He used to make me think of a person who had been buried two or three days, and dug up again.

About half-past eight of an evening, Mrs. Drayton and I adjourned to the salon for about an hour, which was rather a pleasant change after the day's work was over; as Monsieur Duboisjolin was then full of the news of the day, and used to be very desirous to know if we had either of us had the latest "Tims" sent to us, and what that leading English journal said of affairs in general.

About six months before I arrived at Carrière, Madame had had some English ladies, as "Dames en chambre;" and, in compliment to them, she had introduced tea of an evening, and the ceremony was still kept up when I came, and continued through the winter; after that it died a natural death. Mrs. Drayton or myself relieved Madame of the office of tea-maker, or rather *tea-pourer*, for the decoction; and a very queer one it usually was—was made in the kitchen. Cups and saucers were rather out of the common affairs there, at least, I never saw but four—two sound ones; one chipped, and inclined to a sort of tipsy motion, totally unbecoming a tea-cup, owing to the rim having met with an accident; and the fourth was handleless. Of course when it devolved on me to pour out the beverage, I took the one without a handle; and whilst we sat solemnly around, in the full belief (at least on the part of two of the company) that we were having tea in the true, orthodox, comfortable English style, I was continually scalding my fingers in the vain attempt to carry my cup to my lips. I remember once, when I had got it half way on the "trajet" it suddenly felt so intolerably hot, that I suddenly popped it down again, with an excruciating little "oh!" that made Madame look at me, as if she thought I was a Hottentot, and no civilised being. It was very comical—that tea, "quite in the comfortable English style!"

Mrs. Drayton and I always withdrew as soon as

possible after it was over. But I used to often wonder, after a pleasant chat with Monsieur Duboisjolin, or a little political, or social skirmish, or discussion as to the infallibility of the "Tims" as the British mouth-piece, what there was in the summons to the "Salon" to make me shiver; but sure as the next day came, and some one appeared on the threshold of the "classe" with "Madame vous demande," so sure did it sound to to me like "Madame is going to chop your head off."

And yet, Madame had many good points. She was kind-hearted, sensitive, refined, and endowed with admirable tact. I think her great defect was (in spite of her awe-inspiring back) her having no back-bone.

I had expected that I should settle down to my studies, and the daily routine at once, just as I had done at Arrés. I was a goose to think so. It was a long time before I *settled* to anything.

Of course, I gave Angélique her daily lessons, and assisted Mrs. Drayton, and regularly plodded on at my own studies; but I was far from *settled* the while.

Now, the anxiety and uncertainty of the last few months were over, I collapsed and felt completely up to nothing. It was weary, weary work to keep up appearances, and to try to conquer the dreadful feeling of having no real interest in anything. I really believe, if I had had time, that I should have been very ill. Fortunately for me, I could not find the opportunity to do so. And, besides, there was somehow a feeling in that house that nobody ought to do such an out-of-the-way proceeding, and so I did not attempt it, and gradually got better; but it was a long, long time before I was quite myself again—and the struggle to keep up was sometimes terrible.

I had been subject to occasional attacks of violent headache at Arrés after a hard day's work, or when more than usually worried; but then they had been but occasional, few, and far between. Now, I was continually suffering from them. They generally came on late in the day. The usual relief of going to bed was no relief to me. The pain was so intense that I could not bear to move my head to the right or to the left after I had once laid it on the pillow. I lay stretched

out, still and motionless, but quite wide awake—hour after hour—when Maggie was fast asleep. Thus should I lie, with a feeling as if my strength were gradually *evaporating*. It was a most singular sensation. And when I got up the next morning, I often felt as if I had just left my bed after a long weakening illness.

It was a favourite theory of mine at that time, that mind can master matter; and that much can be effected by the strong determined will not to give way. And that we are seldom so ill as we fancy, and can do much to send it off, if we will but do battle, and not give way at the beginning. But matter decidedly mastered mind just then. Late events had possibly greatly weakened my will, and it was not so active as usual.

After a while I got better, and eventually quite well; but, for the time, the suffering and the *agonising* —mentally and physically—were terrible. More terrible, perhaps, because borne so utterly alone and unknown; locked up closely within my own breast; and gnawing daily, like the wolf concealed beneath the robe of the Spartan boy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"One and all."

CORNISH MOTTO.

"Copper, tin, and fish."

CORNISH TOAST.

"POL———, CHURCH-TOWN,
"NEAR TRE——, CORNWALL, 18—.

"MY DEAR MILLIE—Here we are, settled down in the most delightful little spot you can imagine, and already I feel degrees better. Oh! but how I wish you could see the cliffs here! they are grand! I could rave on to the amount of double postage about them; but, as even then I could not do them anything like justice, I think I had better not waste time and paper in ravings which I know you abominate. But, oh! how I wish you could see the gorse (*furze* they call it here.) There is one little nook that I call the 'Field of the Cloth of Gold!' You should see it with the full sunlight shining on it! I do not wonder that Linnæus, when he first saw the golden gorse, thanked God for having made it. Papa has taken to antiquarian researches. He has already no end of 'Antiquities of Cornwall.' I am writing this on old Borlase's back, my desk having met with an accident in travelling. I am sure you will be glad to hear that, or anything else, rather than it should be a mining fancy, of which temptation you were so afraid. (I am referring to the antiquarian researches, not to my broken desk.) For a week he did come home, day after day, with abominably dirty shoes, and his pockets filled with what they call here '*specimens*,' and very beautiful some of them are, I must allow. He was also for a week (so, you may think, the fit was on him strong) full of going down into a mine, and actually went to 'Wheal Adventure,' (all the mines around here are called *Wheal* something, which I

will take pity on your ignorance by telling you means 'Hole,' or *mine*, being a corruption of the Cornish word 'Huel.') You see I am getting quite learned. Well, papa set off on his downward travels; but I believe the sight of the 'captain's (all the managers of the mines are called captains), or, as they pronounce it here, *cap'n*—the sight of the cap'n's dirty clothes, and the piece of tallow candle he would have to wear (wear the clothes, I mean, and carry the candle), so disgusted him, that he came home without going down, and I believe he has been so ashamed of himself, that he would rather not talk much on the subject of mines.

"You will think it odd, I am sure, to see 'Church-town' as part of our address; but it is no town at all, only the village where the parish church is, is called the Church-town in Cornwall. This consists of the parsonage, a superior kind of one-storied cottage, where the lieutenant placed here in the preventive or coast guard service resides, and where we have been fortunate enough to secure lodgings, and a higgledy-piggledy lot of cottages, all just of a par. We like Mr. and Mrs. Pendean, the clergyman, and his wife, very much. The church is so near the sea that one can hear the plash of the waves, and see the white sails as they pass. It is curiously ornamented with the most singular tablets and inscriptions. Immediately opposite the seat where we sit, there is hung against the wall a large frame, quaintly carved at the top, containing a copy of King Charles First's letter to his faithful Cornish subjects, and when I glance up at it, and read the 'I, Charles Rex,' with which the remembrance begins, I cannot help thinking of that last 'Remember!'

"And then, between the arches and the windows, are queer traceries in, apparently, yellow ochre, representing droll imitations of knots and scrolls, containing texts of Scripture.

"Would you believe it, there is a myrtle trained against the front of this house, so tall, that it reaches to the roof. It is green and flourishing now; and, they tell me, in summer it is covered with blossoms.

"I have not yet had an opportunity of trying 'the pye that is squabbler than squab;' but I have eaten

Cornish pasty. 'Don't pronounce it pāsty as I did at first, it is pâsty.' Now, what do you suppose a pastey is like? It is neither 'fish, flesh, or fowl;' at least, the one I eat was not, for it was made of fruit. But a pasty is a round piece of pye crust, of any size you like, filled with anything you choose, no matter what. The Cornish put everything into a pasty. In fact, there is a tradition that a nameless personage never comes into Cornwall, because he is afraid of being caught, and put into a pasty! (how angry you'll be when you read that!) When the something—whatever you like, is put in a little pile on the middle of the round piece of dough, you double it over, something like a turn-over puff, and pinch it up, and tuck it in, and there you have your pasty. I ought to know, because I made one yesterday; only, somehow, it would'nt stick together, but came all abroad at the top, and looked very much as if the baker had sat upon it, instead of being of a nice shapely form, '*keenly*' as our landlady called it, she said it was rather a '*whist*' looking affair; but I am going to try again to-morrow, and Mrs. Tregeagle encourages me, by saying, I shall get more *keenly* in time; *fitty*, and *keenly*, and *whist* are untranslatable, but most expressive terms. But I must tell you how the pasty is cooked. It is done in the open air, under a large iron thing, very like a great saucepan turned upside down, called a '*Baker*.' The thing to be cooked is put under this on a flat iron, and turf and gorse, alias *furze*, are piled up all about it.

"We are going to-morrow to see a famous 'Mên-an-Tol,' and pasties are capital things for such excursions. If only you and Maggie could be with us! I expect you will have a *treble* postage letter from papa, after we have been there, asking you no end of questions about the 'Menhir' and 'Dolmen,' and the curious 'Peulven' you used to tell us about, with a crucifix and cock on its summit, that you saw in Brittany. Look out! for I can forewarn you from certain unmistakeable symptons, that the infliction is coming. I wish I could, by any means, give you something like a satisfactory description of a scene we witnessed the very first night of our arrival. I believe, we should have

no opportunity of seeing such a sight after this month, so we may consider ourselves lucky. It was what is called 'Tucking the Seine,' and that means taking 'a catch of pilchards.' Papa and I had strolled out on the cliff, and were just remarking a peculiar look in the water, and wondering what could occasion it, when we heard, all on a sudden, a great noise and commotion; and in less than no time the cliffs were swarming with people. I should not have thought the whole village contained more than half the number. Carts were rattling down over the shingle, close to the water's edge; and it looked for the moment as if all the houses had been turned into boats—so many suddenly appeared from 'no-where,' apparently. It was most exciting watching the scene from where we stood; the boats gradually closing in round the huge net, in which thousands of fish, gleaming through the meshes like silver, were vainly endeavouring to escape. It was a lovely evening; and while we stood there the sun sank down behind the Western sea, like a globe of fire. I never saw it set in the water before, and it was magnificent. We were so interested in the scene, that we stayed there till long after the sun had gone down; and then, as the light waned dimmer and dimmer, the huge 'Tors' assumed all sorts of weird forms in the vague light; whilst, down below, the busy excitement continued uninterruptedly—deep Rembrant lights, being thrown upon the living picture from large lanterns, which were lighted so soon as the light waned."

