



# LIBERTY HALL,

Oxon.

BY

W. WINWOOD READE.

*'My friends receive me from the night.'*

OSSIAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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# LIBERTY HALL.

## CHAPTER I.

### U L T I M A   T H U L E .

“So, Sir, now we have got to the top of the hill out of town, look about you, and tell me how you like the country.”

THE COMPLEAT ANGLER.

UPON a hill of soft moss and scanty heather, two men reclined, their elbows resting on the ground, their heads in the palms of their hands. Both were dressed in suits of Scotch tweed, with leather straps slung over their shoulders, and double-barrel guns across their knees.

The elder was dark as a Spaniard; his eyes stern and haughty, his nose aquiline, his moustache and beard joined his whiskers so closely, that all the lower part of his face was hair. His

shoulders were broad, his chest prominent, and, as he moved his arms or his legs, the muscles could be plainly seen to quiver through his clothes.

The other was also handsome. His eyes were brown, but calm and pensive ; his face was pale ; his chesnut hair, long and silky, fell in curls below his neck ; his hands were white and small, his limbs exquisitely formed.

They looked across a narrow strait of the sea upon a bare, though beautiful country, which swept towards the horizon in gigantic ridges.

Between these ridges might be seen the blue waters of the inland lochs.

On a promontory that bulged out beneath the shadow of a high dark hill, there was a town erected, small in size, and irregular in construction. The houses appeared to be built of some white stone, and stood close down to the water's edge.

The peat-smoke from a hundred fires hung over it lightly, and veiled its roofs in a thin blue mist.

Some vessels were lying at anchor in the harbour. Many were bound for distant ports ; many were returning from remote seas.

A revenue cutter, or trollie boat, low in the water, rakish in the build. Above the edge of the bulwarks, the head and bayonet of a soldier pacing backwards and forwards in sentinel promenade.

A Greenland whaler bound homewards from the North while the season was yet young. Her barrels were empty, her tackle lost with the wounded fish. Her crew, dispirited and weary, were waiting for the south wind, which would bear them back to their disappointed wives, and to the angry speeches of the ship-owners who had employed them.

A French sloop-of-war with the tricoloured flag waving pendent at her stern. She came from the Iceland waters, where she had been sent to protect the French fisheries.

A round bulky vessel swinging heavily to the ground swell, like a cradle to the rocking hand. She was the Hospital ship of the provident and charitable Hollanders. Thither were borne the poor Dutch sailors maimed by the falling of masts, or wasted by the scurvy of the seas.

Along the strait at some distance from the harbour, the water was specked with black and white spots. These were small boats engaged

in the *haaf*, or deep sea fishing, or in tacking to and fro across the Sound after small cod and mackerel, with line and fly.

In spite of this diversity of scenery the faces of the two sportsmen were clouded with languor, their eyes unlighted, fixed, and dead.

The darker of the two, having yawned wearily, said in a low tone as if only to himself :

"I have been becalmed on the Line till my soul has become parched and empty, till the blood has dried in my veins. I have been stationed at the outpost of Bewar in Hindostan, where for two years I saw no white face, I heard no English tongue. I have roughed it in the Bush of Australia, with no better companions than stock-drivers and graziers. I have spent some time in your Oxfordshire mansion, which is passably secluded. I have tasted the solitude of crowds, roamed like a hermit in the Great Desert of Sahara, but never did I feel so sick of life, of the want of life, as I do now."

He turned, and looked at his companion, and waited as if for a reply.

He bent his head languidly, and did not speak.

"The land is barren ; the inhabitants inquisitive and reserved ; we have brought no letters of introduction ; we can form no acquaintances among the higher classes. Hospitality is a bam. We must content ourselves with the country. Look at it, look at it ; why don't you speak ? Is this land a desert, a wilderness, a hole, or am I blind and mad ?"

Thus appealed to, the young stranger raised his mild brown eyes, and ran them over the scenes I have described. He replied in a voice heavy and monotonous as his thoughts,

"There are no trees."

"Trees !" cried the other, bounding to his feet, and casting the gun from his lap, while his eyes burnt, and his lips sneered. "Trees ! are there shrubs ? are there plants ? are there flowers ? It is a land of stone, of stone, of stone ! Our green hedges are stone walls ; our ditches choked with brambles, our trenches filled with stone. Our plank across the brook is a stone slab across the burn. The roadside seats, the stiles, the houses—all are stone. It is a stony region, and a stony race. Their brains are stone, their minds are stone, their souls are stone. We ask a welcome ; it is cold as stone, hard as stone.

We speak to them, and their faces are stone, and their words are stone. It is a stony region and a stony race."

"While we remain, let us be stone as well, and with like, meet like."

"I have lived too long and too near the sun, my flesh is too warm, my blood too free, my thoughts too hot, too swift. O why did we come here? To shoot strange birds? to catch the spotted fish? to visit the Thule of Pliny and of Tacitus? It was not this, it was—"

"It was Destiny!"

"Destiny! will you still rave under these mad fancies, which almost change you to a being of another world? which transport you into ecstasies, or which make you so grave, so romantic, and so sad? Ah, my friend, how strangely you are altered. Is this the merry school-boy with whom I sported on the bright waters of the Isis? with whom I laughed and chatted beneath the elms and lindens of the Oxford groves? Three years ago no line had wrinkled on your forehead, no care had cankered in your heart. Now your fair white brow has wrinkles, and your heart is wrinkled too. No longer young, you speak a language which you do not know, you utter riddles which you cannot solve; your thoughts

mount from you as high as the stars in heaven, which shine upon you, but may never be grasped or understood. Since we have been lying here, I have learnt from your eyes that your thoughts have been busy. Tell me what they were."

"I was looking at the sky, at the mountains, at the sea. And as I looked I felt more sorrowful, I know not why. And as I looked, and thought, and wept within my heart, the words of a great poet streamed upon me.

"In sooth I know not why I am so sad,  
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made on, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn;  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,  
That I have much ado to know myself."

"Whispering these verses to myself I became Antonio; like him sad, like him fearful of the dark and ominous to-come. Tell me, Rudolph, might not this be Venice? This blue cloudless sky; this silent waveless sea; these white buildings whose sides are washed by the waters that bubble to the shore?"

"This sky is Italian in its colour but English in its warmth. This sea has the sullen torpor of the Mediterranean without its beautiful repose.



And Lerwick resembles Venice as the hideous resembles the sublime, when the bare faint outlines are the same. But cheer up, Edward, why should you give way to these dark fiends? Young, rich, handsome, you have the world at your feet. I grant that you have had your troubles, and so much the more reason to hope for a brighter future. Dry the tears that you have shed, and forget all your old follies."

"It is difficult to forget the madness of the past, it is difficult to forget the misery of the past; to forget the guilt of the past, is impossible. If you knew what it is to have a great sin upon your mind, to feel that, through you, the happiness of a whole life has been sacrificed, if—ah! you start like one who wakes from a sinister dream, again that black shadow rests upon your face . . . . . Thus I saw you two months ago. Do you remember that place? where the music rang forth delicious strains, and the lights blazed and sparkled, and the voices, and the songs, and the laughter? There I, wild and mad, out-sang, out-danced, out-revelled all. There I, with cheeks flushed with wine, and hair crowned with flowers drank on and on, while women dragged me to their bosoms, to their laps, and fought in order to caress me. And

there I found an old friend whom I thought that I had lost for ever. Sombre as Othello with clouded brow, and absent thoughts he was leaning against the wall. No eye had he for the girls of the saloons, no ears had he for their music, for their whispers. The black shadow was upon his face."

"My life, Edward, has been longer than yours, and men the longer they live, the more sins they commit. I am a man; I have been a man for many years; but you ought only to be a boy. You were gay then, be gay now."

"I was gay then if to be gay is to be wicked, I was even less happy then than I am now, for my conscience reproached me more. . . . Drunken nights are succeeded by the sufferings of a morning, of a day. But such nights as those bring worse pains far; pains which settle not in the head but in the heart; pains which come not always in the morning of our lives when we are young and strong, but which creep upon us in our cold sunless evenings when we are weak and dying."

"You say you are happier now."

"Yes, for I am less guilty, and yet—I do not know what to say. Is it the air of this country, Rauch, which depresses and darkens the soul?"

He wiped his face, covered as it was with a cold

perspiration, and spoke almost beneath his breath. "Last night, Rudolph, I laid on my bed lonely, sorrowful, wakeful as the stars. Then as I turned and turned, and sought for sleep, dreadful thoughts came upon me. I felt *tired*. Pray God, my friend, that you may never feel tired. Tired of hoping; tired of praying; tired of living any more; tired of the sun and the bright sky; tired of God's earth, and of all that He has given us; tired of men; tired of all things breathing; tired of my best friend; tired of my own poor self. Had a pistol been then in my hand, I would have pressed it to my brow; had a knife been given me, I would have thrust it through my breast; had a precipice opened at my feet I would have flung myself down. Still waking, I saw though the bare uncurtained window the grey streaks on the hem of the morning sky; I watched the thin dusky light as it crept slowly towards me along the walls and across the floor. And while my soul was yet bitter, while the bad spirits still tortured me, I heard a child's voice in the room above me. It was singing a hymn—the words and the strains so sweet, so touching, melted me and made me good. Hot tears poured down my face, something like a soft hand glided over my frame, and I fell into a peaceful heavenly sleep."

“Poor child, it is plain that this northern but moist atmosphere does not agree with you, nor does it with me. I too own that since I have been here I have had my nights without sleep, or with a sleep that has been torn by ominous dreams. We will leave this land of hills and rocks to return to our homes, or to visit more fair and more foreign lands.”

“Oh yes, let us go. Already I feel like the prisoner to whom they converse of his freedom that is near; already I languish for the cool shade of the pleasant trees, and the songs of the birds, and the bubbling of the forest streams. Yes, let us go.”

“This is Wednesday afternoon, and on Saturday night a steamer from the south will anchor in Lerwick harbour. On Monday evening she shall bear us away.”

“How happy I shall be! but if—”

“Again this dark and turbid face! Edward what ails you now? you fear something?”

“I fear—yes I fear—and what it is I cannot say. At times I fear the water which I drink, the food which I eat, the very air which I breathe. I try to beat down these presentiments, to laugh them away, and I cannot, I cannot. Rudolph Rauch are you a sceptic in all things? Without

faith in the friendship of man, in the love of woman, in the promises of God, do you ever listen to the tales that are told of ghosts who rise from their prisons in the tomb, of sights that appear in the clouds, and on the deep, of words which the soul sees while the body is at rest?"

"I do."

"Yet you have read, you have travelled, you have a mind so strong, so bold that often when I have peered within I have been terrified with what I have learnt."

"It is precisely because I have read, because I have travelled, because I have had experience, and have powers of self-judgment, that I am what fools call superstitious, and that I possess what dunces imagine to be credulity. The more I read, the greater mass of authentic evidence was brought before me: the more I travelled, the stranger sights I saw, and the more I became persuaded that things happen every day, which are only believed by those who may have seen them. I have a will of my own which absolves itself from the chains that bind down others. I follow my own ideas which are temperate, and stand half way between the cattle who huddle together at the opposite extremes. In former ages, the mob believed everything, and had I lived then, I should

have been denounced as an Infidel. Now the mob believes nothing, and jeers at me for receiving authenticated facts."

"Then you believe—"

"I believe that the stars of heaven are connected with our fortunes: I believe that the spirits of the dead may wander and be seen: that the mysteries of the future are shadowed forth to us in dreams, and that there are unseen, unknown chains which join different hearts together. . . . And you?"

"I believe with you, in revelations by dreams: I believe with you, that hearts are made for each other, and that in time they will be united, though earths and seas, and men and years shall intervene to divide them."

"Come, enough of this ghostly talk: let us return to our mortal selves: let us be men, and no longer prying wizards. The sun is sinking behind the crags: it bathes the sea in blood: it turns the green hill tops into gold: it sheds a rich light upon the bare rocks till they shine like precious metals at our feet. The country is bright and almost lovely: let our hearts be gay and lightsome too. Come back, come back to our grey, amphibious town: we will dine upon the dainties they shall bring us from the deep: we will drink the rare liquors we imported from the

South : we will sit at our own open windows and listen to the minstrels who will play upon their *gues* : and thus, as we sit, and drink, and listen, we will talk of women, of laughter and of love."

## CHAPTER II.

## SUNDAY.

It was Sunday in Haley.

The bells for afternoon church were ringing joyously : after they had chimed for a quarter of an hour, they ceased, and a single bell began to toll.

Then all the doors were opened, and all the townsmen and townswomen with their children, and their servants issued forth into the street, and bent their steps towards the church.

The faces of these people wore a stern and repulsive expression. They had their Sunday faces on. If their children whispered loudly, or laughed ever so low, they turned upon them with frowns, and said "hush, naughty children : you forget that it is Sunday : you forget that you are going to the House of God."

And the poor children pattered behind with drilled looks, and drilled steps, and drilled tongues,



longing earnestly for bed-time that Sunday might be over. Sunday which the kind God gave us as a day of rest, and which these wretches turn into a day of hard work. Who also make his temple a prison, and his sweet doctrines sour laws : who make this world a hell for others, that they themselves may merit heaven in the next : worse still, who drive their children from God, by compelling them to follow Him, not as He has wished, but as they—they stern and silly puritans, with their heads of wood—they, shallow word-mongers with their minds of mud shall choose and order.