There was much more in Alice's letter, more personal news; but it bore all through, a cheerful tone—such as none of her letters had done for a long time. I paced up and down the "*Berceau*" under the linden trees, after I had read it—thinking—thinking! Maggie came running up to me, flushed with pride at having won a high place in her class that day. Papa was well; Alice was happy; what more did I want? Was it not "All right?" Yes! yes! and yet the wolf gnawed to the very quick, just there.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"God took thee in his mercy,
A lamb untask'd, untried;
He fought the fight for thee,
He won the victory,
And thou art sanctified.

"I look around and see
The sinful ways of men;
And, Oh! beloved child,
I'm more than reconciled
To thy departure then!

"The little arms that clasp'd me,
The innocent lips that prest,
Would they have been as pure
Till now, as when of yore
I lulled thee on my breast?

"Now like a dewdrop shrin'd
Within a crystal stone,
Thou'rt safe in heaven my dove,
Safe with the source of love,
The everlasting One!"

I HAD soon enough to do, to have little time for anything but *doing*.

Mrs. Drayton's little boy fell ill; and she, of course, was constantly with him, so that her duties and my own both devolved on me.

It puzzled me at first how Madame put up with it. I could not make it out. But I was shortly put in possession of a few facts—partly through Madame and partly through Mrs. Drayton herself—that somewhat enlightened me.

About three years previously, Mrs. Drayton had been separated from her husband, who was still living; and, with her mother, had come to reside as "Dames en chambre" with Madame. They had very high references, paid well; and what Madame thought as much of as anything—had very good connections. They were of Irish origin; and Mrs. Drayton possessed all the warm, quick,

generous impulses of her nation. Possibly, this very antipodial temperament to her own, was one cause why Madame became so much attached to Mrs. Drayton. The very high-mindedness and scorn of everything mean and grovelling that one could see, ran like a vein of silver through every deed and act of Mrs. Drayton's; *made* one respect and esteem her.

I fancy Mrs. Drayton was, in a great measure, dependent on her mother, who had a very handsome life annuity. And that may have been partly the reason, though I do not think the principal one, why, when old Mrs. Kilmore died, rather suddenly, about twelve months before I arrived at Carrière, she offered to take the situation of English governess in the school, which became vacant rather suddenly at that time. "Let me have it, Madame," she said, "I shall be all the better for having something to do;" and so it was arranged. I had very early been led to the conclusion that Mrs. Drayton's married life had not been a happy one. For instance, when one day we had been speaking of French marriages, which I affirmed to be little better than buying and selling; and she said, in her half humorous, half sad way—

"Never marry a man because you love him, Millie!"

"I'll never marry him for anything else," I retorted.

"You'll repent it then, if you do," she answered. "Marry, Millie," she continued, (and all humour was gone now), "because you *know* him—know him to be good, and pure, and high-minded. And when you know him to be that, love him as much as you like; love him with your whole heart."

Another time, when we had been watching her little boy sleeping, I said—

"What a comfort this little fellow must be to you."

"Comfort," she repeated, in a strange unjoyous tone that I could not understand.

"Yes," she continued, after a pause, "he is a comfort;" and then, in a manner utterly at variance with her tone, she bent over him, and kissed him in a way that showed that he was more to her than even her passionate mother's love knew.

And at other times I have seen her break off sud-

denly, when fondling and caressing him, and almost sternly test his prompt obedience. I think she was afraid of loving him too much.

The disease rapidly gained ground; alarming symptom after symptom appeared; and then the bright, joyous little being was gone from us, and it was well with him. Short as his illness had been, it had worn his mother to a shadow. The morning he was buried, I went to take a last look of that little face I should never caress again—never see lifted to mine, beaming with life and animation. Those closely-sealed eyes would never again try to catch mine, and make me laugh when I ought to be grave—never peep out at me from beneath his long, tangled locks, after a game of romps. As I stood by the little coffin, I remembered how, but a few days before he was taken ill, when he began to cry at some trifling hurt, which had happened to him in playing, his mother had said—

"Oh! Gerald, I wouldn't cry at that! Let Millie see you are going to be a man!"

He had come to me, dashing away the tears, and squeezing his eyes tight the while that they should not burst out afresh; and, drawing himself up, said out, heartily—

"I'm going to be a man, Millie!"

I know, at the time, we could scarcely refrain from smiling; for, in spite of his brave bearing, his voice was very tremulous, and his little lip quivering the while.—

Ah! dear little Gerald! you will never be a man!—

As his mother replaced the cambric over the little waxen face, and turned her own, almost as death-like as his, towards me, she said—

"Millie, I never realised God's merciful love so fully as now he has taken my little one from me. Shall I tell you what has been my one thought, my one dread, ever since he was born? If he should—if he should—"

I understood what she meant, though she did not like to cast reproach on the father, by speaking of his faults beside the coffin of his and *her* dead child.

"I know it was wrong," she continued, hurriedly. "I know all you would say to me. God has put it into my heart many and many a time; but," she added, so

low that I scarcely heard, "'the sins of the father shall be visited upon the children.' God knows what my boy was to me, and He would never have taken him from me, when I wanted him to fill the aching void *here*," putting her hand so piteously on her heart, it made mine ache for her. "My boy would have been all I feared," she continued. "I could see the seeds springing up; you might not, but I could, and that is why God sent for him. He never would have done so else, for He knows that it will break my heart."

God comfort you, poor mother! I thought; and ease your aching, passionate heart! He only can.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Now thunders wafted from the torrid zone,
Growl, from afar, a deaf and hollow groan;
Now in a deluge bursts the living flame,
And dread concussion rends th' etherial frame;
And nature, shuddering, feels the horrid roar."

FALCONER.

WHAT a night it was! The thunder pealed right over our heads, as if it would split the old château. The lightening flashes succeeded each other, each one more vivid than the last. The storm had been looming in the distance all the evening; and now, just after we had gone to bed, it broke out furiously, close above us. It was grand!

"Are you afraid, Maggie?"

"Not a bit, Millie."

"Sure? I should like to open the shutters, and let the window wide."

It was a magnificent spectacle; but all in the house were not of the same opinion, for I could hear little half-suppressed shrieks from the dortoir overhead, at each flash; and from the room next to mine, a running fire of terrific groans of alarm was kept up.

I went to the door to try to re-assure them.

"Oh, Ciel!" and a dozen more similar ejaculations saluted me.

"Don't be stupid," I said; "there is nothing to keep such a noise about. Did you never witness a thunder storm before?"

"Oh! oh! Là! l—à!"

"Do behave rather more rationally; that is, if you can. Why, you don't know what you lose by keeping your heads buried in that way." Another hail storm chorus of national ejaculations.

Well, poor creatures! I know some people can't help it; but, for pity's sake, don't smother yourselves. What

good will that do? If there is danger, that won't ward it off. Why, you must be nearly suffocated!

More groans, and oh! ah 's, all up the "gamme."

Scolding was the only mean; as for reasoning, what French girl ever reasoned. I was very glad to hear Madame's step in the corridor; she would bring them to their senses if any one could! In she came, majestically enwrapped in a gorgeous Chinese patterned dressing-gown, looking like a regal robe, her calm—

"What is this, young ladies!" was magical. Feeling that now her efficiency was come, there was no need of me. I slipped away, whispering to Maggie to stay there a few minutes, whilst I went to see how Mrs. Drayton was.

I had never done such a thing before, and scarcely know how I came to do it now; but I suppose it was owing to the excitement of the moment, and my being in a hurry, that without waiting to knock at the door, which was a little ajar, I pushed it open, and walked in. Mrs. Drayton was sitting rather from the window, with her back turned to it. I thought at first she was frightened, she was so still; and I suppose I must have betrayed something of this thought in the tone in which I asked if there was anything the matter; for she looked up with such a ghastly smile, and said, in answer to my thought rather than to my inquiry—

"I'm not afraid."

There was an awkward pause—and feeling as one always does when we have done injustice either by word or thought, that we should like to go down on our knees and beg pardon; but instead, we only speak and look more constrained than usual, I remained some seconds, feeling very "small."

The rain now began to pour down in torrents, and beat in at the open window.

"May I shut it?" I said.

"Please."

I had to pass close to her to do so; and, in returning, held out my hand and said, "Mrs. Drayton!"

"I'm not hurt, or vexed, Millie."—Then, "Is Maggie in bed?"

"No, not yet."

"Will she be afraid to stay alone?"

"I don't think so."

"Come back then, after she is in bed."

"Yes, I will."

When I returned she was sitting in the same place, in the same attitude, with the same look on her pale, worn face.

"Don't," I said, in my awkward, stiff way. I always felt all angles, and knobs, and hardness, when I was feeling that I would give all the world to comfort and sympathise.

"It was just such a night; and it brings it all back again!"

Brings all *what* back again? I thought; but the words were not addressed to me. She almost seemed to have forgotten I was in the room. But after a while she looked up and said—

"You are quite sure you are not tired, Millie?"

"Quite," I answered.

I could not bear it any longer, and went and knelt down by her; but I could bring out no attempt at consolation but the same one stupid monosyllable "don't." It was very absurd. At least it seemed as if the pent-up tide must have way.