The church-door is shut : the congregation sit, rise and kneel like automatons moved by springs. The priest prays to God in a cold harsh monotonous voice, as one who is paid for an unwelcome task : and they that kneel round him, answer in dull and sing-song tones, like school-boys who say their lessons with their hands behind their backs, and their eyes fixed on the master's rod.

The priest who has worn white garments, now robes himself in a black gown : the people till now vacant, yawny, listless, settle themselves in their pews, and listen breathlessly.

They are not disappointed.

He who a few minutes before had prayed that forgiveness might be rendered unto all men, now

launches into fierce speeches against some sect of his brother-christians, and consigns some thousands of his fellow-creatures to utter and eternal damnation.

They listen to this oration with relief and pleasure, and their eyes glisten as if he had spoken of the good tidings of the Angels.

The preachers and his disciples had been compelled by the church to use the words and the prayers of the good and of the great, but their hearts went not with them.

In the sermon, the preacher spoke after his own light, which was also that of his disciples who had licked their lips to the tune.

Come with me to the house of one of these Christians. She was one who went often to church : her face was hard and cold all church time : she collected subscriptions : and she was sure that no Roman Catholic could be saved.

\* \* \* \* \*

Constance was lying on a sofa in her parlour. In her hand was a book, in which she appeared to be enthralled. Page after page she turned, and read without changing the position she had first assumed, without glancing through the window at her elbow, without even pushing back the luxuriant hair which, torn free from comb and hair pin, had fallen across her neck, her shoulders, and her face.

Something almost supernatural is required to rivet a woman's body into one posture, even though she may be alone, and to stop her from looking out of window, even though she may be certain that there is nothing to see.

As she read on, a smile which fluttered at intervals across her lips, at length became incrustated upon them, while a warm blush of enjoyment which had kept mounting to her cheeks, and fading away only to mount afresh, at length remained there altogether.

Thus she was reading with smiles and blushes stereotyped upon her features, and a roguish fire sparkling from her eyes, when a loud rap sounded at the door.

She uttered a pettish exclamation, and thrust the book under the sofa bolster. She tossed her legs down, passed her hands over her dress and face, and took up an octavo with a serious binding into her lap.

When the visitor was ushered in, she found a prim little thing perched on the very edge of the sofa, her hair arranged in a plain almost unsightly manner, her dress fastened decorously up to her chin, and her quiet grey eyes bent with devotion upon the good work she was holding so carefully before her.

The prim little thing brightened up amazingly on seeing who it was, jumped off her seat, shied the sermons at a grey cat, who slumbered piously on the rug, kissed her friend, and returned head foremost into the sofa, where she lolled about, and made herself untidy again as fast as could be desired.

"I'm so glad it's you, Clemmy! you can't think how relieved I am! I made certain it was the Reverend Mrs. Buddell, who is always coming here on Sunday afternoons to look after my soul, and my strawberry jam. I never met a woman with such a religious appetite in my life."

"Do you see this?" said Miss Cobb, with a stern air, holding up her prayer-book.

"And do you see this?" retorted Constance, shoving her hand underneath the bolster, and handing her the book.

Miss Cobb laid down her prayer-book, and took off her bonnet and shawl. Then she opened the book, and glanced over its tumbled and dingy leaves, raising it very close to her eyes when she came to the red and smudgy plates with which the volume abounded.

Constance watched her with a cunning smile. "Have you ever read it?" she asked.

“Read it! yes, before you were born or thought of. I was quite a child at the time,” she added, hastily correcting herself. “But I understood it was out of print.”

“So I heard; but books are never out of print till they are burnt in the market-place. I simply understood by that, that it was not to be obtained in the street that shall be nameless. But I did not despair. After long and careful researches, my milliner, who is agent in chief to my bad wishes, fell in with a travelling pedlar, who carries peppermint lozenges, stay-laces, pen holders, and tooth-brushes about the country in a huge box. In this huge box, Clemmy, is a naughty little drawer full of naughty little books; you touch a spring, you pay your money, and you take your choice.”

“How old are you, Constance?”

“Seventeen last birthday.”

“You are more precocious than I was even,” said Miss Cobb, who had already forgotten her previous assertion to the contrary. “I own that I did not adopt these independent measures till after I was turned of age. Then look at the advantages you have had over me. I was under my mother’s thumb till I was twenty, and it was not till after I had gone into Lord J——’s family

as governess, that one of his daughters (who was young enough goodness knows, but they force their fruit in the best gardens) put me up to this kind of thing. While here you are, with no relations to trouble you, and no reminders except a snug little annuity, which makes you remember them on the quarter days. However, my dear Constance, you know that I am older than yourself—”

“Yes,” said Constance.

“And that I have had more experience than yourself. I will not say that I am more clever than you are. On new and neutral grounds I should certainly regulate my conduct by yours, for you can see many things in a moment, which I should boggle at for an age. Still it must be remembered that I have seen more, heard more, done more, and felt more than you have, and I should be omitting in my duty as a friend to you, if I did not give you half a sentence of advice.”

Constance listened with a face of unfeigned gravity.

“In England, my dear child, men have little independence, let them say and write what they please. By men, understand me to mean men of status and respectability. It is true that they may escape now and then from the thralldom of their homes, and snatch a few nights of precious

freedom in the saloons and cafés of our modern Babylon. But this is not liberty, my own Constance, this is not liberty. As well call him free, who snatches his mouthful of fresh air in the courtyard of his prison ; as well call him free, whose limbs are unbound for a short space while his guards stand over him. No, he may play his little pranks, but the same old tyrant who watches over him at home, will soon clutch him in her talons, and bear him back to the apron strings of his wife, his mother, or his maiden aunt. This tyrant is Society ; and tyrant though she be, like many other despots, her rule is wholesome. It is Society alone that preserves us all from demoralization and ruin. It is Society alone that prevents the fashionable rogues of the turf from becoming swindlers whom the law can reach. It is Society alone that prevents all the wives from eloping with the bachelors, and all the daughters from running away with the married men. It is Society alone that crushes crime (within limits) in our fashionable circles. What are laws I should like to know ? Why, my cherub, if certain vices were to become fashionable, lords and ladies would go through the laws like a cricket ball through a glass window, or a government clerk through the Insolvent Court.

“In proportion as crimes become more numerous, their punishment in this enlightened country become more mild and lenient. I daresay you know that some severe and ridiculous laws were made against suicide, at a time when people ran too much risk of being killed by their enemies to think of killing themselves; and now that suicide has become an every-day occurrence, these laws are evaded, and quite right too. Society, you will observe, has no law against suicide which accounts *in toto* (as the Greeks used to say) for the prevalence of the custom. But there are certain peccadillos which Society forbids. If a gentleman offends in these, although he may not be hated, he will certainly be shunned—and if in a profession, he will be ruined. A lawyer, and he will get no briefs; a doctor, and he will obtain no fees; an artist (poor thing!) and no one will buy his books, or his paintings.

“Thus far, my child, I have spoken only of the great commandments of Society, and with these we have little to do. But it is right that you should know that she has her bye-laws too, as numerous, as they are important. These require the performance of certain formalities which, insignificant *per se* (as the Jews of old proverbially remarked), everybody is obliged to adhere to,



because everybody else does. This it is that compels husbands to be constantly with their wives (before the public) in Haley-on-Thames, nor to sit in a separate carriage in the parks, or a different pew in the churches of Belgravia. This it is that brings young gentlemen to our quiet tea-parties from their club smoking-rooms, and their bachelor carousals; this it is that drives them into diplomatic wedlock, and which puts them to the trouble of hiding their undiplomatic liaisons.

“Now, if men have little freedom, I need scarcely tell you that we women are far more shackled still. For the same thing in which men are countenanced, even encouraged, we poor women are frowned upon, and excommunicated. In the same way we are compelled to pay a greater attention to the points of external decorum, and in a town like Haley one requires to be excessively careful. Now, your demeanour in a ball room, my dear Constance, is more than human—it is saint-like. And although your dress is quite as low as other people’s, any one to look at your face would be convinced that it was a mistake of your dress-maker’s. Your behaviour in the streets, and in places of public resort is unexceptionable. In church, for instance, it does

one good to see you—when you happen to be there. But you were not there this afternoon, and you were not there three Sunday mornings ago. Excuse my pointing this out to you, but it may do you considerable harm. All the rich people here, go twice to church every Sunday, and when they see your pew empty Sunday after Sunday, (for if you once begin, you will soon give up church altogether) they will form opinions about you which will scarcely induce them to recommend you as a matrimonial investment to their sons and heirs. I quite trembled for you when I saw how black Mr. Hickman turned, (John, as you know, will soon come in for £700 a year from his uncle) when he saw you were not there.”

“Why, Clemmy Cobb, you are quite an orator! and, what knowledge of life you possess! and I must confess you are quite right about church and all that, but the day was so cold, and the book so warm—As for Johnnie Hickman, I will tell you something by and by . . . . . Ha! ha! ha!”

“What are you laughing at?”

“I was thinking that if the men could hear us now! dear simple creatures, who believe that they swallow up so much with their great in-

tellects that there can be nothing left for the women to learn. They look upon us as children, don't they, Clemmy? and think that grown up women are only so many sheets of paper that won't take anything but what they write on them; that we can learn nothing except what they teach us themselves; that we have no eyes to see or to read with, no ears to listen with, and, above all, no minds or brains to comprehend."

"It would be a pity to undeceive them; but have you any news for me?"

"Yes, you shall have them presently. And you?"

"I have got the bits of a puzzle, which puzzle me completely. I have brought them to you, and you will help me put them together, won't you?"

"To be sure I will, when I have had some tea. It brightens one up so. Besides, scandal without tea would be almost as dull as Haley-on-Thames without scandal. Rinse the pot out that's a good soul."

\* \* \* \*

"Now then, let me hear the problem."

At these words, Miss Cobb raised the cup to her lips, full, and set it down in the saucer empty; she wiped her mouth, adjusted her black Sunday dress, and raised her nostrils in the air as if

hoping thereby to imbibe her stray thoughts and memories.

"You remember Lucy Leddiard?"

Constance answered by tucking back her sleeve, and displaying a fine jet bracelet which encircled her wrist.

"And you are aware that for two years we have neither seen nor heard anything of her. Her aunt, who still lives in the same house, never did receive a visitor, and the servants know as little as ourselves, except an old harridan who has also disappeared now, and who, it seems, had been paid like a mute at a funeral, to hold her tongue."

"Her disappearance was sudden, certainly," answered Constance, "but as she was not in the habit of acquainting us with her movements, or their motives, I simply inferred that she had sickened of this delightful place, concocted a quarrel with her good aunt, and gone to take up her abode with some other relative."

"You did not look upon it as mysterious?"

"I candidly own that I did not. I love the romantic dearly; but here I could find no premises to go to work upon."

"In connection with the bracelet and Miss Leddiard you remember young Edward Saxon?"

“And also as the most perfect partner for a round dance that I had ever the honour of blushing to.”

“Do you know, that after the ball he never called upon her at her house again, during the months that elapsed between that period and the date of her departure?”

“Yes, for he must pass along this road to get to the bridge; without getting to the bridge he cannot cross the river; and without crossing the river he cannot attain to his fool’s paradise. Consequently, I nearly always saw him go by when he went to call on her, and when I did not see him, my spies did.”

“Can you account for his not going there?”

“Easily enough. By dancing with me that night he hurt the girl’s vanity, which is generally fatal. So there was first a warm debate, next a cool division in the house.”

“Though he never called upon her, he used to visit Haley twice a week, to take German lessons from Schlitz—”

“The man with the beautiful beard.”

“And seemed always pale and careworn.”

“Natural enough after the division aforesaid, or, perhaps, it was because he had not seen me lately.”

"Let us have no jesting, Constance, for if this is really fire which I carry in my hand, we shall not find it difficult to set all Haley in a blaze."

"It is serious then?" said Constance, composing her face, and looking keenly at her vis-à-vis.

"There is undoubtedly a grand mystery, and if we can catch the clue, there will be a grand exposure to follow. Now, young Saxon's behaviour at the ball is piece No. 1 of my puzzle; his apparent indifference and evident inquietude, No. 3; and the Leddiard's absence from Haley is my No. 4."

"I suppose you know that you have left out No. 2."

"When we have got all the pieces before us, we shall have to put them together, if we can. But first listen to my No. 2, which is the best piece of all."

Constance having assumed an attitude of wrought up interest, Clementina licked her lips, and continued:—

"I have got a maid now of the name of Charity. She was brought up very strictly in those schools from which she has derived her name, and where she had received a sound and proper education in those acquirements which mistresses look for in

domestics, and which in most schools now-a-days are dispensed with in exchange for the arts of crochet, or for the use of the globes. On making myself acquainted with these points, and seeing that she was pretty, (with an arm and bosom, a Countess would have given her title for), I straightway engaged her."

"What ! because she was pretty ?"

"Most ladies, I know, imagine that good-looking servants do their work badly, but that is a mistake. Pretty girls always like to be clean, and in order to be clean they must keep everything clean about them. Besides, you don't often find a handsome plebeian with a sedative turn of mind. They are nearly all brisk and active, and early risers ; this gives them a colour, developes their lips, and makes them down-right good maids of all work."

"I thought that they were always getting into love, and going dreaming about the house while they forget the slop-pail that blocks up the stairs, or the joint that is burning on the spit."

"Females in that class of life are all subject at times to that unhappy distemper. Do you suppose that the ugly girls never fall in love, you little goose ?"

"I live and learn," answered the young lady, con-

vinced and delighted. "It is quite a treat to hear you philosophize. Go ahead, Clemmy."

"Before Charity had been long in my service, I discovered that she was courted by Mr. Saxon's young man. Would you believe it, my dear, the Saxons only keep one servant to groom the horse, drive the carriage, cut up the wood, fetch the coals, fill the boiler, clean the knives and shoes, mow the lawn, dig the garden, and do a hundred odd jobs besides? With all their pride too! and the livery he wears! I wonder they don't put him into hair-powder, and artificial calves as well, and so fill up the measure of the unfortunate young man's degradations."

"There, never mind the man's calves, Clem, you are making me lose the thread of your story."

"Whenever Squire Saxon drove into Haley, my maid found some excuse for leaving the house, and going on an errand which always lasted just half an hour. I did not interfere, as I might otherwise have done, for this reason, that the Saxons keep so much to themselves, that it is very difficult to find out how matters go on at Blakey's, and while this courtship was in progress, Charity would impart to me the household information she had received from her suitor, as so



much Sunday gossip she had picked up from the neighbours, little thinking that I knew all about her thirty minute mouth-piece.

“ One evening the Saxons came to Haley to go to a concert at the Town Hall, and at nine o'clock Charity came up-stairs and asked if she might just run down the town, and buy her a little ribbon for her best cap, over which she was nocturnally engaged. I told her that it was too late: all the haberdashers closed at eight, but that she might go if she liked the first thing the following morning. By the way in which her mouth worked (always look at a person's mouth when you ask a favour, or say anything unpleasant: it is our best index of the mind), I saw that my suspicions had been just, and immediately took up my cue.

“ ‘ Charity,’ said I, ‘ you are not going to buy any ribbon, you are going to see Mr. Saxon's servant.’

“ Charity protested that she was not, indeed. That she did not like young men. That as for Mr. Saxon's young man, she'd never thought twice of him in her whole life, and that she wouldn't be seen keeping company with him, not whatever.

“ I silenced these rejoinders in my own quiet way, and instead of giving her a month's wages,

or a month's warning, as she had probably anticipated, I made her my accomplice in the little plot that I was planning, and my fellow searcher for the phantom, which, till then had evaded me—the piece of the puzzle, No 2. She was to invite her John Thomas to my kitchen, and having intoxicated him with furtive smiles, and coy embraces, and Hickman's strongest beer, to wean from him all that he knew about Miss Lucy Leddiard, and Mr. Edward Saxon.

Every woman has a taste for intrigue, every maid-servant a passion for bitter beer, so Charity complied eagerly with my offer. She brought home the infatuated youth, and went to fetch the beer which John Thomas implored might not be Hickman's. It was prime Marlow beer, fourpence a pint, love, and the horrible creatures (Charity said, she would be obliged to drink some herself, or he might suspect something), drank seven! I only wonder they did not drink more. I tasted it myself as it came in, and I am sure it was very nice. So it ought to be! two and fourpence, Constance dear, I had to pay. Fourpenny followed fourpenny, as pint followed pint, and I made certain that he was never going to get drunk. Not that I grudge the money. I amply recovered my expenses, as you shall hear.

"The first foolish thing the man did, after being wise and timid for a long time (at least, I thought it long, for I was listening at the key-hole, and there is a terrible damp draught from the cellars there), was to kiss Charity, who, I am ashamed to say received the salute, as if she was not only used to kisses, but tired of them. The next to sing a song: the next to burst into a flood of tears and to talk over Miss Jane, and how kind she used to be to them all, and to cry into his beer as if it was too strong for him. Then he sang another song, and then Charity asked after Master Edward, and then it all came out.

"It appears that a very short time after our little business at the Town Hall, Lucy drove up to Blakey's: the family were away at the time, and Edward, with an Oxford friend of his, had the house all to themselves. A heavy snow-storm came on while she was there, and prevented her from returning home that night."

"So she slept at Blakey's?"

"Yes, she slept at Blakey's fast enough; and Charity who began to get interested herself, plied John Thomas so judiciously with questions and Marlow beer, that he soon told her all he knew about the matter.

"The next morning the two gentlemen set off

for Oxford, and Miss Leddiard set off for home. He, John Thomas, saw Master Eddard who looked pale and sick-like, while the Oxford gentleman, he seemed very merry, as if he was trying to cheer him up."

"Did he see Lucy?"

"No, but he heard that she looked even worse than Edward, as if she had the fever, and that she did not get out of bed till it was time for her to go."

"Did he speak to any of the house-maids about the matter?"

"They informed him that the old housekeeper was very bad that day crying for hours together as if her heart would break, and that whenever any one spoke of Master Eddard she would sigh and turn pale; and once when the cook mentioned Miss Lucy, she bid her hold her tongue, and not talk of her betters, and then ran out of the room with her apron up to her eyes, sobbing away a good one. After a few days, Master Eddard came back quite like an altered man. He did not seem to care for such as he had doted on before; he wouldn't so much as look at the dogs, nor touch a gun, nor ride on horseback till after he took to riding into Haley. What he did do, was to spend all his time walking about the woods with a face

like a ghost's, and his head bowed down like an old man's."

"Was, there anything in the way of correspondence discovered?"

"Yes to be sure there was. One of the girls had told him that a letter in Miss Leddiard's hand had come from abroad. It was on fine paper, and the postmark had a big C, and an l, and an s; and what the whole word was they could not rightly make out."

"It was Calais," said Constance. "She went there because the Saxons had been there. Go on, this becomes exciting."

"It is nearly done now. Five minutes after the letter had gone into the parlour where the family were at breakfast, Master Edward rushed out, and ordered the horse to be saddled; and while it was being done, he walked up and down the stable-yard working his hands about, and his face working too, and kept calling out to know if the horse was ready. And directly he was on, he flogged the beast with a heavy whip, and galloped it out of the gate, and he did not come back all that blessed day; and he (John Thomas) had to sit up for him till midnight pretty nigh, when he rode in the horse all over foam and half dead with work. And where he went to all that while, he never

could find out. It wasn't to any town, for he had asked at Haley, and at Reading, and at Collingford, and nobody hadn't seen or heard anything of him on that day."

"When did this letter come?"

"Charity, like a sensible girl, asked him that question, and he said that it must have been in a year's time after the storm of snow, or it might have been less by a month or two. He was certain it wasn't more than a year at the very most."

"When did she leave Haley? what month?"

"In the beginning of October."

"And the snow fell in the end of December. Clemmy go to my desk and find me a sheet of paper and a good pen: this is more complicated than I had expected, though I think that I see my way. However, I must note down the evidence before I can sum up."

While Miss Cobb was opening and searching the desk, Constance was doing an addition sum to herself, and counting on her fingers—January 1, February 2, March 3, &c.,

The sum apparently came right, for she smiled; then she nibbled her pen, spread the paper out before her, and wrote a page or so deliberately enough, stopping to ask a leading question every now and then.

After this she paused, chewed the end of her quill, and lifted her eyes towards the cornice, and patted the ground in slow time with her Cinderella foot. Then with another and a still more confident smile playing on her lips, she penned a few more sentences, and handed them to her companion.

Miss Cobb gave a great start, and crumpled the paper in her hands with convulsive glee ; then she glared doubtingly upon Constance who answered with a slight nod, and the same composed smile.

“My dear love this cannot be ; it is too much for any one to expect. You must recollect that Lucy Leddiard was a clever girl.”

“And a self-confident one. She was one of those women who think that they have stouter heads than every body else, and that they can walk with impunity upon the brink of that precipice over which so many have fallen. When the sentinels underrate, and despise danger, the fortress is no longer impregnable. Miss Leddiard played a dangerous game with Mr. Saxon, and finished off by losing it. She kept it up for some time, but you know the French proverb : *Il n’y a pas de salamandre, qui ne finisse pas par se bruler.*”

“And she has gone to Calais to—”

“Yes.”

“This will prove a little expensive to the last of the Saxons.”

“Did you not hear that he has had a lot of money left him?”

“No, and I am very glad to hear it now. I am sure that I bear *him* no ill-will; and if I had, it would be all sponged off since he has become the instrument of our wrath upon Lucy—I only hope that it is true.”

“I am convinced of it; and I could convince you easily enough if we knew any one who had seen her in August, in July, or even in the latter part of June.”

“You must be right,” cried Clementina dancing up from her chair in an ecstasy of emotion. “How stupid of me never to have thought of it, though to be sure these things don’t happen every day, and I did not give the girl credit for being such a fool. Of course, the servants did tell me that the latter months before leaving she kept close to her room, and wouldn’t see a soul except the old woman, not even her aunt; and that when she came through the house to get into the carriage, she was muffled up from head



to foot, as if it had been March instead of August. Ah !”

Miss Cobb gave a gasp of pleasure, and sank back into a delicious reverie.

“ You have not heard my news yet.”

“ I am afraid they will come now like sago pudding after venison. You can’t cap my puzzle, dear. However, you can try.”

“ Well then, Lucy Leddiard is at Tenby, and is going to be married to a Mr. Jameson.”

“ Mr. Jameson ! the wretch ! Oh, this is good ! this is glorious ! this is incredible !!! How do you know, Constance ?”

“ From Jameson’s sister that is all. We were at school together, and are real bosom friends ; that is to say we write long letters to each other, disclosing all the secrets we can lay hold of—only sparing our own.”

“ This is truly wonderful,” said Miss Cobb, in a low condensed voice. “ In the same hour, I learn that I am about to be richly avenged on the two people I hate most in the world. There never were two people more like each other, and therefore more unsuited to each other. Both as sharp as Sheffield penknives, both as fiery as a blacksmith’s pincers. They will kill each other like the Kilkenny cats did, if they are only shut up together

for the night—especially when the bridegroom discovers—”

“As there is no chance of their being shut up together for the night, I fear Miss Cobb’s vengeance will have to be postponed.”

“I do not understand you,” said Miss Cobb, anxiously.

“My early friendship for Miss Jameson interests me in behalf of her misguided brother. I cannot permit him to be the husband, or her to be the sister-in-law of a lady who, by this time, has doubtless commenced to turn pleasure into a profession.”

“Is this my clever Constance?”

“Is this, my intelligent Clementina? If you cannot understand woman’s English, I must talk to you as if you were no better than a man. In plain words, I hate this Leddiard, while Jameson is nothing to me either one way or the other. Leddiard of course wants to get married now more than ever, and I mean to prevent her.”

“But, Constance, this man is a regular brute. He has played me all sorts of vile tricks, and called me names, too.”

“I am sorry for it,” replied Constance, with equanimity. “It is very wrong of him to call a lady names, and to play tricks upon her, very

wrong indeed. I feel for you from my heart, and if it was anybody else he was going to marry, I am sure that I wouldn't think for a moment of standing either in his way or in yours—but you see, she has done things to earn my displeasure, and he hasn't."

Miss Cobb who had been reflecting all this while, now burst into a fit of premeditated laughter.

Constance looked at her with a smile that was almost a disturbed one.

"What is the joke now?"

"It is no joke," said Clementina, growing very grave; "and it was very wicked of me to laugh, though I did not laugh at what he said, but at your simplicity in thinking him inoffensive, and all that."

"Then he said something."

"Did I say he said anything? I don't think I did; it must have slipped out quite unawares."

"What did he say, please?"

"It does not matter now, love," replied Miss Cobb in the voice of a person who desires to change the conversation.

"But it does matter now. What did he say?"

Miss Cobb again evaded the question in order

to quicken the curiosity of her friend, and to have more time for framing her own story. Constance bounded from her seat like a panther, and gripped her on the shoulder.

"Answer me directly. What did he say? what did he say?"

The old maid quailed beneath those eyes, which glared upon her like a viper's, and beneath the touch of that hot angry hand.

"Yes, I will tell you, dear, I will tell you; but you must not mind it; promise me that. Mr. Jameson is sure to have something disagreeable to say about everyone. If it was an angel, it would be just the same. And he said—it was only a joke you know—that—that you were no better than a live skeleton, and that—you won't be angry, will you dear?—and that he wouldn't touch you with a pair of tongs."

"Oh, he said that, did he? Ha! ha! pair of tongs, indeed! What are his arms I should like to know. He was alluding to them, I suppose. He! he!"

"He! he!"

"Well, he shall marry Miss Leddiard, and I hope he will find her to his fancy. A skeleton! (here she turned up her sleeve). Well, perhaps he is not far out; but he—he need not have said so.

Were there many people by?" asked poor Constance faintly.

"Oh no, there was nobody by, Constance, dear. Nobody at all, except me. He was speaking to me at the time, and I am certain that nobody else could have heard him."

"I suppose it is true," said poor Constance, lifting her dress, and scrutinising her narrow leg and ankle, "and I hope he will find Miss Leddiard as sweet a lemon as the one I am tasting now."

"You will get stouter after you are married, love," said Miss Cobb, feeling something like compunction. "Everyone does, gentlemen and ladies, too."

"I hope I shall," said the girl dejectedly; "and (brightening up), I assure you that my intended has plenty of flesh to give away in exchange for the rib."

"Your intended! why this is another piece of news; 'pon my word, and all. Your intended!"

"It was only arranged two days ago. Guess who it is?"

"Some very stout gentleman from what you said. Let me see what stout gentlemen do I know? Perhaps it is Mr. Hobbes."

"You great silly! Do you think I would go and be Hobbes' missus? Besides he has got one.

He married that pimply girl from the Black Bull. Really you flatter me. Now what do you think of Mr. Plumper?"

"I do not know him."

"Don't you? O, he is such a dear elephant of a man, you can't think; and just the one for me. As fat and as rich as butter, and almost as soft."