"Oh, Millie!" she exclaimed, with all the impetuosity of her character, "did you never wrestle, and strive, and strain, heart and soul in the struggle, and yet be worsted? Did you never will, with all the earnestness and determination in your nature, and yet be flung, foiled, and stunned, and bruised, and sinking, to the ground? Did you never kneel and pray; GOD only knows, *how* beseechingly, how agonisingly, that you might not be led into temptation, only to rise from your knees to feel it twice as strong as before. Strive how you would, struggle as you might, it *would* come back. Oh! scores of times I have clenched my teeth, and pressed my nails into my palms, and bowed my head to my very knees with shame and agony at the thought that the tempter—that evil one, was perhaps standing close beside me, rejoicing at my failure—mocking my utter helplessness—filled with scorn and contempt for my weakness—rejoicing as each failure was but another

link in the already long and strong chain which drew me closer, surer, each time to him."

It was terrible to hear her—more terrible to see her—with that look of ghastly agony on her pale, worn face, usually so calm, and immoveable; and yet, I could do nothing but hold her hand—and piteously repeat, "Oh! don't." I could have thumped myself for it.

I had observed all day that she had been looking wretchedly ill, with a dark heavy rim around her eyes, that I knew betokened a sleepless night; but she had persisted in having her classes as usual; though I had begged her to remain quite quiet, and let me have them all.

"Just rest quiet for to day," I said; "and then you will be better."

"You are telling me to do an impossibility, Millie," she said, sadly. "It is harder for me to rest to day, than any day of the whole year. No, no! let me be doing something."

And there I had watched her all day, more patient, and kind, and forbearing than I had ever seen her before. It quite brought the tears to my eyes, to hear her voice, so touchingly gentle, trying hour after hour, to make things clear, and intelligible to those unattractive, stupid girls.

She was naturally quick, and almost *short* in her manner. And when I first came, I had more than once heard her speak out hastily; but, latterly, this had never happened, though she had a peculiar way of restlessly tapping with her foot, and nervously twitching, almost *clutching* her chain, when excited or tried. But now, to-day, I had wondered what had come over her; for, though the girls seemed wilfully provoking, there were none of the usual signs of irritation, only her eyes were unusually restless, and a bright spot glowed on each cheek.

I understood it now.

And now, when the day's fight was done; when the long, long day of weary strife was over, she knew that she was wounded, for she felt the smart, and how the struggle had exhausted her; and in the yearning to lean somewhere, when she felt so worn and faint, she had

turned to me. The hours we had but so lately spent together by little Gerald's death-bed, had drawn us closer together than years of daily ordinary intercourse would have done. And then I slowly gathered a good deal of what had been slowly, surely, wearing her life away.

How that she had married hastily. "Fallen in love" with true Irish vehemence; and, within two short years after, had found that her husband was unworthy of her. He was an inveterate gambler; and worse—far worse than that, had her proud, untamed woman's heart to bear.

It was more from detached words, supplying the missing links in the chain of what I knew before, than from what she actually said, that I now put together the complete whole of her story.

A proud, high-spirited girl—for she was but little more—giving up her pure young heart, wholly and unreservedly; and then finding, too late, that it was contamination to be linked as she was. And then came first neglect; and then insult; and then, one night, a rush from the house to take refuge with a mother, only too ready to receive her, and to urge her never to return; and then a hurried legal separation, for which, unhappily, it was but too public, and well proved that she had just *legal* ground. And *then*, when too late, remorse and regret, and the constant reproach of her conscience, that *she* should never have broken her vow made before God.

How little had I dreamed that such a terrible struggle had been her daily portion!

"I should not have left him—I sinned in so doing," was her constant heart cry. "I might have brought him back; and even if not, I should not have left him!"

And I could not say her "nay!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

"For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come."

SPRING was come again—bonnie, blinking spring, with her winking buds and blossoms—and the prettiest spot in all that large old town was the "marché" St. Giles, where the market women sat clustering round the fountain, that threw up its sparkling, quivering waters under the shadow of that glorious spire. It was such a pretty sight, the women seated under huge scarlet umbrellas, which looked like so many little tents pitched in the midst of each particular little clumps of pots of budding shrubs and tastefully arranged bouquets. The tall white cap, of every conceivable grotesque form, and bright coloured shawls and "*jupons*" of the voluble venders, producing the most picturesque effect.

Maggie and I never went into the town without passing through the flower market to buy a wreath, or flowers to make one, which we hung on the cross that marked where little Gerald slept. The cemetery lay in our way to and from the town, and we seldom forgot to pay it a visit; but another had always been there before us—and come when we might with our flowers, another hand had but lately placed some there. The first violets I had seen that year I had found there. All through the winter months, when no flowers could be procured, long trailing wreathes of ivy hung about the cross.

It seemed as if the outburst on that night had relieved the heart-burden of her sorrow. I might have been flattering myself; but I fancied she felt, from that time, that she was not so utterly alone and friendless there, and that the mere feeling I would gladly sympathise, if I could, had soothed her and done her good. The

way in which she would join me in the garden, and draw my arm through hers, or seek me when I had stolen away into the old summer house to read or draw, made me feel assured of this; and though we never spoke on the subject again, I could feel that it was a comfort to her to be where I was.

It is curious to reflect how we often, if not always, lead two separate and widely distinct lives; and the world, judging from the one it can only see, often judges so far, far from the truth.

Here was one who—outwardly, was a calm, sad woman—who had known great sorrow, but seemed to bear up against it, and to go on resignedly, fulfilling her duties in the school, rather out of health, and sometimes looking anxious and care-worn; but the world judged that to be but natural, and did not wonder or trouble itself about the matter. And so that was *one* life. But she led another, and a far other; and that was the life I watched, and judged of now.

I had remarked, for some time, that she had habitually gone out at about the same time daily, just after her duties for the day were over, and that she always came in looking calmer, and even cheerful. I had fancied, at first, that she went to the cemetery; but that, I found, could not be the case. When she went there, it was either very early in the morning, or at dusk; never when she was likely to be observed. I did not think it likely she would go to confession so often; and yet I scarcely knew where else it could be, as I was well aware she had no friends in Carrière to visit.

One afternoon, as I was going into the town, I saw a tall slight figure in mourning go in through the entrance to the "*Crèche.*" It certainly was she. And then I remembered that we had been there together once, and that we had been much struck with the order and exquisite nicety of all the arrangements throughout the establishment. We had passed down the wards, with their rows of little white draperied cots, and looked in on the numerous little sleeping faces within them, and visited the hospital, where the tender care of the sisters for the suffering little ones was a beautiful lesson. There was one sister there—quite young; she had

entered the establishment when a mere girl, and never wished to leave it again, she said—she was pacing up and down with a peevish sick child in her arms, and I could not help pausing, as we left the ward, and looking back unobserved to watch her. The child was suffering from a loathsome disease; but she nursed it as tenderly, and looked on it as fondly, as if it had been the most beautiful and interesting little creature in the world. It was beautiful to watch the calm unworldly face of the sister bent down close to the poor little sufferer's, and trying to hush its fretful wail, by her low, soft, tender murmurs. Surely, I thought, as I glanced up at a text written on the wall, *she* has learnt it by heart—"Take this child and nurse it for me."

I walked on, wondering could it really be Mrs. Drayton, and—thinking that my near-sightedness must have deceived me—besides, I remembered that I had seen her at "Gouter," which was only just before I left.

I had executed my commissions; and having several of them, and but little time, ere I had completed my purchases, I had almost forgotten the circumstances. I was hastening back by the same street I had come, when, just as I again reached the door of the "crêche," it was suddenly opened, and Mrs. Drayton stepped out close to me, and then it was all explained. Her heart had yearned for something to caress and care for, and I found that she had been in the habit of going there daily for an hour. Still, though I saw she was soothed and calmed, I was almost afraid it was doing her harm, for she grew thinner and paler, if that could be possible; and once or twice the mere exertion of going there, or rather, as I feared, the excitement of being there, had brought her home, looking wretchedly spent, and I could not help asking her, if she was quite sure it was well for her?

"Quite sure," she said; "and you would feel so too, Millie, if you knew how my heart leaps when I go in, and see the eager little faces looking out for me."

"And teaching?" I added; "are you sure that is well for you?"

She paused a minute, and then said, "I don't mind telling you, Millie. Yes, I know I am ill; and I

consulted Dr. Buvière, and he says the best thing for me is occupation."

"Yes," I replied; "but teaching is such wearing work."

"He knows what I do, and he did not forbid it; besides, it does not weary me now, at least not so much, particularly since Clothilde and Julie du Borné are gone."

But before three months had passed away, she was carried fainting from the "classe" one morning, and never entered it again.

Her priest used to visit her almost daily; and no sooner was it known at the "crêche" that she was ill, than the sister I had seen, and observed more particularly the day we were there, came and begged to be allowed to nurse her. There was no one in the house who could do so half as well; and I felt only too thankful that she could be with her. Madame was as kind as possible; I got quite to love her for it. I am sure she never once thought of the trouble and inconvenience it occasioned her; but all that could possibly be done or thought of, was done with alacrity, and the kindest consideration.

Mrs. Drayton had but few near relatives living; in fact, none very near, I believe. There was some one in Dublin who managed her little property, to whom she wrote; and whose address she had given to Madame as one of her references, when she first came to Carrière. And, I believe, Madame wrote to some friends of her own, who knew Mrs. Drayton, or at least knew her family and connections; but no one came over. Nor did she seem to expect it.

She lingered on longer than we had at first dared to hope she would; but, at last, it was clear to us all that she was fast sinking.

I had taken her place in the school; and Angelique was considered old enough to study in the "classe" with the other pupils—a very great relief to me.