"We love by contrast. And when you are married," she sighed, "you will forget your old friend, I dare say."

Constance gave her a kind look.

These she-wolves actually loved one another, though they did interchange their little quarrels and insincerities in common with other people. Thrown into the same circles, they soon coupled from the mass, and were soon recognised by their decrepid disciples as the queen-makers of tea and scandal. Clementina had once reigned alone, but with marvellous penetration, she detected almost immediately in the young, and simple-faced Constance, a spirit superior to her own; with marvellous wisdom she conciliated the dangerous rival by offering her the half of the throne, instead of contesting for the whole of it, and losing it. Soon this intimacy ripened into friendship. Each bowed to the other as a clever woman, and liked

her for it. Cobb, aged 47, revered Constance *ætat* 17; while Constance respected Clementina for an experience and shrewdness, which she had little looked for in the drowsiness of Haley. Their tastes congenial, their minds congenial, and their arrows headed with the same metal, their friendships had begun, by the present time, to resemble the affections of Pylades and Orestes. They trusted each other (as far as geniuses dare trust geniuses), spent all their time together, and when absent from each other, were planted on the brink of misery.

So Constance looked at her kindly, and seemed to think for a little while. Then the look of kindness became a look of pity.

“It must be dreadful, never to get married.”

The old woman woke from a sombre reverie, when she heard these words. She bent her head, and mused for a few moments. Then her eyes darted flames.

“Aye, and how much more dreadful when this is owing, not to the want of attractions, not to the want of opportunities, not to that conceit which refuses, and refuses, till it becomes too late to consent, but—”

Her face drooped, and her eyes became moist.

“Ah! Constance, they say that old maids have

all their tales to tell of suitors rejected, but how many there are who might tell a tale of their own hearts betrayed, and their own lives withered through the wickedness of men. You will perhaps laugh at me, if I relate to you the story of my own love, and my own wrongs—be it so. I prefer the laughter of a clever girl to the compassion of a fool, yet that even, I would have, in order to pour into some ear a part of that which I have suffered, in words which, till now, have never crossed my lips. And why should I not speak? Has it not been laughed over, talked over, by a hundred tongues?

“Once, Constance, besides being clever, I was pretty, and I was modest. At that time I lived with my aged mother in a town called Slough, which is situated between Reading and London. We were poor enough, and we were happy enough, for we worked hard and honestly for our bread. While I went out as day-governess, and music-mistress to various families in the neighbourhood, my mother worked embroidery at home. Thus we contrived to keep the cart upon the wheels, and even succeeded in laying by a small sum in the town saving’s bank.

“How well I remember that dark winter’s day! I was hurrying home from a clergyman’s at Stoke,



where I had been teaching one of the young ladies the rudiments of Italian. It was very cold, and I felt the colour tingling to my cheeks, and my hands beginning to be numbed, even inside my modest home-made muff, as I walked along thinking of the Italian lesson, and of my dear mother, and of some little delicacy she had promised me for my one o'clock dinner.

“As I was crossing the railway bridge, I met a tall gentleman, who stared at me so hard as he passed by, that my face coloured all over, and my eyes dropped to the ground. But I had time to see that he was handsome, oh, very handsome. His eyes were dark and powerful, and his whiskers were black; and then, Constance, he was a clergyman, for he had a tiny white cravat tied under his collar, as neatly as if he had been going to a ball. As I walked away, I asked myself whether I was really angry with him for staring at me like that, and I found that I was not. And why should I be? If a Frenchman meets a pretty stranger, he lifts his hat to her: if an Englishman admires any one in the road or street he stares at her very hard. The one is quite as great a compliment as the other, only it is not paid in so pretty a manner.

“And do you know, (I was so vexed with my-

self afterwards) I was actually silly enough to look round. I might have guessed that he would be doing the same, and so he was. And when I saw him burst into a loud laugh, I felt hot all over with shame, that I did. It was so stupid of me to look round, as if it would have been of any use. There is nothing interesting in a gentleman's back-hair and coat-tails. Still one always does look round, somehow.

"I promise you that when I got home, I cared very little for the nice treat my mother had made for me, and that I was absent-headed all that day, and that I did not sleep much for some nights afterwards, through thinking of the handsome clergyman and his black whiskers, and his great hearty laugh.

"Three weeks afterwards, I was invited to a ball at the clergyman's at Stoke, to play the piano. And there I saw him again. As he entered the room I was over a quadrille, and for the next five minutes I played so badly, that they all turned round and looked at me. But I could not help it, Constance, he was looking so handsome, and he smiled at me as he came in.

"I learnt from the stray phrases which I caught now and then, that his name was Stephen Walesby, that he was a fellow of an Oxford

college, and that he had just been admitted to holy orders. He danced, and flirted, although he was a clergyman, and all the young ladies seemed burning to have him for their partner. But I could not help observing that he stole a great many glances at me; and I—I was a true virgin, and I did not wish him to think that he had conquered me so soon, yet I could not prevent myself from looking at him, and once our eyes met.

“I do not know whether I blushed this time or not, but I did wish that I could sink into the ground, while my hand ran over the notes without my seeming to move it, without my hearing what sounds it produced. . . . . And he was smiling a calm proud smile: the smile of one who knew that he had gained a victory. Yet I loved him all the more for it: I even revered him for that smile.

“Then the dance went on, and I saw him press my pupil to his side. I saw his arm round her waist: I saw his eyes bent upon her face: I saw one white hand gleaming on his noble shoulder, and the other nestling in his own. And I played on, I played on. They had paid me to play, paid me with the happiness of others, and with a seat at the supper-table. Yes, I must play on, or

they would turn me out, and I should see him no more.

“The lights danced before my eyes; the beating of feet, and the murmur of voices poured confusedly upon my ears. For some moments I would see nothing, hear nothing: then I would wake up as it were, but only to the same dim vision, and with dull half-conscious ears. And all this while my hands strummed the measure, as if my senses had been in full life, and power. At last a voice at my side told me I might cease, and the music died away beneath my hands.

“Before the next dance commenced, I, who still watched him furtively, observed him cross the room, and with a side-long glance at myself address some observation to his hostess—my employer. She shrugged her shoulders, and looked *part* of the way towards me as she answered him.

“They told me to play the Lancers. I obeyed. And I made a resolution within my breast that I would not look at him once during the whole dance. You think that this was firm—no, Constance, it was weakness. I feared to see him hold another woman in his arms.

“Thus I was playing on with my numbed tired fingers, and my poor sinking heart, when

a voice spoke behind me ; a voice melodious as a song. I had never heard that voice before, but I knew well from whose lips it came.

“Then I summoned all my woman’s courage, all my maiden pride to assist me, and I answered him calmly, and with an unchanging face. Ah ! could he but have seen how I was suffering within.

“He stood by me all that dance, (how short it seemed !) and even after it was finished. The daughter of the house, with whom he had danced nearly all the evening, came up while he was there, and gave me some directions in a harsh imperious tone. I answered her gently, but he, with his black fierce eyes, reproved her more bitterly than words could have done. She turned away looking paler than she had been before. And I was sorry for her, Constance, for I was a simple soft-hearted creature then.

“Almost the whole night, he turned his back upon those handsome women whose arms were bare, whose bosoms were exposed, whose hair and dresses sparkled with precious gems—and all that while he conversed with me—with me, in my prim high dress, which fastened round my throat, and which covered my wrists ; my hair folded plainly, my only ornament, my mother’s brooch.

“Meanwhile, those young but bad-hearted girls whispered at me from corners, and hissed me with their eyes. I did not understand those whispers then; I knew not what those looks meant then; but I know now. They were insults to my lover, they were injuries to me.

“I cannot speak to you of our courtship, my friend. I can only tell you that he saw me oftener and oftener every day, that every day he spoke to me more earnestly, more warmly, and that every day I loved him more. It is true that my mother tried to set me against him. She said that a man who lived as he lived, after he had sworn to devote himself wholly and exclusively to the service of God, would never make a good husband. But I could only see that he was handsome, that he was clever, that his sentiments were pure, and that he loved me tenderly.

“Two months after I had first known him, he asked me to marry him. My mother reluctantly consented. Then he explained to us that, being a Fellow of a College, he would lose his present income by marrying, and, what was of more importance, the living which would necessarily fall to his share in due rotation. So it was arranged that our marriage

should be postponed till the living became vacant.

"This chimed in with my mother's wishes. Under any circumstances, she would have desired us to wait a twelvemonth, or even two, in order that I might gain a little more age and experience, and above all, she said, that my husband might sober down into a better man.

"O, Constance, what places are these, where men are held back from marriage under pain of ruin! through whose laws so many poor women are compelled to linger long, long years, feeding on the hope deferred, fed upon by the canker that gnaws deeper every day!

"For fifteen years we remained thus plighted. Seven of those years we passed almost entirely in each other's company. But soon my charms began to fade, at least, in his eyes; soon those qualities which at first had enchanted, began to lose their essence, at least, for him. Men love hotly but they cannot love long. A woman's love is devotion, the one whom she loves is her God. A woman gives herself wholly, eternally to love; men only lend themselves to passion. There is a sweet flower in a woman's heart which she fondles and cherishes every moment, every hour, every day; she will not let it languish,

she will not let it die, for it is love. And there is a caprice in the hearts of men, or rather a depravity in their natures, which leads them to neglect and despise the prize that is already in their power, and to pursue with avidity those which by almost insurmountable obstacles are separated from them.

“And yet I ought not to blame him. During the many hours that we spent together, he never gave me one promise which he did not then mean to fulfil, nor spoke one word, nor did one deed he need blush for now. And yet, loving him as I did, and relying on the certainty of our marriage, I could have refused him nothing. He knew this, and he spared me. Because he spared me, because I loved, aye, and love him now, I call God to witness that I forgive him from the bottom of my soul.

“At the end of ten years I had grown plain, and it was evident to all that he no longer cared for me. Not only this: I believe that it pained him to see me, or even to think of me. When this sad conviction forced itself like iron into my soul, I determined no longer to write to him, no longer to implore him to come and visit me, no longer to remind him of the ex-



istence of that woman, whose prospects he had marred for ever.

“At the end of fifteen years they sent me two newspapers. In the first, I read that he had been appointed to a rich College living in Buckinghamshire; in the second that he had married a bishop’s daughter.

“During those first ten years, I had received six advantageous offers of marriage. I did not regret them; I only regretted him.

“They advised me to go to law with him, as if money would repay me for the husband I had lost.

“The great question which so long had run the round of the Slough tea-tables ‘*whether it would come off or not*’ was settled at last; the standard joke of the dinner-parties, and the dance-suppers was at length exploded, and everyone seemed satisfied and pleased.

“I found that I was now universally recognized as an old maid, and remembering how, in my girlhood, I had pitied these Ishmaelites of society, who ill-use, and are ill-used by all, and who return the sneers and contempt of the young with poisonous and bitter tongues, I shuddered at the thought that to this class I now belonged.

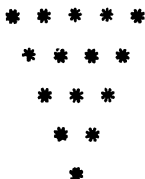
"Then I plucked up courage, and determined to contest the prejudices of the world, and by good deeds and words to disarm the scorn and ridicule of those about me. Ah! it was a hard, an unequal fight, and I gave up heart at last, and became what I am now."

"O, why is a woman to be subjected to this horrible ban? Why, if she does not marry is she to be laughed at, hissed at? Is not her fate in itself bad enough? Is it nothing for a woman to pass through life unaided, unconsolated? If she loves, her love is unrequited; if she hopes, her hope is deferred. Her youth is the intrigue that fails, the anxiety that wrinkles, the longing that gnaws her to the core. She must feed on the happiness of others, and this food turns into gall, and envy, and black bile in her withered breast. In the old age that comes so soon, she does nought wrong, yet all revile her; nought foolish, yet all taunt her; nought mean, yet all despise her. And when her dark sour day draws on towards its close, when her hairs whiten, and her limbs fail, and her senses fade away, when her hour-glass is run, and the sceptre of death is raised—no tear, Constance, is shed for the poor old woman whose worst faults have been to have listened too easily to the words of a hollow heart, and to have lived

so long unloved, uncared for, in this wretched world.

“I do not blame him, dear, for bringing me to this, I blame that cruel College law which has robbed me of my life’s flower, and which has robbed *him* of one who could have made his life sweeter and happier than it can be now.”

It was dark in the room when her voice had died into silence, and when Constance folded her arms round her neck, and laid two kisses on her tear-stained cheeks.



It was Sunday in Lerwick.

Edward Saxon standing in the upper street of the town, leaning with his breast against a wall, gazing over the slated roofs and the chimney-tops of blackened gray upon the sea, which, calm and blue, by these landlocked coasts wound gracefully between the verdant hills.

The harbour vessels were streaming with gay

His eyes, which at first wandered restlessly

from object to object, soon fell into a vacant stare.

He was thinking, as now he often thought. He no longer saw, nor heard, nor felt.

From a large shapeless building, on his right hand, rose the sounds of many voices and musical instruments. A peasant hymn pealed through the walls, and wafted round him ; but he heard it not.

There was a silence for some moments.

Then a voice now loud, now low, and stern always ; but he heard it not.

A door opened, and several women rushed forth tearing their hair with their hands, and tossing their arms madly in the air, and uttering savage cries. And lying on the ground, they writhed as if in agony, and foamed at their mouths. But he saw, he heard them not.

Not long after, the door again opened, though less rudely than before, and a large crowd thronged slowly out ; as they passed the young stranger, and saw that he had been absent from the service, all stared at him keenly, all frowned upon him, and many smiled secretly to themselves. But he neither heeded their inquisitive looks, nor their steps as they loitered past.