It was strange to me at first to sit beside Mrs. Drayton, with the little black robed sister, Marie, moving noiselessly about the room; but we soon got to be fast

friends, and continued to be so, long after we had parted, when Mrs. Drayton wanted her no more. I used to often go to see her at the "crêche," and spend many and many a pleasant half hour with her among the little ones.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"My tongue should stumble in mine earnest words."

"Alack, 'tis he! Why, he was met e'en now!"

"Now then, Maggie, be quick! We must make the most of our time to-day. Write out a list of all we want to get; and be sure not to forget the pound of candles."

Be it known, one candle was allowed weekly for each "dortoir," but that I found very insufficient for my use; and, accordingly, I kept a supply of my own, hidden away in the depths of my "armoire." At first I had trusted the cook with the purchasing of them; but I had found, once or twice, when I happened to buy some myself, that there was invariably a difference in the number in her pound and mine; and, as the latter was most to my advantage, I had thought best to make my own purchases in that line.

The night of our arrival I had witnessed a most absurd scene. After all the pupils had kissed Madame's cheek, as if it were wax, she stood by whilst a candle was distributed for each room; and, on going back to the classe, one of the girls was gravely drawing black lines on hers to mark it into exactly seven lengths; and telling the girls that slept in her room that they had better be quicker in their movements that week than they had been the last, for she intended to put out the light the very second it was burnt down to the black line.

"How am I to curl my hair in the dark," piteously demanded one poor victim. "You know I shall never be able to do it before the candle is burnt to there. Goodness! what a morsel. And, I declare, the candles get thinner and thinner each week; 'tis a wonder they keep upright."

"That's your affair; but you hear what I say, pop it will go."

"And we can't buy any of our own," was the doleful

rejoinder, "for I know we have none of us in our room a 'sous,' and I owe the cuisinière a franc for chocolate, and shan't be able to pay her till I get my allowance, which won't be for three weeks."

So Maggie and I started "en ville;" and, amongst other places, entered a shop to order something to be sent to Mrs. Drayton. There had been a mistake in the delivery of a former parcel; and, as I was about to leave the shop, I suddenly remembered this, and turning round, said—

"Be kind enough to direct it plainly, Mrs. Drayton, chez Madame Duboisjolin."

As I spoke, a gentleman who had been standing at the further end of the shop with his back to me, turned round and looked very hard at me.

I thought I must have probably spoken rather more loudly than was quite good manners, and feeling rather vexed, hurried out of the shop.

I had quite forgotten the circumstance, and Maggie and I were making ourselves very merry about our miscellaneous parcels, more particularly the pound of candles, which I was carrying rather gingerly, when, just as we were standing a moment at the outer door of the "Pension" to recover our composure before we went in, I happened to look round, and saw the same person I had observed in the shop, slowly sauntering up the lane, that, branching off from the main road, led to the château.

Feeling very annoyed, we hastily rung, and were at once admitted.

I was so vexed, that when I went to Mrs. Drayton's room with some fruit I had brought home for her, she could not help seeing that I was annoyed at something; and rather than make a mystery of a trifle, or let her think I had had some serious vexation, I told her.

"*What* did you say?" she asked. When I remarked, "That I supposed it was my turning back and speaking rather loudly that attracted attention. And yet Maggie says I did not," I added.

"Only told them to be sure to direct the parcel carefully—to you, here. You know what an awkward mistake there was the last time they sent the same thing to you."

"True," she said, in rather an absent manner. And

then, rather to my wonder—for she seldom inquired about peoples personal appearance—she asked, rather anxiously I thought, what he was like.

"I did not look at him sufficiently to remark what he was like. I only know he was tall and dark. Maggie said he was a nasty, horrid looking man, if you can make anything of that. I should say, from the glance I had, that he was a gentleman. I fancy he had rather a military gait and bearing—voilà tout. I should not care if he had not seen us come in here. You know I don't want to bring discredit on poor Madame; and she would be so inexpressibly shocked!—Now, then, do be tempted! See how fresh and luscious this fruit is! I ought not to have talked to you; you look quite worried. Lie still and let me feed you. Sister Marie looks as if she had a mind to turn me out of the room. I shan't speak another word to you."

She smiled faintly.

"I have felt better to-day than I have for weeks."

But I remarked that her hand trembled so, that she was fain to let us put the cool fruit to her mouth. And that night she had a violent return of the fearful spasms, that attacked her whenever she had the least excitement.

I greatly reproached myself for having talked to her; but she had looked so bright and cheerful, and spoken so firmly when I went into the room, that I was afraid I had been off my guard. But sister Marie told me she did not think that that had hurt her. But a great deal of the old nervous excitement seemed to have returned the next day; and it was not until after she had had a strong composing draught, and had slept, that she seemed the least calmed. I was very uneasy until I had asked Dr. Buvière if he thought I had done wrong in talking to her.

"Not at all!" he said. "She talks more than that to me, every time I see her. It is not a little quiet talking that can do her any harm; in fact, rather the contrary. She must not lie thinking too much; but it is excitement, anything that acts suddenly on the nerves that does the mischief, and brings on these terribly exhausting attacks."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"We watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low;
As in her breast the waves of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

"So silently we seemed to speak,
So slowly moved about;
As we had lent her half our powers,
To eke her living out.

"she had
Another morn than ours."

HOOD.

"Translated by her GOD with spirit shriven,
She passed from earth to heaven.
Weep not for her—she is an angel now,
All darkness wiped for ever from her brow—
Sin, sorrow, suffering, vanished from her eyes.

"Weep not for her—there is no cause of woe:
But rather nerve the spirit, that it walk
Unshrinking o'er the thorny path below,
And from earth's low defilement keep thee free."

A WEEK later, and it was all over—that troubled heart was at rest—those cold hands, now quietly folded on the still breast, would never more be wrung in agony and doubt. The head, so stilly pillowed within that cold narrow resting-place, would never more toss to and fro through the long, weary hours of night, or throb and burn till reason seemed well nigh gone. She was gone home—home to her God and mine—home to her Father's house; and, ere this, all was made clear and plain. No more doubt, no more groping and weary striving after the right way.

When I had learnt that Mabel Rylstone had gone from earth to her rest, it had seemed to me that here we might truly say, "there is no death, what seems so is transition." She had only gone on before, through the portal of what the Jews so beautifully and meaningly

call "The House of the Living," to that home, where we all hoped to follow her by-and-bye, at the right time for us to go. But here it was Death indeed for Wymond Drayton; she was truly dead—dead to all the trouble, and sorrow, and temptation that had been her appointed, or *permitted*, portion here—dead to all fears, and doubts, and tremblings; alive now, and for ever, to perfect peace and assurance. All was made clear, for now it was "All right."

Sister Marie and I stayed up with her the last night. Towards dawn I quietly drew back the blind, and looked out. The few first early morning streaks were breaking in the east. A faint glimmer—a feeble light—a gradual brightening—streaks merging into broad gleams—broad gleams giving place to a flood of soft, just awakening, new-born light, and day was come once more.

"Draw up the blind, please," she feebly asked; and, as I did so, the glorious spire of St. Giles was seen, bathed in the early dawn. "How beautiful!" she feebly uttered. "Lift me up! higher, higher yet!" and she bent forward, and gazed out eagerly. "It is very, very beautiful this world of ours! Now, then, please lay be back again."

The day before she died, she had drawn my head down close to her faint lips, and said—

"Millie, I know you will think it foolish; but I cannot put away the thought that *he* is not far from me. Somehow, I feel a conviction that it was *he* you saw the other day. I wish I could have seen him just once more, to ask him to forgive me."

Only once, during her illness, had she referred to her little boy; and then, after asking for a miniature of him, and looking at it long and fondly, she said—

"I shall soon have him again."

She had been removed, so soon as possible, from the room where she died, which was adjoining one of the "Dortoirs," and placed in one of the small side apartments down stairs, until she was moved, for the last time, to be placed beside her little boy. The evening before the interment, Madame, and sister Marie, and I went into the room to take our last look of her. It was a moonlight night, and the soft shimmering light

gleamed in at the glass door, and gave us sufficient light to see her for the last time on earth. The face looked quite young and girlish now. The look of care and sorrow had for ever passed away, and was replaced by one of peace and rest—of full and complete rest. I know it struck me as being just the look a little baby has when lying sleeping on its mother's breast.

Whilst we were still standing looking on her, and sister Marie was laying a little cross she had made of garden everlastings on the still breast, we heard a ring at the outer door; and almost immediately after, some one came to the door of the room where we were, and asked if Madame was there? She went out, and then sister Marie bent down and kissed the cold lips, knelt for a few minutes by the side of the coffin, and then went away through the garden-door, and I went up to my own room. Soon after, Madame came to my door and knocked, then came in, looking frightened and agitated.

"Il est là," she said, pointing down with her finger.

"Qui?" I asked; not conceiving what she could possibly mean.

"Son mari."

"Her husband!" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

When Madame had gone to the salon, as she afterwards told me, she found a gentleman there, who apologised, rather confusedly, for the liberty he had taken, etc.

"But would she inform him if a lady, a Mrs. Drayton, resided there?"

It had never occurred to Madame that it might be her husband. She thought some friend in Ireland, perhaps, had requested him to call. So, deeming that he was simply a friend, and that not a very near one, as indeed seemed probable from his inquiring for Madame first, she stated what had just happened, without any hesitation.

"Let me see her," he said, abruptly.

And when Madame looked surprised, he added—

"I am Mr. Drayton."

Madame said there was such a look on his face as quite precluded any further hesitation, or even anything

like an attempt at condolence, so she quietly led the way to the room where his dead wife lay; and then came to my room to consult with me and sister Marie, who, she hoped, might still be there.

A quarter of an hour passed, then half an hour, and then more than an hour had elapsed, when we fancied we heard some one pass out by the door—the same door through which the soft moonlight came and rested on her face, and where, for a moment, his dark shadow fell, and then passed away, and for ever. He would never shadow it again.