For hearing and vision had yielded to a trance,

which had fallen on his brain, and on his mind.

Often when we dream, the memory of other dreams is revived, and the faded visions of the past return upon us glowing and distinct.

Edward, though leaning against the wall with eyes open, and muscles alive, was yet buried in a partial rest. He was dreaming as he stood.

He dreamt that he was weeping; weeping by the brink of a silent stream; that he was lying beneath the branches of a leafless 'tree, his limbs reposing in the high grass that was damp with the winter dew.

And he dreamt that his tears were dried as if by soft kisses; that a voice of pity fell upon him; and that then, the floods in his brain burst loose, and that he wept again more than he had wept before.

And he dreamt that a beautiful woman was near him with an angel face, and long golden hair, and a pair of eyes as bright as the lofty heaven, as blue as the deep sea.

And still in this strange daylight dream he felt as if his heart was leaving him, and being drawn gently from his side.

He started; the blood from the veins of his soul poured upon his cheeks, upon his forehead.

Burning pains ran through him ; his head swam ; his legs tottered.

For he felt that a girl was standing behind him ; her face lovely, her hair golden, her eyes tender and languishing, bent upon him as before.

With one hand grasping the coping of the wall, with one hand pressed to his throbbing forehead, he turned feebly round.

She was there !

## CHAPTER III.

## HIDE AND SEEK.

“Those voices, actions, or gestures, which men have not by any compact agreed to make the instruments of conveying their thoughts one to another, are not the proper instruments of deceiving, so as to denominate the person using them, a liar or deceiver.”—SOUTH.

IN Lerwick there are no taverns or hotels, but there are lodging-houses in which tourists may find accommodation either on the exclusive, or on the table-d'hôte system. These houses do not take out spirit licences, for they obtain no custom from the natives, and it is only during a few months in the year, that these shores are visitable.

The shopkeepers (especially the grocers) constitute themselves the publicans of Lerwick. Thus pockets are emptied more quickly and more knavishly than in England, for the customer who drinks whiskey as he buys tea and candles, seldom drives his bargains into second prices.

A fellow-passenger in the steamer had earnestly recommended Rauch and Edward to Geordie Tulloch's lodging-house by the North Quay. They took his advice, which had been couched in the warmest terms, and subsequently discovered that he was the proprietor himself. However, he had only done justice to his establishment, which was decidedly the best in the town, and though bad may be the Shetland best, there were many advantages attached to their residence, which elsewhere they could not have obtained.

It was the last house in the street, thus commanding the sea in front, and a good view of the country on one side. Next door was the Lerwick circulating library : the librarian was likewise chemist, draper, confectioner, and licensed.

Their room on the first floor was large, airy, and abundantly lighted, by day with two windows, by night with gas.

Their bed-rooms, also lighted with gas, (which is laid down all over the town) were airy and quiet ; their sheets were white and untenanted.

They were waited upon by a clean sailor woman, who, when they rang for her, would come rolling in upon them like a cask, and lean against the door-post as she received her orders. These she never replied to in monosyllables, and



always carried out with a promptitude which she had learned at sea.

There was also a Mrs. Tulloch, who had visited them several times. About three nights per week, they would drink whiskey-toddy, and on these three nights, Mrs. Tulloch usually appeared.

On such occasions, she would greet them with a lukewarm smile, (which she directed chiefly against him whose face appeared the reddest), and with the phrase "a little Shetland hosiery, gentlemen," would open a large shallow box which she carried underneath her arm; and standing between them both, would turn the articles over and over, praising them, telling anecdotes which bore upon her points, and smiling upon her victim for the night. She invariably insisted upon their trying on the scarfs then and there, that she might be able to tie them nicely, and to judge with a lady's eye which suited them best. Sometimes, in praising the quality of her stockings, she would exhibit her own, (put on new for the purpose; Shetland stockings are warm and comfortable, but they will not wear,) and asked them to guess how many years she had worn them. She never refused a thimble-full of toddy, and generally staid a long time.

She directed her batteries mostly against Rauch.

She could not understand the brown-haired Edward, who sometimes would almost flirt with her, gaily buying veils and shawls to carry back, as he told her, to his lady-loves in England ; but who often sat still without moving or speaking, his lips set together, and his forehead covered with frowns.

Rauch affirmed that she only came to show them her white hand, or neat ankle, to talk to them, and to sip their whiskey ; that it would be politic to buy something of her now and then as she was good company, or her unfortunate husband might perhaps prevent her from coming any more.

Edward, who had grown very old lately, would answer him by glancing at a stuffed bird which filled a glass case in one corner of the room. It was a grey bird with a yellow beak, and black feet, and is very common by the sea-side.

The truth was that Mrs. Tulloch (who had nice eyes and a sweet voice) had once praised the prominence of his chest, as she was winding a scarf round it. This was when Edward was not in the room, and after Rauch had not bought anything for two nights running.

A man may be almost a giant in intellect, as Rauch was ; almost a sage in experience, as Rauch

was ; but adroit flattery from a pretty mouth will always blind him.

And so Edward saw his giant, his sage, hood-winked by a little woman who had not even been as far as Edinburgh.

At six o'clock on this same Sunday evening, the two Southrons were sitting at their table over a dirty table-cloth and a joint of mutton.

Rauch plunged his fork in the meat, and twisted it round contemptuously into the air.

"What a curious thing a dinner will be when we get back ! This must be mutton, for mutton is the only meat here that is eatable. The intelligent Lerwegians murder the very name of veal, by killing their calves when only two days old. What little beef there is to be had, is only to be had under the name of *vivda*, to make you suppose that it is a foreign dainty. When you are tired of mutton and of fish, and of this dried beef, which I firmly believe to be cooked off the dead ponies, you may lie down and starve, for the resources of Thule are exhausted."

"You forget the geese which they smoke and salt here like Westphalian hams."

"And which are only fish under the name of fowl, as far as flavour goes."

"Did you ever hear that story about the geese?" asked Edward gaily. "You know they are reputed to give one an appetite; but some Shetland Hobbes (did you ever meet Hobbes, Rauch?) complained that he had picked one to the bones without feeling a bit the hungrier."

"Thank you," answered Rauch gratefully. "The idea would have come quite fresh to me if I had not unfortunately heard it applied to mangoes in Calcutta, and to oysters in the Strand."

"Do you mean to make me ravenous?" said Edward, clashing his knife and fork together. "Why don't you carve?"

"I should like to know whereabouts in the sheep it came from."

"It is almost impossible to say; these sheep are so very small; yet they have a delicious flavour."

"They have; but permit me to remind you that yesterday you maintained exactly the opposite opinion."

"Yesterday I was in the doldrums."

Having finished dinner, they rang the bell, and the table-maid, as they call them in Shetland, entered, holding a small tray in her hand. She closed the door carefully behind her, and propped herself against it, as if she wished to protect herself from some one who pursued her.

"Did you please to ring, Sir?"

"Yes, you can take away these things.

"I will thart," (cheerfully).

She carried the things down, taking the small tray with her.

After she was gone, Rauch complained of being chilly, and assured his friend that he had not been warm once since he had been in Shetland.

"That is a bad sign; you are not going to be sick I hope."

"Sick of the country, that is all. Thank heaven! that will be all over by to-morrow night."

"I do not understand you."

"Not understand me! Is not to-morrow Monday? and did not we agree on Bressa Hill that we were to go home this next Monday?"

"Yes, I remember now," said Edward timidly.

"It would be very odd if you did not, when you were talking about it all yesterday. But I must have a fire. Ring the bell."

The servant came in, holding the small tray in her hand, and oscillated against the door-handle with an air of inquiry.

"We wan't a fire, please."

She was about to express her astonishment in something more than stares, but luckily was physiognomist enough to see that he would not stand

it So she said, "shurely" in a tone of depression, and slowly left the room.

"What makes her bring that tray every time she comes in?" said Edward. "I cannot make it out at all."

"What makes an English waiter carry a napkin over his arm, whenever he comes in?"

"Do you mean to say that she takes it about with her, as a badge of her profession?"

"Exactly."

"We meet with a great many amusing incidents in this country, do we not?"

"Humph."

The girl now reappeared with some shavings, some pieces of sea-soaked wood, a few lumps of coal, and some large wedges of peat. Kneeling down before the grate, she flung her whole burden upon the carpet. First she deposited a layer of coals, then the wood, then the shavings, and finally the peat. This mode of laying the fire, besides being singular, was economical, the consumption of fuel during the first hour (except the shavings and part of the wood) being barely perceptible.

"While the fire was burning up, the room filled with peat-smoke." Rauch fumed and swore.

Edward declared that he rather liked the smell of it.

Rauch wanted whiskey, and remembered with gloom that all the shops would be shut. Edward glided to a cupboard and held up a bottle.

It was the Maraschino: Rauch thought it had all been gone: he rubbed his hands, and lighted a cheroot to make his enjoyment complete.

"When he has smoked and drank a little," thought Edward, who now fell into a reverie.

He was roused from this by a long gasp of pleasure from the chest of his companion, who was engaged in lighting a second cheroot at the fragment of the first, and who now sang in a stentorian voice.

"Happy mortal he who knows  
Pleasures that a pipe bestows,  
Curling eddies climb the room,  
Wafting round a sweet perfume."

"After all," said Edward, also smoking in order to hide his face a little, "there are many redeeming points about Shetland."

"O, yes, it isn't such a bad place," answered Rauch, who could afford to be charitable now that his end was gained about departure. "How-

ever, I don't see the redeeming points," he added, after an interval of reflection.

"I think that we have enjoyed a great many comforts here, for a foreign land."

"My dear fellow, it is as difficult to find comfort in Shetland as it is in a French dictionary. How can you expect it in a country where the houses have no chimneys, where they eat, drink, sleep, and make love by peat-smoke? Where those who visit must go by sea (and when is the sea comfortable?) or on top of a pony with a hard mouth, a hard hide, and a hard will over roads, which being naturally almost as bad as they can be, the inhabitants have succeeded here and there in making artificially worse? Where the tops of the heather are used for hops, and to brew your own malt is illegal?"

"Still there is something about the place which makes me sorry to go so soon. How romantic it is to be in a country where there are no game-laws, and—"

"No game."

"Where we can roam miles and miles without a hand to stop us, or a voice to turn us from our path."

"As long as we keep in the path. Let us take a short cut across the barley, their grass or even



their turnips, and the Udallers will be down upon us like hornets."

"Nothing interferes to check the ardour of the Zetland sportsman."

"And nothing rises to excite it."

"There are snipe—"

"Scattered over the hills on the average of three to the square acre."

"The lochs and the voes abound with trout."

"The snipe and trout regulate their movements by the state of the wind and the atmosphere. I allow that, on particular occasions, the snipe may be shot by scores in the valleys, the trout hooked by creels-full from the voes. And that is all I can find out. There may be gentlemen hereabout who study the habits of the birds and fishes, but I need scarcely tell you that the fishermen will not, or cannot, give me any information. Now yesterday, I fished at Latchford Voe till my arms ached, and my legs ached, and my head ached, and my soul ached, and all was blue—without a rise, Sir, without a single rise."

"The bold rocky scenery—"

"Comes tame to a man, who has seen real precipices."

"You will allow that the women are hand-

some," said poor Edward almost driven to despair.

"The same cast of feature everywhere: the effects of repeated intermarriages, I suppose. When you have seen one face, you have seen all. However, I should not mind that, if they were not inaccessible."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it," said Rauch, earnestly. "Besides some experiments which I made on my own account, I have it on the authority of the Kirk minister, whom I met geologizing on the hills, and with whom I entered into conversation on the subject, that only one case of incontinency has occurred during the five years he has resided here."

"How do you explain this?"

"He explained it partly himself, by informing me that since the church has done with excommunicating and martyring sinners, crime has been rapidly decreasing."

"Still in the Oxfordshire villages, the frail and tawny damsels are treated more as sensible women, than martyred as offenders."

"We are now in a cold country, and where the women have auburn hair, and fair complexions, and who therefore are but slightly influenced by

those passions which actually madden the women of Italy and of Spain."

"I," said Edward, "admire a handsome woman, as I admire a beautiful picture, or a finely modelled statue."

"And I love only those pictures which leave their frames, those statues which descend from their pedestals. . . . . You are an artist, Edward. In a theatre, or in a church (when free from those black moods which transport you so far beyond my comprehension, or which bury you in impenetrable sadness) you are always happy. I see you pick out a face, a hand, or an arm, and gaze at them for hours together, absorbed in a dream of the beautiful and distant. You love nature, you adore the handiwork of God. Sometimes you will examine the colours that men daub on canvas, and the stones which men hew out after their own shape, and with an eagle eye you will reject the ore, and glean the precious gem; but from these I see you turn with delight to the living treasures which surround you. The sparkle of a brilliant eye, the smile of a luscious mouth suffice as your study and your delight."

"And you? are not you also an artist?"

"I—I am a *man*. A man as God made me

whether for right or wrong; a man of unbridled savage passions when those passions shall be roused; a man who, when he loves, desires; who, when he desires, is blind, and deaf, and mad; whom no voice of honour, of law, of friendship can withhold. I worship that essence which you despise; that which in your eyes is coarse, in mine becomes sublime. What care I for hands unless they burn in mine, for words unless they rave, for cheeks unless they glow, for eyes unless they fire, for lips and bosoms unless they are pressed against my own! . . . . . Yet there is little need to think such thoughts as these. My heart is old though it has not throbbed so long. I am still young and I am tired of all that love, and women can bestow. The fire of which I speak is sinking lower and lower in my breast, and there is little chance of its rising to the surface any more."

"Edward, I think that you have something to say to me, have you not?"

"What makes you suppose so?"

Rauch stretched his arm towards the lofty hill which raised itself proudly on the opposite side of Bressa Sound. Now its summit was immersed in the molten gold of the sun-set sky, and even

at that distance, they could distinguish the 'cairn' or pile of stones which crowned its cone.

"I remember how on that hill you wished to return home; how glad you were when our departure was arranged; how not only on Wednesday you professed yourself anxious for the voyage; but during Thursday, Friday, and Saturday you remained in excellent spirits, and made your homeward preparations with a lighter face than I have seen you wear for some time."

"You know how I suffer from the sea, and——"

"You go out this morning, saying that you are going to Kirk in Lerwick for the last time, and humming a tune which bore some resemblance to the College horn-pipe. In three hours you return grave and silent. You sit down by the window and look through it, always in the same direction. I speak to you several times: you do not hear me, or you answer at random. After this has gone on for three quarters of an hour, which pass sufficiently slowly for myself, you appear to have adopted a sudden resolution; for you turn round with a face as bright as a new shilling, overwhelm me with a flood of agreeable small-talk, from which you gradually glide into a series of encomiums upon Shetland, which is now furnished with more blessings than heretofore

you had been able to discover. From all this, I infer that you have fallen in love at first sight as they did in the romances of the eighteenth century, or, at all events, that something has occurred between morning and noon which has induced you to change your mind."

"You have seen right thus far, Rudolph, and you will not blame me when I tell you all. Do you remember how we travelled that night through bleak and dreary Caithness, along the grey hard rocks which encircled the stony hills, and skirted the waters of the German Sea? And do you remember how, seated on the roof of the coach, wrapped in our cloaks, and gazing at the stars, I told a tale, if tale that can be which is so unreal, almost so untenable? how I uttered those dim hopes, those dream-like fears, which in vain I attempted to form or to dispel?"

"I remember it all."

"Rudolph, that vision is realized; those hopes or those fears are about to be fulfilled. I have seen her again; I have spoken to her. She is my angel-bride; I have loved her for three years in my thoughts, and in my sleep. Is it to be life, or is it to be death? are the hopes or are the fears of my dream to be fulfilled?"

The sun had sunk beyond Bressa Hill; the

western sky was tinged with a ghastly yellow light. It seemed as if the clouds had descended from the sky upon the earth, and the whole room grew dark.

In the midst of this mysterious silence, the low plaintive howl of some shepherd's dog from beneath the window, from before the door, rose towards them like a funeral dirge.

When they heard this sound, which, among all nations is regarded as an omen of death, they both started, and shuddered, and turned pale.

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"Margaret."

"Yes, dear mother."

"I have been looking at you all breakfast time, for you will not pay much attention to me. Sometimes you gobble down your mouthfuls one after the other as if you were starving ; and then you sit over your plate, and fall into a brown study ; and all the while you have a smile upon your lips. I am sure that something has occurred to please you. Is it to be a secret, Miss ; or is it to be a confession ?"

"If I was to confess all the happy thoughts that came into my head, I should have to chatter all day long till you would put your hands up to both your ears, and try to make your face look so cross—but it is of no use, mother dear. You cannot make your eyes burn with any light but love; you cannot mould your lips into anything sterner than a smile."

"You feed me with flattery instead of with secrets, little courtier, but I do not wish to know them before the proper time. Your cheeks were pale, and your eyes were dull yesterday. To-day they are rosy, and they are bright. I see that you are better, and I am contented."

"Better, indeed! when was I ill, pray? You are so fond of me, mother, that you become over-anxious. If I have not slept well—and I am sure that generally I sleep like a dormouse—if I have been too lazy to take my morning's walk; if I have been eating something by myself, and do not want much breakfast; if I have been running about like a hoyden as I am, and find myself tired like other mortals, my poor mother fears that I am ill, and she suffers. . . . I ill! I who spend all my time in the open air, when Hay Blance does not persecute me with those tiresome lessons. I who ride like an amazon,



and eat I do not know how many meals a day."

"You never feel ill then, dearest."

Margaret jumped from her chair, and lifting her dress executed several steps of a popular reel or *spring* called *the Scalloway Lasses*, with wonderful strength and agility. Then she burst into a ringing laugh, and nodded merrily at her mother who sat watching her with a face of pride.

And then she turned suddenly to the window with her back towards her mother, for she had felt her face whiten, and she pressed her hand to her side as if to still the pains that throbbed therein.

"What are you looking out of the window for?"

"I wanted to see if Hay was coming."

When she had returned to her seat, Mrs. Adie said to her :—

"You are fond of reels, are you not?"

"I adore them."

"Yet I heard that you did not dance a single one that night at the Mouatts, when I could not go with you."

"I was out of temper that night, mamma; you know I have a terrible temper when it is once provoked. Where it came from, I cannot im-

agine, not from you who are always so kind and gentle, nor from my—”

She stopped herself; her father had died soon after she was born; she seldom spoke of him to her mother, who always appeared troubled at the mention of his name. “It is because they loved each other so much,” thought Margaret.

And in fact Mrs. Adie was even now trembling, and was looking still more anxiously at her daughter’s face.

“You are sure that it never hurts you—this violent dancing.”

“Hurts me!” cried the young lady with an air of surprise. “Do you think I should do anything that hurt me? I am not such a goose as that. I will soon show you whether it hurts me or not, now I will play Olè Olafson’s new reel upon my *gue* first, and then I will dance the steps I have invented for it.”

She snatched up an instrument which was not unlike a guitar in shape, but had only two horse-hair strings. After a few preliminary touches and turns of the keys, she tinkled forth *The Foula Reel*.

“Shall I give you the steps now?” she said, and the brave girl was actually preparing to dance

again, when her mother now quite reassured, threw out another remark about her good spirits, *i.e.* another hint about the secret.

“You really wish to know it, Madam?”

“Perhaps,” said Madam archly.

“Now fancy, I have been keeping a secret from you a whole night, and half a day. Mamma, I am become wicked, there never was such a thing heard of before. . . . . But listen. When I was at Edinburgh three years ago, that dear uncle George, who is always so kind to me, took me down to Oxford for a treat. We passed all the morning among the colleges, which are far more noble and beautiful than the Castle of Scalloway, or even than the Cathedral of St. Magnus at Kirkwall; and there were large halls with arched roofs, and sonorous stone floors, and chapels with painted windows, and little children in white robes who sang—O mother you cannot think how sweetly they sang—and there were hundreds of young gentlemen in black gowns, and broad square caps, and with such pale faces—much paler than mine, mother—and uncle George, who knows everything, told me they were pale because they were obliged to read books all day and almost all night too.

“In the afternoon, we went a walk by the river:

it was very cold, and the trees were bare, and the gravel paths were heaped up with dead leaves. We were walking briskly along to keep ourselves warm, when we saw a young gentleman lying under the trees on the brink of the water. We stopped for a moment, for we thought that he was ill, and, as we stopped, he turned round, and I saw for the first time, a man's tears. They had often told me, mother, that men cannot cry, that they are too hard, and too proud to be touched by the miseries of others, or to be carried away so far at the thoughts of their own troubles ; but I never believed them . . . . and when I saw this handsome, good face streaming with tears, I pitied him from my heart. Uncle George told me that he was in disgrace with his college. I am sure that it could have been nothing very wrong. And do you know, mother, that I dreamt of him all that night, and I have often dreamt of him since, and thought of him too. But the wonderful part is to come.

“ Yesterday I went to Kirk by myself, for you had gone to see a poor sick woman, and Hay Blance had gone with you. Well, I suppose that there was something in the sermon which reminded me of that day, and that face ; for as I came out of church, I found myself dreaming of it,

as if I had been asleep in my bed. At last I raised my head resolving to shake off this foolish fancy, and then I saw—O mother, I saw him as I had seen him three years before. He was resting his bosom against the road-wall, and his eyes upon the clouds, or upon the sea, and while I stood there uncertain what to do, he turned round and saw me.

“It was strange that although he turned first red and then pale, and appeared very much excited, he did not start, he did not seem *astonished* at seeing me there. Perhaps he might have seen me before.

“When I shook hands with him, I felt that his hand was cold and trembling. He had no tears upon his cheeks this time, but his eyes were red and hollow as if they had wept often, and he was very pale. I asked him if he had suffered from illness; he answered that he had, but he hoped to be cured soon now. He was plainly much affected by this singular meeting, and I scarcely less myself; therefore you will not be surprised to hear that although we walked some distance together, but few words passed between us.

“I asked him if he knew the Scotts, or the Mouatts, or the Thrails he answered that he

knew no one. So I invited him to visit us, mother. I did right, did I not ?”

“You did right, my child. Hospitality is a virtue which will soon leave Shetland for some more northern land, but do not let us aid in its expulsion. There is nothing I should fear so much as to find myself in a foreign land, far from home, far from friends, far from all that I loved and cherished. And how much more dreadful this must be, when the rights of hospitality are denied to the poor wanderer who seeks in vain for a hand, for a word of welcome, or for a companion to solace him for those whom he has left behind.”

“He is not quite alone ; there is another Englishman with him. But doubtless he is weary of him, for when I asked him to come here, his face grew red and bright as the setting sun, and his voice was half choked as he thanked me for the offer.”

“Poor child ! he must have been very dull in this land which would seem so miserable and barren after his fair English forests . . . . Ah ! here is Hay, I saw him pass the window.”

A tall young man bounded into the room ; his eyes, a laughing blue, his hair, almost white in its extreme fairness, clustering down below his

shoulders. He saluted Mrs. Adie with a son-like affection.

And she, like a mother, pushed back the hair from his forehead and kissed him tenderly.

"You naughty boy, do you know that you are very late?" said Margaret, passing her arm round his neck and kissing him too. "Now what is your excuse?"

"I have no excuse; but I will give you a recompense instead. Let me have some tea and *burstan brunies*, Maggie, and I will tell you all about it."

"O, Hay," cried the young girl, starting back in horror, "there is blood upon your waistcoat, blood and white feathers! O, what have you been doing?"

"While there are maws," laughed he, "which perch on the Lerwick crags, and scarfs which flap on the waters of the Sound, and while Hay Blance can use a rifle, as he can use it now, feathers must fly, and blood must flow."

"While the warm sun burns," said Margaret, "and the maws are in their nests, and the scarf have young which cry to them for food, Hay Blance should lay his rifle by, and no longer shoot these poor birds which do no one any harm, and which cannot even be eaten when they are killed."

“ Unless they are buried for three days underground ; by that time the fishy flavour is thoroughly extracted.”

Mrs. Adie who had a passion for gastronomy, exclaimed :

“ That is a discovery !”

Hay Blance chuckled, and would even have laughed, had his mouth not been full of buttered *brunies*.

“ You should have told us this before,” said Mrs. Adie sternly.

“ I only learnt it this morning.”

“ Who from ?” asked Margaret, coaxingly.

The young gentleman had intended to protract their curiosity, but the voice was too much for him, and weaned his little secret out of him directly.

“ It was told me by a Southron, this very morning. I was walking across the wet land above the Fort, when I observed a tall powerful man, whose skin was as tawny as those of the Lascars, whom I have seen in the Docks of Aberdeen : his eye keen and glittering : his beard long and dark as a winter’s night. As I was approaching, two snipe rose before him, and he killed them almost at the same time, though one flew to his right hand, and the other to his left.



“He leant on the barrels of his fowling piece and scrutinized me as I came towards him. I paid him a compliment on his skill, and we soon entered into a lively conversation. He informed me that he had found Shetland in itself, a most agreeable country, and that he had persuaded his companion from the South (who had been most anxious to return home) to wait a little longer. He said that he had come here without intending to spend more than week, and had not thought it worth while to bring letters of introduction for so short a time. But he found it not so easy to leave Thule as he had anticipated: there was something about the country which charmed him, and compelled him to remain.

“I asked him to come and see us this afternoon, and to bring his companion with him. He accepted my invitation very politely, and acknowledged that when the day was over, and he could no longer enjoy the wild beauties of our scenery (which he declared to be unrivalled by those of any other country in the world), he had often languished for a little society. His friend was a most agreeable man, but at times given to fits of silenciousness, and absence of mind which lasted for hours, or even for days, without any better breaks than stares or monosyllables.

"He told me one or two excellent stories, extolled our snipe-grounds, and our loch-fishing, and praised the very air of Shetland, which refreshed and inspirited him beyond anything he had before experienced.

"And I am sure," added Blance, "that we shall like him, even more than we did the French officers."

"We only laughed at the French officers," said Margaret, "and if this gentleman is amusing, we can laugh with him, which will be better."

"And if he has studied cookery," said Mrs. Adie, "he can perhaps teach us how they cook hares in England. Mr. Mouatt imported two last year, and now I hear that there are several in Tingwall Marsh, but they will be of little use to us if we do not know how to cook them."

"Mamma, do not talk like that, I have the appetite of a vulture to-day, and if you speak any more about eating, I shall do all my breakfast over again. . . . I have a great mind to join you, as it is, naughty Hay,—I am so hungry."

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE HEART THAT WAS STOLEN

"WHEN my heart was in its youth, and my thoughts and dreams were also young—my troubles unborn, and my misery unseen, unknown—when I believed that my companions were my friends, and that all women were pure and holy, I, seated with you in the long soft grass, which droops over the stream of the College grove—I, seated with you on the grass, that was warmed by the summer sun, placed before you a problem which I could not solve, propounded an enigma which I had tried in vain to unriddle.