As every arrangement had been made for an early interment next morning, it was thought best that it should take place as was intended. But, late as it was, Monsieur Duboisjolin went out to see Le Perè de Lafoi, and to consult with him.

This latter was afraid there might be some difficulty in delaying the funeral, and said he did not think it necessary; but, added, he would go early in the morning to the "Bureau de la Police," and try to find out where Mr. Drayton might be found, for we had not the least idea where to send to him. Madame said that she had mentioned that Mrs. Drayton was to be buried the next day, when she told him of her death; but it was very doubtful if he was likely to have heard it, as most probably the announcement "Dead!" was all that reached him.

Madame wrote at once to the Dublin address, mentioning the circumstance of Mr. Drayton's appearance, as well as informing them of Mrs. Drayton's decease. She also, by the advice of Perè de Lafoi, packed up all that belonged to the deceased, and forwarded it to the same address. There were a few handsome trinkets, and some other valuables; and they considered that as there had been a legal separation, that her husband could have no right to claim anything; and yet, fearing what he might do, Madame was anxious that it might be out of her power to comply with any demand he might choose to make.

More than a fortnight after, Madame received a letter with the Paris post-mark, and the address of a café there, to which he requested a letter might be

sent, informing him of where his child was. It was not to be directed in his own name, but simply to have "Gerald" written in the corner, (he himself was not called Gerald.) And, at the same time, a letter was received from Dublin, stating that they had done quite right not to allow Mr. Drayton to claim any of the late Mrs. Drayton's personal effects; and further adding, that he had been obliged to leave England on account of some dishonourable gambling transactions, and they were aware of his having fled to France.

We fancied from this, that he must have been hiding quietly in Carrière, till I accidentally betrayed that his wife was in the same town; and that also accounted for his coming to the Château at the hour he did, as possibly he did not venture out in the day, for fear of meeting some one who might recognise him.

We further imagined, that he must have had some real or fancied alarm that same night, and have at once hurried to Paris, for Le Perè de Lafoi tracked his former lodgings at Carrière, where he was known under an assumed name; but both Le Perè and the police had no doubt that Mr. Jones and Mr. Drayton were one and the same person. He had returned to his lodgings late on the night of the 13th the people there said, and had made hasty arrangements to leave by the "Diligence" the next morning.

About a month later, Monsieur Duboisjolin came home one day and told us he had heard of a dreadful "fracas" in a low gambling house at Paris, in which an Englishman, calling himself Johnson, had been killed; but who, it was found, had been previously known as Mr. Jones—and, also, from a paper found on him in a private pocket, must have borne the name of Drayton, which was thought to be his real one.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"There, on a foreign shore,
The home-sick solitary finds a friend."

"My holy mother made reply,
'Dear child, it is my priest.'"

WHEN first we went to Carrière there was no English clergyman there, and we were obliged to attend the French Protestant service, held in what is called the "*Temple;*" but, to our great joy, about three or four months after Mrs. Drayton's death, we heard that there would be an English chaplain appointed shortly; and, in a few weeks, a notice was sent to the school that there would be regular English services held for the future on Sundays, immediately after the French services were concluded, and in the same building.

My defective vision would not allow me to see anything more than the pleasant sight—to near-sighted as well as to keen-sighted auditors—of a clergyman of our own church; but it was unanimously agreed that he was a great boon, and much to be valued.

"Madame, vous demande au salon," greeted me a few days after; and, on proceeding thither, I found her entertaining a thin, compact, springy-looking gentleman, with keen, humorous, twinkling eyes—sharp and searching—looking as if they pierced right through you to the back bone at the first glance.

"Monsieur Mildman, your minister, wishes to know you, Miss Heaton," said Madame.

After some little conversation, Mr. Mildman said—

"Miss Heaton, I can't put up with the abominable noise we had on Sunday last, and I want to ask you a favour. Will you kindly undertake to lead the singing I suppose I must not say anything about chanting just yet; though I hope we shall come to that in time, so I will content myself by only adding, and the responses."

"Lead the singing, Mr. Mildman!" I exclaimed. "I do not sing."

"I saw your lips moving on Sunday," he said; "besides, nonsense, everybody can sing if they like."

I'll keep my veil down next Sunday, I mentally noted.

"You know now, I have seen you sing," he said, laughingly. "I don't think you can have the heart to refuse me."

"Seeing is believing, it is said; but seeing is not hearing."

"No," he replied quaintly, "considering the number you were up in that little gallery, I must admit there was a very inadequate amount of sound from that quarter. But don't let me alarm you. I mean, more particularly, lead the singing of that portion of my congregation here. I think if the strong force you must be here would only begin, that we might soon hope to get tolerably good congregational singing."

"Indeed I wish I could be of use," I answered; "but I really do not sing, at least not what is understood by singing. I try to join in the services of the church: that, I think I am bound to do, as much as I am to respond; but, as for singing"—. I had a great mind to say, ask Madame—for certain rather uncomfortable reminiscences flashed across me of certain rather satirical remarks of her's on the subject.

"Now, Miss Heaton, I abominate affectation!"

"So do I, Mr. Mildman!"

"Very well then, I am glad we agree. I thought we should, so I shall expect a full choir next Sunday."

"Shall I preside at the organ?" I asked, gravely.

"We'll leave that for a few weeks yet," he added, his eyes running over with mischief, and his mouth all *a-twitch*.

"I have no church music: but is that of much importance? Won't just telling them to sing be sufficient?" I asked, demurely.

He laughed—a hearty, real laugh. It did one good to hear it.

"I know Mrs. Mildman has plenty of sacred music packed up *somewhere*; but she won't be here for some weeks: and, though all the packages are come, I have

no notion in which to hunt for it, and should be sure not to find it before I came to the bottom of the last box; and as there are three-and-thirty of them, besides innumerable little sundries, I must leave it till my wife come. What are we to do?" he added.

"Stay! One of my boys turned out something this morning printed in crotchets and quavers, when he was looking for his lexicon, and perhaps we might find something for the next Sunday or two, there. I'll send it up—that is, if I don't forget. I believe I left my memory with my wife, for I forgot to order dinner yesterday. I suppose nobody from here will be likely to pass the 'Rue des Frères' to-day about four? I shall be at our lodgings then, and would send back what I may find."

I remembered that the French governess and I were going into the town, and would be returning home about that time, so I said we would call for it, as the street lay in our way.

"My boys are all here," he said, "and I hope I shall have Mrs. Mildman and the girls soon; but I am greatly put out about a house."

We found Numéro 30 Rue des Frères, groped our way up the stairs, and knocked at the door of the apartment indicated to us.

"Entrez," was answered from within by one voice. "Come in," by another that I recognised.

We entered a rather small room, and such a scene of dire confusion was revealed! Books all about in every available spot, the table covered with papers, and boxes partly disembarrassed of their contents, standing half open in all the spare corners of the place. A big, round-shouldered lad of about thirteen was sitting with his elbows on the table, and his head between his hands, busily studying. Mr. Mildman was on his knees, hunting down into the far depths of a large box. Before the fire a dish containing a ragout was placed to keep warm, having apparently been brought from the "restaurateur's" before they were ready for it.

"*Ereuka!*" exclaimed Mr. Mildman, withdrawing his head from the invisibility in which it had been lost.

"Oh, Miss Heaton! I beg your pardon; but here it

is—and now for some singing next Sunday—and" (in a half coaxing voice) "don't you think you could try these chants? They are *very* simple."

The succeeding week he had promised to send us the selection he wished us to practise for the following Sunday; but Thursday was come, and we had heard nothing about it. Maggie and I had been in the town that afternoon, and agreed that we would call and inquire what had become of it.

They had moved from the lodgings to the house he had taken. We entered the "cour" and looked all about for him, as we had just met one of the boys, who told us we should find him in the garden: but we could see no one but a very shabby-looking gardener a little way down the garden, so we made our way towards him, and said—

"Can you tell us where Monsieur Mildman is to be found?"

He turned, and resting his foot on the spade he was using, lifted his hat, with

"A votre service, Mesdemoiselles! Ah!" he continued, "don't think of apologizing. I see you took me for the gardener. You know you did, Miss Maggie. Now don't deny it," and Maggie grew scarlet, and looked terribly confused and put out, for truly she could *not* deny it.

"Come in, do—you must," he said, "and see how we are getting on. I have been hard at work all the week, (and certainly his looks fully corroborated the assertion; dusty, begrimmed, and very unclerical,) "and you must forgive me this once."

"I had made out the list, but entirely forgot to send Dick up with it." Now then, please look at the improvements! The first thing I am going to do, is to build a bath-room; we can't any of us exist without it; and I have been planning and contriving it. Look! here it will be; we shall have to get at it through a window, but that won't matter! Here! this way; it is quite safe! Is'nt it a famous contrivance? Don't be afraid, there is no danger," and he scrambled us up, just to see how capitally he had managed about the tank!

"By the by," he suddenly exclaimed, just as we were

coming away, "Do you know of any one who can scrub?"

"Scrub!—what, floors?"

"Yes, floors. I have actually been down on my knees to show the woman how to scour the floor. I have indeed," he said, as he caught a little wondering, rather sceptical look on Maggie's face; "and, would you believe it, she *won't* do as I tell her, but persists in using her feet instead of her hands; and, after spreading a nasty red muddy-looking mixture thickly over the floors, goes skating about on them with the brushes attached to her feet. It is very distressing is it not? and Mrs. Mildman is *so* particular! Can you help me?" and he put on such a comically perplexed look! "I assure you it is a serious matter."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth
That coft contentment, peace, or pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
Oh! that's the chiefest warld's treasure!"

"MRS. MILDMAN is come, Millie."

"Is she! how do you know."

"I saw Mr. Mildman go out of the "*cour*" with a lady. I'm sure she is his wife."

"How?"

"Oh! I don't know. She looked like it."

"Logical, certainly! Pray, what particular look had you made up your mind Mrs. Mildman ought to have?"

"Oh! she is sunny-looking; and went out of the cour laughing. I heard her. I'm sure we shall like her."

"I hope so."

Maggie was right. Mrs. Mildman was come. Madame informed me so the same day at dinner; adding, that it was a pity I was out at the time. But, Mrs. Mildman had said, she hoped to see me shortly.

I caught a glimpse of her at church the next Sunday, and agreed with Maggie that I thought we should like her; but we decided that we would give them a sufficiency of time to get to rights before we called. But they did not seem to have made the most of the time we had so considerately allowed them; for, when we presented ourselves, everything looked in confusion. Certainly the Mildmans seemed as fond of air as water, for all the windows and doors seemed to be wide open; and, as we passed the glass door of the "salon," we heard some one singing—

"Home, sweet home,
There is no place like home."

A servant was unpacking outside the open door, and ushered us into the room at once. Just as we stood in the doorway, a head popped up from outside a window, directly opposite, looking out into the garden, and the owner said—

"I'm glad to hear it, my dear! But would'nt it be advisable to put home a little to rights?"

"Ah! Miss Heaton," as he perceived us, "very glad to see you—so will Kate be," springing through the window into the room, whilst "*Kate*" advanced towards us with a pleasant smile and "I-know-you-already" manner.

"Will you take a seat, Miss Heaton?" said Mr. Mildman, pulling out the piled-up box on which his wife had been seated at the piano in the middle of the room.

"There, Miss Maggie! there's a seat for you," he said, turning a tub upside down. "Don't get into it 'à la Diogenes.' Stay, let me put this piece of carpet on it."

"My dear Fred!" exclaimed his wife; "the best fire-irons are wrapped up in it! Don't ask her to sit on that."

"I told you Mrs. Mildman was very particular about her scrubbing, Miss Heaton; you see, and *hear* how busy she has been putting things in order! Now, don't you admire her putting things to rights?"

She had on an old checked gingham dress, and a large wrapping apron coming nearly all round her. I could scarcely believe her to be the mother of the no-end-of little Mildmans—who came size after size like the families one sees on old monuments—she looked so young, and bright, and *natty*.

"Fred, you are an *ingrat!* I have been hard at work all the morning; and only rested a moment to see if the piano had suffered by the knocking about it has had. Miss Heaton, you must not judge of our getting things to rights from this room. *He* knows to what purpose the dining-room (which *was* completely arranged) is put to. You may look, sir; but I repeat *was*, till seven boys and *somebody* took possession of it."

"My dear, where was *somebody* to teach his seven

boys till the school-room is got to rights for them, if not there? But suppose you show us what you have done," he said, mischievously.

She looked at him defiantly. "Very well, sir! Will you come, Miss Heaton." We peeped into the dining-room, where four pupils and three of his own boys were hard at work; but I could not say much for the *order* it appeared to be in. The thing that looked most to rights, that I could see, was the baby sleeping up stairs in a flasket, with a shawl over him.

"We'll have his cot up soon, little man, won't we?" she said; "but, with eleven children and only one servant, who knows not how to do anything. And the best room in the house, that would have done for a nursery, sacrificed by a thoughtless papa—one must contrive before things are settled."

"Miss Heaton, don't you call *that* '*ingrat!*' when I have to pump up the water for *her* bath every morning. Oh! Kitty, Kitty! I'm ashamed of you!"

"Are you? And I'm ashamed of you, who promised to put me up a shelf a week ago, and it is not even planed yet! And those pegs for the boys' hats, when *will* they be up? Besides, if *somebody* hadn't failed in their hydraulics, they wouldn't have to pump now. You certainly didn't find your level there, sir."

"No, my dear, *you* weren't here then! I planned the bath before you came!"

No one could help enjoying the good-tempered, merry banter.

"But the pegs, Fred?" she continued, more seriously.

"In five minutes they shall be 'all to rights,' my dear," he said, as he pretended to make his exit in a great hurry, shrugging his shoulders, as if he expected to get it for that last fling he couldn't resist, as he went out. And when we came down, there he was very busy hammering with might and main.

"A poor clergyman, with eleven children, and a Kitty, and very limited, *extremely* limited means, must put his hand to anything, Miss Heaton," he said, as we shook hands, and said "Good bye."

It was really refreshing to meet with such a family as the Mildmans. Hearty, natural, genial people, who

weren't ashamed to be poor, for that they certainly were, but who retained amid all a freshness and brightness, that were like a tonic to a poor jaded mind that came in contact with them. Mr. Mildman had but little private property, and eked out the stipend of a government chaplain at Carrière, by taking pupils. His attainments were so well known among his friends, that he always had three or four lucrative ones.

"But even then, my dear," Mrs. Mildman said to me, one day, "I have to turn, return, and turn again, old coats and frocks. If the children didn't grow it wouldn't be so trying! but, though I flatter myself I have the gift that 'gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new,' I haven't the gift of stretching out my material to *any* proportions, and make Dick's wristbands and coat sleeves follow his wrists on their rapidly elongating downward course."

But, in spite of Dick's wristbands, and coat-sleeves, and other similar troubles, she was always merry and happy, and used to go carolling about the house like a bird; and yet, in the evenings, be ever ready for a stroll with Mr. Mildman, or to enter enthusiastically, heart and soul, in his archaiological researches in the neighbourhood. She was married when very young, and possessed the blessing of a buoyant spirit, that *would* rise and float calmly on the surface of her sea of cares. She looked more like the big, fast-growing Dick's eldest sister than his mother. She had one of those fair, sunny faces, set in light-haired ringlets, that *won't* grow old-looking. It was a pretty sight to see her among her boys, and they were all so proud of "mother." Charlie, the antipenultimate, confided to me one day that his wife (the urchin was only seven and a quarter) was to be exactly like mamma, only he was not quite sure whether she was to have mamma's funny little pit in her cheek or not; he should think that over. The funny little pit, one of mamma's great attractions, being, as papa affirmed, the result of mamma's eleven boys and girls kissing her so much. I suggested to Charlie that, perhaps in the case of his wife, there would not be the same cause and effect, which appeared to act as a consolation to his poor unsettled little mind.

I accidentally overheard Master Nugent, the second boy, announcing one day, that "mother was a brick!"

"Mother a brick, indeed!" exclaimed indignant Dick, to whom the observation had been addressed. "Mother is no such thing! But I'll tell you what she *is* like—*that!*" and he pressed the elastic ball his brother held in his hand, "pliant and yielding, but—"

"But don't lose her own shape, though?" suggested Nugent, "aye? soft, but!"—and he looked knowingly at his brother—"when she does say no, she means it. I always know when mother has said, 'No, Nugie,' it's no go to ask again. A fellow may as well knock his head against a wall as against mother's *no*."

"A *brick* wall," slily suggested Dick.

Nothing seemed to daunt Mr. Mildman; he was indefatigable. In less than two months after he was settled at Carrière, he, in addition to his boys, his pupils, and, his knowing all the English residents, was giving weekly scriptural instruction to our English pupils; catechising the English collegians at the Lycée on Sunday afternoons, in addition to his two services on that day, and rubbing me up twice a week in my Latin.

CHAPTER XL.

"God bless our gracious Queen;
Long may she reign."

THE German lesson was just over. The professor—a little conceited foppish specimen of much knowledge and much nonsense combined—had sufficiently maddened us for one day. His presence acted like a blister on most of us; for his manner, tone, and look were so supremely, condescendingly, and plainly insinuating:—"I am trying to bring these simple rules down to your limited capacities"—that it really was torture to sit through the lesson. So, now, at the conclusion, there we sat all in a row; some sullen, some savage. Poor Clara Peyton, the most stupid and conceited of the class, pushing her neatly chausséd foot through the bar of her desk, so that the delicate little boot might be displayed to the best advantage. I used sometimes, when in a very savage mood, wish he would trip over it. Susan Travers, the *steady* girl of the class, the *stoic* as she was called, sat bolt upright, looking somewhat as if a string of gutterals had got half way down her throat and were strangling her, whilst professor "*Fat*," as he was not inaptly named by the girls, paced up and down before the row of desks, addressing one or two parting sarcasms, whilst he adjusted his delicate primrose-coloured gloves. Finally, this important affair being concluded to his entire satisfaction, he took up his hat, and—with a last fling in the shape of the repetition of a favourite phrase of his "Il laisserait beaucoup à desirer Medesmoiselles!"—bowed first to our row, with an expression that plainly meant "What a set of asses you are!" and then, with a supercilious inclination to Mademoiselle, jauntily quitted the room.

I don't quite know what the others felt. I can only

guess at the sentiments of a few of them; but this I know for myself, that I longed to fling my dictionary after him. But instead of doing so I began to pick up my books and exercises, and was just going up to my room with them, when in rushed Helen Merton, the *wild* girl of the school, nearly knocking me down in her headlong career—

"Oh! Miss Heaton, dear Miss Heaton, I beg 'mille pardons,' but don't you think we ought to have a holiday this afternoon?"

"What for, Helen?"

"Oh! don't you know, don't you remember! to-day is the 24th of May!"

"I say girls, we *must* have some fun. Who'll ask Madame?"

"What for—the fun?"

"No, no! Don't be stupid—the holiday. We'll manage the fun."

"I believe you!" was answered; but nobody seemed to have the courage to ask Madame—so, after a deal of coaxing and entreating, I agreed to "beard the lion in his den."

Madame did'nt know what the Queen of England's birth-day had to do with them in France, etc., etc., but at last yielded.

"But I don't think the French girls are included," I said, when I related the success of my mission.

"Then we won't have it—all, or none," and they were off to the salon in a body.