"I asked you, what was love?

"Boy-like and confiding, I gazed up to your dark stern face, and questioned your eyes for their silent answers, and listened to the words which should murmur from your lips.

"And you, Rudolph, who had wandered through

so many lands, from the regions of the North which are bound in eternal ice, to those Southern realms where the sun is a sultry furnace, and the stars themselves burn close upon the earth—you who had seen so much, who had done so much, but who had felt so little—you endeavoured to unravel this knot which my fingers had failed to untie, to open this door which to me was closed, to find a clue to this labyrinth, in which I had become lost and entangled.

“Like the mechanist of Rasselas, who, with his own paltry wings attempted to soar among the creatures of the air—

“So you, with gross and bitter thoughts attempted to rise from the level of the earth, and to obtain for me a treasure which will ever defy your grasp.

“You pointed to the stream which swept past beneath our feet, and to the light and fragile bubbles which were borne upon its surface.

“Such, you cried, is the man who loves ; he is tossed helplessly on the turbid waters ; every moment threatens his destruction. Sooner or later the bubble bursts, and all is ended.

“You pointed to the heaven which was bright and cloudless.

“Such, you said, is the heart of the man who

loves ; undimmed, undisturbed. But there are storms behind the horizon, and clouds which must sooner or later rise.

“ With such worn out metaphors as these, you spoke to me of that which the heart alone can analyse and describe.

“ Then I opened my books, and poured out my soul upon their treasures. And as one who seeks pearls on the rocks beneath the sea, I dived within this ocean of the thoughts and emotions of the great.

“ But I could not find the pearl for which I was in search. They could not tell me what was love.

“ Poets have vaunted that they sing its theme, and its theme alone. I gathered the Poets of the past and present into my lap ; I conversed with them, and gave them my riddle to expound.

“ Listen, said they, and we will sing to you of love Of love, rosy and naked, with streaming hair, with roistering gait, or with forefinger resting gravely on his lips, and the torch of midnight flaming in his hand. Out of dark Chaos, in the midst of far spreading Tartarus he begot our race, and called us forth into the light.

“ And they told me more in soft and mellow words which echoed to each other in harmonious

rhyme ; and as they sang, my blood simmered, and my frame glowed with enchantment and delight.

“ They sang of beauty, and of passion, of madness and of rapture—but they did not tell me what was love.

“ Years after, I came to her whose heart was twin to mine. I knelt at her feet, and implored her to tell me what was love.

“ She described her love for me—her brother ; and as I heard her speak, the tears flowed into my eyes, and thence dropped softly on her hands. Yet this was but a woman’s, but a sister’s love.

“ I asked her what love it is that men feel.

“ She answered that few men love ; that when they did love, it was a sublime, an enthralling devotion. Again I inquired how it exalted, how it enthralled the soul, that I might recognize it, that I might welcome it when it came to me.

“ She shook her head, and sighed, and said no more.

“ Once more I opened my lips like a child who cries for its puppet, and cries still with empty hands.

“ Whom is there that you love besides your

brother? whom that you love more than myself?

“ We were standing in the open air : the sun had sunk into an ocean of foliage ; long black shadows had poured towards us from the wood ; the stars one by one had twinkled into life ; the moon was rising gently from behind the trees.

“ My sister raised her hand to heaven, and she murmured in tones of adoration,

“ ‘ I love God, who is my father, and who loves me. If you wish to know how I love Him, I will tell you that I love Him with affection and with fear. With affection, because He is so kind to you, and to me, and to us all. With fear, because He is so great and noble, and because I am so weak, so foolish, and so wicked.’

“ This, thought I, is true love, and thus must I love if I love at all. Then I thought to myself, with a bitter smile, how can I expect to find a woman to whom I can yield my heart, my soul, my courage? Are not women torn by the coarse and brutish passions even more than ourselves? are not these passions so heightened by restraint as often to madden them into raving words, and delirious deeds? often to waste them away, and to leave their cheeks hollow, their bosoms shrunk, and their eyes glazed? often to conquer them altogether,

and to take away their lives? I knew what long, long nights those whom we call maidens spend; what terrible torments they suffer; and how they seek their beds night after night, only to call back those wicked dreams which had left them with the morn, only to cover their pillows with the hot tears and kisses of desire.

“And as I went to my rest that night, I sighed, for I could not respect such women as these, and I deemed it impossible that I should ever love.”

“Life, without love, they say, is a spring without flowers, a flower without perfume. But this love which now tortures me, is a perfume which will kill me if I inhale it to myself alone.

“To live without loving, they say, is to die. Love, like mine, Rudolph, that is not returned, must bring inevitable death.

“And I must then die, for she does not love me. She loves this blue-eyed Shetlander, who is always at her side; whom she regards with eyes of affection, whose hand she presses, whose cheek she even kisses with her lips.

“And how can I hope that she will love me, when I cannot even speak to her? even were her heart free, she would never be mine.

“As I lie on my bed, or sit on the rocks by the



sea, I frame long and fiery speeches ; I determine to fling myself boldly at her feet, to lay bare my heart, to gain her with tears, with prayers, or even with menaces.

“ But when she approaches, my breath leaves me ; the blood dies back from my cheeks, the words from my lips, and curdle like ice around my heart. O what is this gentle majesty in her look and mien which awes me into silence ? It is VIRTUE ! I have read of it often ; I have heard of it often ; I meet it for the first time—and it frightens me. I must then be very wicked, or why should I fear that which is good ? why should I tremble ? why should I shrink from one who is always kind to me ?

“ At eventide, three days ago, I wandered on the hills and lamented my unhappy fate ; and I beheld Margaret seated on a bank, alone, and unattended. I crept nearer and nearer, till I might plainly see her face ; then I concealed myself behind a rock, and watched her. Coward that I was, I did not dare to speak, or to warn her that I was by.

“ Her hand was pressed against her side, and I thought that her cheeks were paler than their wont. I thought, too, that her face changed and clouded. It was perhaps the shadows of the dusky flickering light.

“ She thrust her white hand within her bosom,

and brought forth a flower. She held it between her fingers, and folded her hands across her knees. She raised her divine face towards the mighty heaven, and her lips moved, as if her soul spoke a prayer. She rose and passed me. I crouched, and remained unperceived. I watched her as she glided slowly from me. When she was almost out of sight, I ran to the top of a small hill that I might see her for a little while longer.

“ When her form had melted from my sight, I returned with a throbbing brain to the spot on which she had been resting. I covered it with fierce kisses, and even with my tears. In the soft black earth, the marks of her feet were imprinted : I kissed these also, and believed that I was embracing the feet of Margaret. I reclined upon that bank, and as the shadows fell round me, I fancied that Margaret was also there. When the night warned me I should go, rising heavily, I perceived a little flower upon the dull sod by my side. It was the flower that had seemed to smile in the hands of Margaret ; it was the flower she had carried in her breast ; it was faded and withered, for the warmth of her bosom had dried up the dew within its leaves. I pressed it to my lips without ceasing, as I went slowly back to-

wards the town, and I dreamt that the lips of Margaret Adie were burning beneath my own."

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"It is cruel of you to think that I would deceive you, mother, for that is to tell me that I do not love you. You believe that I love you, do you not? and if I love you, how can I deceive you?"

"You are so fond of me that you fear for my health, but you must calm these fears, or you will make me afraid too, and then I shall be sure to fall ill.

"Did not the two learned doctors from Lerwick come here, and at your desire? did they not feel my pulse, and ask me questions? and did they not assure you that I could not be in better health? Are you neither to be satisfied with their pledges, nor with mine, infidel that you are?"

"It is true that my cheeks have little colour, but yours are also pale, and you confess that you have been scarcely ever ill.

"You tell me that my father died young, and

that you are anxious. But it was you who bore me, you who suckled me ; you have lived many years, mother, and why should not I ?

“ Feel how strong my arms are. I will throw them round your neck, and if you dare to doubt me any more, I will strangle you, naughty mamma and smother you with big kisses.”

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ORKNEY-MAN'S CAVE.

“What hidest thou in thy treasure-caves and cells.  
Thou hollow sounding, and mysterious main?  
Pale glistening pearls, and rainbow coloured shells,  
Bright things which beam unrecked of and in vain.  
Keep, keep thy riches, melancholy sea!”

MRS. HEMANS.

THE great quay at Lerwick was crowded, for it was half past ten o'clock, and a fine summer's morning; the sun had invited out the dozers to enjoy its warmth, and all flock down to the quay, which is the market-place of the fish-wives, and the landing place of the fishermen from the sea. There were some small sailing boats disembarking a cargo of peat—the French man-of-war's barge, with the sailors in blue frocks, and tarpaulin hats, and the lieutenant's uniform blazing in the stern—and a pedlar, who with a voluble and

brazen voice, and with stagey gestures was vaunting his wares—the scum of the Scotch manufactories, the refuse of the toy-shops of Aberdeen.

A large rowing boat, pointed at both ends like a Norwegian yawl, was rocking to the roll of the morning swell. Two men wearing flannel shirts, with the comfortable and unsailor-like accompaniments of braces, were bustling about within, smoothing down the cushions, wrapping up a small mast in its sail, and shoving it beneath the thwarts, and adjusting out of the way a couple of guns, a basket, in which a yellow stone jar, with a decided whisky look about it, nestled on top of several white paper parcels, and other like appurtenances.

One of them stood up in the boat, and leant a little forward till he could see down the street. He turned to his companion who also rose, and hitching a boat-hook on to the bank pulled the boat closer underneath it.

A tall dark gentleman was walking towards the quay. On his arm, was a lady whose hair was not the less silky, not the less massive, not the less beautiful, because it was grey, and who possessed that mild sweet beauty which the face never loses while the heart remains good.

Behind these, came a handsome girl who walked

between two gentlemen, and the peasants who had saluted Mrs. Adie with respect, now flocked round Margaret, with beaming looks, and with voices of love and gratitude. The old men in their flannel shirts and duck trowsers, the women in their short gowns and black petticoats, the children with or without clothes as the case might be, all pressed towards her to catch a word from her tongue, and a glance from her eye.

And she had this for them all. She would ask the sailor how his bed-ridden mother had fared since she had seen her last. She would ask the fish-woman, if she had had any news about her husband who had gone to the *haaf* fishing, or after the herring. And she even found time to loiter a few moments to distribute morsels of home-made gingerbread, which, in Shetland as well as in England, form the staple hankerings of childhood.

Edward, dressed in a light summer suit, which had dazzled the admiration of the Lerwick drapers, sprang into the boat first, and handed in the mother and daughter by turn.

When Margaret's fingers fell upon his hand, he felt a quiver run through him. It was the first time that she had touched him.

The boatmen now threw themselves backwards

and forwards, with the jerk of wrist and body peculiar to the skilled sea-rower. Their heavy shapeless oars creaked in the single peg of wood, to which each was tied by a loop of string.

"How long shall we be, Hay?" asked Mrs. Adie.

"We shall be there in two hours and a half. If we have a fair wind we shall not be so long, and if we meet with much game we may be delayed an hour or so."

"I do not think that we shall find it worth our while to loiter after any game that we shall find here," said Rauch, "although we have brought our guns. Edward and I devoted one day to gull-shooting, and our zeal for bird-butcery has been rather damped therewith."

Edward, who was sitting next to Margaret, also declaimed against gull-shooting. But he did so with such earnestness, that they all looked at him in surprise, and Rauch smiled.

They passed lands lying low, and corn-fields which extended to the water's edge.

They passed the new light-house on Bressa Point.

They passed beneath mountains of perpendicular stone: and the waters which foamed white and fierce against the black protruding rocks.



In a small cave they discovered the dark mouth of a large sea-cavern. The boat was rowed slowly towards it: Blance sat in the stern, with the tiller resting on his shoulder, and guided by his hand.

"Will it be safe to-day?" asked Margaret, in a voice which appeared faint to Edward's ears.

The boatmen answered that it would be quite safe.

"When you can see no white water on the Bressa shore as you stand on Lerwick quay," said Hay, "you may be quite sure that it is safe to go in."

They were already under the arch of the cave; the water was calm and of a pale green.

The sailors stood up, and fixing their boat-hooks into the niches of the cavern sides, propelled the boat slowly inwards.

They were in a delicious twilight: behind them they saw the green water brilliant in the noon-day beams, and the shadows flickering on the sunny rock.

Before them, a terrible blackness: but even within this, they could distinguish something darker than the rest. It was the entrance to the second apartment of the cave.

The boat no longer held to the rocks, swayed to and fro in the middle of the water ; the various currents all poured towards the centre, and there retained the boat which neither progressed nor retreated.

"Hither," murmured Margaret, "an Orkney sailor fled from a press-gang who pursued him. There was a gentle maiden who dwelt in the valleys of Hialtand, and who loved him truly. For her sake, he dived within the black mouth of this cavern, preferring that which he deemed an almost certain death, to a hopeless life-long slavery beneath the British flag. They did not dare to follow him ; he was saved ; and in memory of the man who first entered it, we call this place, the Orkney-man's cave."

"This is the parlour," said Hay, "and if the ladies will not think it indelicate, that is to say dangerous, we will presently venture into the bed-chamber."

"Miss Adie will not be afraid," faltered Edward, with a timid glance.

"Margaret afraid !" answered her mother : "why, she has been in there a dozen times already."

"Not very lately, mamma."

"What ! you *are* afraid ?"