The evening passed in all sorts of fun, and speech-making, and toasting, and enthusiasm; and, at last, wound up with "God save the Queen," played and sung dreadfully out of tune, but with spirit and heartiness that amply atoned for such trifles.

In the middle of the evening I had been called out of the room. Some one wanted me, and Nugent Mildman gave me a parcel of newspapers and magazines.

"Papa sent up these, Miss Heaton; he says he has got a jolly lot of books and papers from England, and he thought you would like to see some of them."

"I am much obliged, Nugie; but I am sure he didn't say that."

"Well, it meant just that. I say: what's all the row here to-night?"

"Our Queen's birth-day."

"Oh! Well, good night; I must be off."

When I had gone to my room that night I thought I would just open the parcel, and see what it contained before I went to bed; but chancing to cast my eyes towards Maggie's bed, I saw it was empty. Where could she be gone?

Then I heard a sort of suppressed whispering and tittering, and a queer little tinkling sound; and, most curious of all, I smelt a queer odour, both sound and odour apparently proceeding from the next "Dortoir." I quietly opened the door, and there, in full night costume, were all the English girls assembled at a repast of "patisserie" they had got the cook to smuggle into the house for them, but which did not arrive in time, in fact not until they were just going to bed. Of course, they were not going to forego their feast, so a *scout* had been sent to each English girl to steal out of bed, with orders to bring her tooth-brush glass with her, as they were going to drink the Queen's health in *punch*, which Helen Merton was to make!—Madame having allowed nothing more dangerous than lemonade for the toasts down stairs—and orders were also issued to bring any come-at-able pieces of candle, and a certain little tin can one of the girls possessed. The candles were arranged close together, and the water for the extraordinary compounded mixture they drank as *punch!* was boiled over the flames. They had forgotten the time, and so had not managed to steal back quietly to their beds, as they meant to do.

Of course, I ought to have scolded them well, perhaps have informed Madame; but I was wrong enough to do neither, only told them to be quick and finish, and I'd watch the while.

"Oh, Miss Heaton! you should have heard our three times three; it was so funny to whisper it!"

"I don't doubt it; but do make haste. Suppose Madame comes this way?"

The hint acted as I desired, and I had soon the satisfaction of clearing the room; and then, when I had

Maggie all to myself, I tried to give her a little lecture on the impropriety of the thing.

"Please, Millie, did *you* never do anything like it? because, if you *never* did, and you *really* think it is very wrong, I'll *try* to be sorry!"

"Go to bed, Maggie!"

I had pushed back the papers and magazines lying on the table to make room for my candle, and was about to pile them away for the night, when my eye fell on the list of marriages in one, and I read:—

"On Tuesday last, at M——, Philip Polruden, Esq., M.D., to Emily Ainworth, second daughter," &c.

What was my first sensation? Well, it was a very strange one, for I believe it was more like mortification than anything else! I don't think I felt glad or pleased—strange why I did not—why? I wonder! I did not feel one bit glad that he was happy; there was not one noble, generous impulse in me. I really believe, if anything, I felt rather vexed; and yet why? Did I love Philip Polrudon? No. Did I ever intend or hope to marry him? No. What, then, made me feel as I did? Was it not mean, despicable? Doubtless—unwomanly. Nay, there comes the truth; for, I believe, every woman *for the moment* feels mortified at finding that she can be given up after all, and others found to fill the niche in man's heart, we, like the dogs in the manger, won't fill ourselves; and yet *snarl* when we see another fill it. But a true woman only feels so for a moment. All womanly dignity and virtue comes to her aid, and helps her to recall all that is noble, and generous, and true in her; and, almost before that first flash of mortification has been fired off, to exclaim as I did, from the very bottom of my heart—

"May he be happy. God bless him. Yes, God bless you, Philip; I'm very glad."

CHAPTER XLI.

"Measure not your work until the day is out, and the labour done."

"When seven lang years had come and fled—
When grey was calm, and hope was dead:
When scarce was remembered Kilmeny's name,
Then late in the gloaming Kilmeny came hame."

I REMAINED at Carrière two years longer, and then returned to England, and began a new phase of life as a governess in a family in the north.

Things had meanwhile brightened as regarded Papa and Alice. The former had, after all, speculated in a mine, (though he never went down one) and, wonderful to relate, the shares had made handsome returns. And Alice was comparatively provided for, for life—one of her god-mothers, who had never shewn the least interest in her beyond standing at the font, and taking vows upon her she never intended to fulfil—had died and left Alice what was for her a handsome legacy. Many years after, we found it was not done from any good-will to Alice, but merely to spite some relatives who expected to inherit all her property, but who contrived to vex her in her last illness.

Maggie remained at Carrière three years after I left, and then she too returned to England, and began life as a governess.

Our one grand wish now was to settle down somewhere, and take a few pupils, *where*, we did not much care, so long as we could be together.

After Papa and Alice got tired of Cornwall, and "came into their property," they went over to Carrière to be near Maggie, and remained there some time; but it did not seem to agree with Alice after the pure, bracing Cornish breezes, and so they came back to England, and went down into Devon; and, at the time

at which I now resume my story they were passing the summer at Torquay, where, it was arranged that Maggie and I should spend our holidays with them. So we met in town, and travelled down together.

I was feeling rather overworked, and truly glad to get the rest, and pleasant change.

Papa and Maggie used to start on long excursions to different points of interest in the neighbourhood, leaving Alice and me to spend a quiet, lazy "dolce far niente" day on the sands. Occasionally I should so far exert myself as to go a short distance to take a sketch; but I was generally far too indolent to do even that much, and contented myself with a book and a large umbrella on the sands, where I lay for hours stretched-out, basking, very like a Neapolitan Lazzaroni.

Among the visitors, there was one family that interested us much. It consisted of two boys and a girl, one of the former apparently in very ill health. They had no parents or relatives with them; only two servants, an elderly nurse, and a maid. We first became acquainted through the medium of a summer thunder-storm. I had taken shelter under the shelving cliff, and the little invalid's carriage was drawn up to the same spot, whether flocked brother, sister, and nurses.

The poor little fellow seemed fretful and impatient, and I thought the nurse appeared to be rather cross.

As the rain continued to come down with no sign of abatement, the impatience of the whole family, but most particularly of the little cripple, waxed sorer and sorer.

The nurses reiterated:

"It's no good in the world to get impatient, sir!" And the brother and sister's kind:

"Watty, dear, it will soon be over." To which he replied; "No, it won't."

Only seemed to irritate him more.

"I wish I had a book," he said, fretfully. "Nurse, what did you forget my book for?"

"Well, sir!" was the reply, "it is a good thing I did. You're nothing but pore, pore over books from morning till night." To which the only answer was:

"I wish I had my book!"

"Shall we tell you a story, Watty dear?" asked the little girl.

"No, you shan't! I know all your stories."

The little maiden flushed up to her eyes at the unkind rebuff. The other brother turned round quickly. He was a fine, handsome boy; and his dark eyes looked as if they would have portened mischief to any one else than his little cripple brother who had so addressed their sister.

"Now, Watty, that's unkind," he said, "you should not speak like that to Queen Mab."

"Never mind, Hugh," Queen Mab replied. "Watty didn't mean it. He's tired of staying here, and I'm sure I am too."

I was rather famous for story-telling, at least the younger ones among my pupils thought so; so, closing my book, I looked up and said:

"Shall I tell you a story? Perhaps you have not heard mine."

They all looked delighted. Oh! thank you," was chorused; even the nurse looked grateful.

When my story was ended, we discovered that the rain appeared to have been over some minutes, and we all prepared to decamp.

After that, he would always ask to have his chair drawn up to where I might be sitting on the beach when he would come down on the sands; and I used to tell the nurse that I would take care of him if she would leave him with me. A few more stories, and the loan of "Anderson's Fairy Tales," that I happened to find among the books Alice had brought with her, cemented our friendship till it was as firm as the rocks around us.

One very warm afternoon, when papa and Maggie had set off for the "Bear's Den," and Alice had remained quietly at home to write letters, I was down on the sands as usual. Watty, lying back in his little carriage by my side, whilst the nurse had gone off to some distance to have a chat with a friend of her own profession. There they sat! I could just see them from where I lay luxuriously coiled up under my umbrella. Their backs turned on us; but I could see their heads

nod, nod, nodding, as they doubtless related the "I saids" and "she saids" of their own interesting gossip experience.

I believe both Watty and myself were far advanced in that delicious dreamy drowsiness one is sure to feel by the sea on a hot day, and had just got to that stage which is the one before sleepiness, when suddenly I heard the brother and sister's voices say:

"Here he is, papa, here's Watty! sitting by the lady we told you about, papa, that we met in the cave, and told us stories!"

And, apparently impelled onward by the united forces of the children, I saw a gentleman within a few feet of us. I was nearly hidden under my portable tent; but, I believe, if I had been right in his path he would scarcely have observed me—so anxious did he appear to be to see his little boy.

He bowed as he drew close to us, without, however, as I could see, looking at me; so, probably, he thought the umbrella "the lady we told you about, papa." And I was quietly getting up to make off out of the way of the meeting between father and child, when his voice arrested me. There was but one voice I had ever heard speak in that low, tender tone, as he addressed the sick boy.

I instinctively looked up, and he that moment looked down, probably at the phenomenon of a moving cotton umbrella. Our eyes met. And, then, in spite of a sallow face and long beard, I saw Walter Rylestone before me.

Half-an-hour later, we were all walking homeward together. Watty's little carriage drawn by his father.

Two years after he had gone to India he had married. (Was I not right when I said he would meet with some one quite equal to myself?) She was a fair young creature, a beauty, and an heiress; but she left him when Watty came, left him a sad and lonely man with three young children.

Hugh, the eldest boy, had been called after his mother's father; and when Mabel came, a little spring blossom, he named her in memory of his sweet young cousin-sister.

As soon after their mother's death as possible, the children were sent home to England; and, about six months before we met again, Walter had himself come home.

My father and sisters never knew that he had ever been anything more to me than Miss Rylstone's cousin, whom I had known at Arrés.

We had been pacing up and down the beach for hours, talking, talking, and still there was *more* to tell.

"Ah! Walter," I remarked, half jokingly, and more than whole foolishly, "I'm afraid I was soon forgotten."

"I hope so, Millie," he replied, in that tone and voice that could be so grave and meaning. "At least, GOD knows, I tried to forget you, for five long years at least," he added, in a lower tone.

I was well punished—what a fool I was! and richly had I deserved it.

Well, never mind! If his heart was not large enough for both the present love and the past wife it was not of anything like fair proportions.

So long as there was room for me, I did not care who or what else was there, for I knew Walter Rylstone's heart would never bid welcome, and let bide a guest I should shrink from sharing shelter therein with.

Why should I wish to drive away the shadow of the fair young wife that still haunted the inner chamber of his heart?

We would neither fear her. He should take me by the hand and lead me over the threshold at which I stood *trembling*, not *fearing*—and with him I would enter therein, and that inner room where she was found would be no haunted chamber, or feared place to me; and I would learn to love her, because she was the love of him who was now my love.

There was no reason that there should be any delay in the matter: there was nothing *now* to prevent our marriage; and so it was settled that it should take place very shortly.

Just exactly one week before the day fixed for it Walter was called up to town on business; he was to be back again the day before our wedding. It was not

twelve hours after he was gone when a telegram was brought to my father. An accident had happened on the up line to Exeter, and a Mr. Rylstone, one of the principal sufferers, had requested, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered to speak, that we might be told he was alive!

Alive! Yes, when that was despatched; but what might not a few minutes, even seconds, have done?

Papa and I started at once. As soon as I arrived, I hastened at once to his room.

He was lying tolerably free from pain now. As I entered, he tried to lift himself up, and stretch out his hands to me; it was piteous to see the flush overspread his face, and then die away, leaving him paler and whiter than before, as he sank back on the pillow, unable to do so. His poor crushed arm was lying perfectly helpless outside the coverlet; and the other, the right one, was very much bruised and torn. The accident had spared his face, but his chest was much injured. Large drops stood on his brow with the agony of that little movement. His face lit up with his own eager, bright smile as I drew near.

"Thank you, Millie, oh! so much, for coming so speedily."

I went up to the bed-side and knelt down beside him. He again tried to lift his arm to put it round me.

How his lip quivered, and how his face flushed again.

I put my arm around his neck instead, and kissed his white lips.

"It must not be, you see, my Millie."

"It must not be." The words sent me back in a moment to the old *cour* of the "Hôtel du Nord," and the parting scene with Mabel.

"*It must be, dear Mabel.*"

I scarcely know how or why. I suppose, because there was the same bending to a higher will, that he had used the very same words now.

It must be! It must *not* be! Whatever it might be, it made me put my head down on the pillow close to his, and cry softly.

I could see he was yearning to lift his hand to soothe and caress me, and he could not move it, poor fellow!

CHAPTER XLII.

"Thou liest low and silent,
Thy heart is cold and still,
Thine eyes are shut for ever,
And death has had his will.
He lov'd, and would have taken;
I lov'd, and would have kept;
We strove—and he was stronger,
And I have never wept.

"Into the eternal shadow,
That gilds our life around;
Into the infinite silence
Wherewith Death's shore is bound,
Thou hast gone forth, beloved!
And I were mean to weep
That thou hast left life's shallows,
And dost possess the deep."

THERE was very little said between us. I have often thought since, *how* little. But the pain in his chest was so intense, that every word he uttered caused him great suffering. But, even had he been able to talk, I do not think we should have had much to *say*. It was enough for both that we were together for the little time that yet remained for us to be so.

Not much could be done to alleviate the intense agony he endured at times. I could do little but bathe his face, and wipe from it the drops of anguish.

And thus the hours dragged on; *dragged* as regarded his lengthened sufferings, but speeding very, very, swiftly as regarded the time we had yet to be together. They were very precious to us both.

He had been placed in a quiet room at the back of the large noisy hotel where they had taken him; for those who could be moved had been taken on at once to Exeter. He had been carried to a room on the ground floor, looking into a pleasant garden, and the sweet, scent-laden breath of the flowers stole into the room, and fanned his burning cheek. We sat so quietly for

some time, nothing breaking the hush but his labouring breathing, that a little bird came and hopped up on the window sill, and trilled its joyous song, looking in on us with its bright, wary eye. The panting, failing breathing did not disturb or frighten *it*. Then we heard the cathedral chimes—the fine old chimes of "the Queen of the West"—and the daylight faded, and the shadows gathered and deepened over that fair spot; and the little bird went home to its nest and its mate, and the sweet chimes ceased. And we sat there; and the pain, and the agony, and the long-drawn breath, grew sorer and sorer.

A telegraphic message had been sent down to have the children brought up at once, and he was eagerly looking for them.

His breathing was becoming more and more laboured, more and more difficult, when there was a knock at the door, and some one said, "Mr. ——," I did not catch the name, "was come."

"It is on business, Millie," Walter whispered. "You will come back directly he is gone, will you not?"

It was more than an hour though before the stranger was gone; and when I returned to the room, Walter was lying back exhausted and gasping.

"Millie, I leave them to you."

I knew who *them* meant. He had been arranging for his children.

"Yes, Walter, they are mine now."—He was gone before they came.

I was very lonely, very sad; but I was not left *alone*, although I felt so. But now, there was no more to do for him, and that was the worst part of all.

I could sit and watch beside his body, but *he* was no longer by me. He had gone home, and had left me behind. And, at first, I almost rebelled that it was so. but it was "all right." There was still something more for me to do below; and I must abide behind and do it. But his work was done.

We had once said, that we would each do our separately appointed task alone; and *then*, if it was to be, we would work on through life together. But it

was not to be. His work was done, but mine was not. He had finished his day's labour, and lain down to rest, when I was only half through mine; so, there was to be no working together, no beginning another day side by side, and so keeping on until the end.

I was worn and spent, and could only sit quietly beside what was left of him until that too was gone; and then they came and took me home, and with us went Walter's three children—mine now.

I had learnt, all those long years before we met again, to do without him; but the little time I had had him back again, had almost undone the work of years. And, at first, it seemed as if I should never learn again that I must walk alone. But the lesson is re-learnt now, quite, quite. I have long had it perfectly by heart.

I used to long sometimes, when the sharpness of the sorrow was first on me, that he had been buried near, where I could go from time to time "to weep." But time taught me to be almost thankful that it was not so. If I really felt in my heart that he was gone from earth, and at rest, where it was far, far, better for him to be, and try to rejoice at the remembrance, why should I wish to sorrow at the grave, where he was not? It would have done him no good; it would have done me harm. And I knew that had he been still with me on earth, and I had mourned day after day at a friend's tomb, he would have been the first to come and take me by the hand and lead me away back into the living world, where was my place and work. And so I knew he would not have wished me to mourn for him.

We are all together now; my wish is granted, my desires are realised, and my father, and Alice, and Maggie and I are again united.

For a year or two, I taught Hugh, and Walter, and Mabel, and then, when Hugh got too old for a woman, he was sent to school. Walter was never able to leave home; but he used to have a few hours reading daily with a clergyman who took pupils. The same thirst for reading he had when a little boy on the sands at Torquay but increased as he grew older. He was always our dear cripple, the light and life of our home. There

was no one in the house so merry and full of fun as Watty. The irritability of temper he had shewn as a child wore off as he grew older, and better able to control himself and keep it under. We would not have had him one bit other than he was. After a time, when Maggie came home to reside, we determined to carry out our original intention, and take a few pupils to educate with Mabel; and then, in a few years, I had other pupils almost as dear to me as she was—Edith's two little girls, and Philip's only little one. She was a very precious morsel of humanity, and held in inestimable value.

Once I thought that there could be no joy like that of married life—that it must be happiness above all else in this world to be cared for by one to whom you were the first earthly thought, and in return to care for him above all on earth—that there could be no music like little clinging children's voices, no strong support or stay in weal and woe like the safe shelter of a husband's love. I have had dreams of such, and dreams only, will they ever be for me—Do I regret it? No, no; though knowing full well that there is no joy on earth like the one I have pictured. God has not willed that it should be mine, and, therefore, it is "All Right!"

There can be no union like the one between those whom God has joined together. "*Friendship*" is very priceless; but it was not that our Lord took as his type of the mystic union between himself and his church. He chose for his emblem those who are made flesh of one flesh, heart of one heart, *will of one will.* But though there may be no joy here like it, there are still others very precious, God granted, God sent. God-sanctioned present earthly happiness is very priceless; but Heaven-promised joys to come are more so.

I will not say the assurance came all at once—the struggle was sore for many a day—ah! for many a year; but it is over now.

As I stood at the glass to-day, I saw many grey hairs; and whatever youthful freshness I may once have had, has vanished long ago. And I am getting prim, and old-maidish in my ways; but I care little for this, if my heart but keep young and unchanged, and my affections untouched by time, who, they say, hardens and chills;

but I do not believe it, for as every year comes round, and slips off one more pearl from the chain, whose numbers others will one day count for me, but which I can never do myself, I feel my heart grows more tender and more loving towards the pure fresh young hearts that gather round me. Nay, nay, it surely cannot be, that Time, that softens all things, should harden us. A wife's vocation is a noble one, and little children untold treasures, and a husband's trusting affection a priceless boon. But the one may be taken back, and the other *may* waver; but the loneliest heart in this wide world, or the veriest old maid that ever breathed, may say—

"Thou art thy Saviour's darling—seek no more!"

THE END.

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