“ Afraid ? Oh no.”

The walls of this strange room were ribbed rocks of a tawny colour : the ceiling of the palest green, and jagged into beautiful stalactites : the floor was made of water, which was dusky in colour, and which rippled softly like a tune of music.

It was like sitting in a great sea-shell : their ears were filled with a loud continued booming : it was the sound of the waters from without.

Having satisfied their curiosity as far as the parlour was concerned, they determined to lunch in it. The boat provided chairs, table, and provisions. The gentlemen quenched their awe in draughts of Glenlivat, and brown sherry ; the ladies discharged themselves of romance in order to make room for barley-scons, and rich yellow butter.

After this they actually smoked !

As if to win them back to their previous impressions, and to prepare them for that which was yet before them, Miss Adie, with a voice that was exquisitely melodious, trilled forth a plaintive Scotch ballad.

Now they lighted torches of tarred wood, and the boat glided within a dark alley, which wound

itself into the very heart of the rock, till it opened out into another space.

This was the bed-chamber.

The torches threw a feeble and livid glare around.

One of the sailors chanted a wild Norse ditty: at home they would have smiled at its uncouthness. It seemed to pierce into them here.

When the boat again floated out into the light, Mrs. Adie cried,

“Good heavens, child, how pale you are! you must have been frightened.”

“A little, dear mamma,” she answered with a forced smile.

“But my dear love, you were never frightened before.”

“Is this the little girl,” blurted out Hay, “who showed the Frenchman the way across in the cradle?”

“Ah!” murmured the poor girl, shuddering, “that dreadful precipice! I feel afraid even now, when I recollect my rashness.”

At these words, Rudolph who had been arranging some fishing tackle on his knees, started and glanced up at her quickly. He dropped his eyes immediately, and went on with his occupation,

though he leant his head a little more forward than before.

"Miss Maggie need not be ashamed about losing a little colour," said one of the rowers: "not half the men in Lerwick, good sailors though they be, will venture inside the Orkney-man's cave."

"Once," said Blance, laughing, "I went in there with two Glasgow men. As soon as we got into the parlour, they kept saying, 'for God's sake don't let us go any farther, for God's sake don't let us go any farther;' well, as they were sprawling about in the boat, and trying to stop it by clinging hold of the slippery rocks, I took up a gun that was lying by me and shot it off. You must know the noise a gun makes in there, is something really tremendous: it is like a peal of thunder condensed into one room, and it rolled these fellows up so, that they yelled out and turned quite green with fright."

Rauch fixed his eyes on Margaret: and as he spoke he saw her start with fear.

"I should like to hear a gun fired off inside very much: it would not take us five minutes to get back."

"We must land the ladies first, if we do," said Hay; "but I will find something else to

engage your attention now, for we can fish for mackarel as far as the light-house. We will hoist the sail; there is just enough wind to carry us along, for we must not go fast,—and now let us clear out the stern-sheets.”

They shifted the cushions to the benches in the bow, and having installed the ladies there, cleared a place in the stern for the reception of the fish, which with their wet sides, and clinging scales, and foul smell, would pollute all that they came in contact with.

The line they used was about sixteen feet long, and held about nine hooks, which were baited with red and white flies, made coarsely enough of wool or feathers: a small plummet was attached near the end to sink it to a certain depth below the water.

Rauch took the reel of cord in his hand and payed it carefully out: Blance watching him as a cat does a mouse.

“Have you come to the loop in the line? that will do then: rest your hand on the boat's side and keep the line clear from the rudder: you will soon feel them bite, if we are meant to have luck.”

After five minutes or so, he gave the line a short jerk.

"Have you got anything?"

"I don't know, but I fancied that something tugged on at the end."

"Let me feel the line," said Blance weighing it in his hand, "O yes, you are all right, two or three I dare say: haul away yo."

Rauch hauled away yo.

When he had nearly wound it all up, he caught sight of several substances waving and twisting under the waves like so many streaks of green flame.

"What are those, Blance?"

"The green backs of the mackerel. Don't they shine! five by St. Magnus; lug them off the hooks, (your hands *are* dirty) and let them kick themselves to death in a foreign land. Out goes the line again."

Out went the line again, and in came the fish again, till nearly a score strewed the planks, and heaved their glittering sides to the distant sun.

Meantime, Edward, seated between the mother and daughter in the bow, discussed with the former various matters relating to cookery, vivaciously enough. But when the latter addressed him on those subjects, about which she had learnt that he was most accustomed to speak, and talked to him

of those scenes in which he had spent his life, he only stammered and turned red, and, with down-cast eyes, and flaming cheeks, began sentences so long, and sentiments so abstruse, that he found it impossible to bring them to a satisfactory conclusion. Therefore, Mrs. Adie inferred that he was a young man of marvellous stupidity, more than redeemed by a gentle passion for the great culinary sciences.

Miss Adie looked at him all the while he was bungling on like this ; unseen by him ; for he never raised his eyes.

And when he had finished (in the middle of a sentence) what he had to say, she did not smile, nor giggle, nor grin, as all men and some women would have done, but simply turned her eyes upon the sea, and. . . . . sighed.

But what did she think ?

I do not know, I can only tell you that she looked at him kindly, that she turned her eyes towards the sea, and that she sighed.

“ Here comes a bird,” said Rauch, “ that neither of us have been able to kill yet.”

“ What is it ?”

“ It must be some sort of duck, I wish you would try your hand on it.”



"O you mean the *ticetee* over there. You found them dive, I presume. However, take the gun, and under my directions—"

"I would rather see you do it."

"Very well, Sir, you shall be gratified, but you will please observe that I do not aim at, but under the bird. Hand me your London fowling piece, with that, I could even kill a porpoise. Thank you."

"The ladies," said Edward anxiously, "I suppose that—"

"O do not mind us," said Mrs. Adie, "we have both fired off a gun before now, haven't we, Maggie dear?"

Margaret nodded without speaking, she glared as if fascinated upon the face of the Shetlander, who now standing up in the stern had fixed his glittering eyes upon the bird, and with one hand resting on the tiller, steered the boat so as to pass it at about thirty yards distance.

It was a black and white duck, and riding upon the waves sometimes was lost in their furrow, sometimes appeared upon their ridge.

Rauch placed himself to face the boat's bow. Blance leaving go of the tiller lifted the gun slowly to his shoulder, "Ah," he muttered, "the bird has dived." Margaret gave a kind of gasp.

when the gun was lowered. This was only perceived by one person.

The duck soon reappeared, this time a little behind the boat. The gun was again lifted. Rauch looked earnestly at Margaret's face; thus turning his back upon the gunner and the bird.

The smoke drifted back over his head, and hung round the bow of the boat; he bent eagerly forward as it was clearing slowly away.

"Always aim beneath them," said Hay, "they cannot escape you then," and he pointed to the wings which struggled, and the blood which flowed upon the surface of the water.

No one answered him. He turned round, and saw Mrs. Adie and the two Englishmen stooping over something at the end of the boat.

Margaret had fainted away!

## CHAPTER VI.

## TO AND FRO.

“He that pryeth into every cloud may be stricken by a thunderbolt.”—OLD SAYING.

“Fish dwell in the deep waters, and eagles in the sides of heaven; the one, though high, may be reached with the arrow; and the other, though low, may be taken with the hook, but the heart of man at a foot’s distance cannot be known.”

FROM THE CHINESE.

LERWICK is built on the side of a hill. It has two streets; one, which is filled with the houses of the great men of the town, and with religious buildings, extends along the top of the hill; the other which is mercantile, being close to the Shetlander’s grand market—the sea, along its base. These streets are connected by lanes which are equally narrow, filthy, and steep.

One afternoon, Rauch dangling in and out of Fort Charlotte (a rickety old place which is supposed to defend the town, and which is

situated between the two thoroughfares), ran up against Hay Blance, who was toiling towards the top with his hands hanging before him, and his knees thrown forward, and his head bent like an inverted comma.

"Ah, Blance! you are just the man I want. I feel dull; always do now; come down to Tulloch's will you, and try a cheroot?"

The eyes of the Shetlander twinkled blue fire; he was very fond of cheroots.

They sat down by each other, on the hard, black and fusty sofa, appertaining to the first floor.

"You are always dull in Shetland; and yet you admired the country so much when I first saw you."

"A rover like myself," returned Rauch, without blushing, "would get tired of a paradise in three weeks. However, I don't mean to run away just yet."

"O no, not till I have found you a little sport, or you will go home and tell all sorts of fibs about us; and besides that, you have been nowhere. We must take you to Unst, and to Coninsburgh, and to the Villens of Ure, and to the Holes of Scraada, and to great Scalloway Castle, and to the Pictish Burghs, and to a hundred other places."

"Do you ever go after snipe?"

"No, it is either my gun or my eye which is not quick enough for them."

"The fault must lie with the gun. You would shoot splendidly with my double-barrel. I never saw anything better killed than that *ticetee*."

"I am very sorry that I shot it now. But who could have thought that Maggie would faint like that?"

"Pooh!" answered Rauch, who had brought the conversation round to his point quicker than he could have expected. "It is well known—at least so the doctors say, for *I* know nothing of these matters—that all people may be subjected to these nervous fits when they are a little out of sorts. Bile on the stomach, a sick headache, or even one cup too many of strong tea will create an attack, which, to an inexperienced eye would denote chronic nervousness, or constitutional timidity. I have no doubt that the next time she hears a gun fired, or goes into the bed-chamber, she will laugh at the memory of her former fears."

"This might explain it away with other women, but Margaret has always been so courageous up till lately, and it was not only on the other day, but I have observed a complete change in her system. At eighteen she rode colts on the edge of precipices, killed gulls with a rifle, and sailed as fearlessly as

a fish-wife. While now she turns pale at every gust of wind, will not venture on a horse's back, unless it is as tame as a cow, and cannot bear to read anything at all horrible—she, who used to devour ghost stories. Then how she trembled at the recollection of the Noss Cradle.”

“I did not quite understand that allusion.”

“I will tell you.”

Rauch listened attentively behind the cloud of smoke which arose from his Manilla.

Blance, like all the true Shetlanders, spoke English, pure from the Scotch accent.\* Sometimes

\* The Shetlanders, however, have some peculiar forms of dialect, which have passed quite unnoticed by the tourists, and, (naturally enough) have been taken as a matter of course, and ignored by the natives who have written. Not only, like the Germans, do they thee and thou their inferiors, but they actually use words which are either German, or something very much like it; such as *du* for *thou*, *dine* or *dein* for *thine*, *dat* for *that*, &c. They often transpose their words too, in this manner, ‘*dat sall I,*’ and almost completely ignore the pronoun ‘*it*’ saying ‘*he’s a fine day,*’ and so on.

As a brief specimen of peasant dialect and peasant wit I give the following little gem.

In the kitchen of a Lerwick dwelling, the lady of the bare feet No. 1 was describing an act of cruelty which had been perpetrated on an apprentice boy in a fishing smack from Hull. The case which was thought a bad one, even among sailors, who are as inhuman as Mrs. Stowe’s slave-masters, excited the incredulity of the lady of the bare feet No. 2, whose partialities perhaps leant

a little burr, which he had picked up at Aberdeen, crept into his mouth, but nothing worth committing to paper.

“Every summer,” said he, “two French men-of-war come here for a few weeks, as soon as the Iceland fishing is over. They give a ball to us Lerwegians on their beautiful white decks; we return it in the town-house, which also answers all the purposes of court-room, custom-house, mason-lodge, and prison.

“Besides this, the French officers make a part in all the picnics and riding and shooting parties that are carried on during their stay. . . . About three summers ago, a number of us made a party to go to the Noss Head, which is one of the noblest precipices in the world; and two French officers went with us . . . . Now about a hundred yards below the Head, and at a distance of fifty yards from the Noss main, is an island precipice, called the Holm of Noss; its summit is a square green knoll of some little size.

towards English seamen. . . . Upon this a young gentleman, (also with bare feet) who had been eating putrid fish by the smoke-side, and who was about the age that young gentlemen are bound to be apprentices, sprang up and cried, “I believe it, I believe it, dat London Cockneys is just savages; dey wid think *nothin’* o’ killin’ a boy.”

“One day proved fatal to the nestlings of the innumerable sea-birds which had built there for centuries undisturbed, and fatal to the life of a human being as well. A man climbed the precipice, at the foot of which he had been landed from a boat, and on arriving safely at the top, with the help of his companions on the main island, he joined the two lands with a stout rope, which he secured on his own side by means of the implements he had taken with him. It is not known whether he wished to render his enterprise the more daring, or whether he mistrusted the security of his own contrivance; he refused to come across by the rope, and attempted to return by the rocks. He died.

“Soon afterwards, a long wooden box was fixed to the rope for the convenience of tourists, and the tenant of the *toon* (farm) of Noss, is compelled by the conditions of his lease, to keep this rope and cradle in sound order for six weeks in the year.

“When we came to this place, Maggie, full of fun and mischief, asked one of the officers, who had been paying her some little attention, to go across first. The officer did a very imprudent thing; he looked over the brink; and when he saw the waters foaming beneath, and the gulls



which were wrens at that wonderful depth—he bowed as well as his reeling head would permit him, and declined. Well, Sir, Miss Maggie jumps into the cradle, and goes across like a bullet. And now she was frightened when we only spoke of it. What strange beings women are!”

“Has she been long like this?” asked Rauch languidly.

“I cannot say, because we have not seen much of each other lately. She has been at Edinburgh during the last three years, and I at Aberdeen. But I have been home with her about a month now, and she certainly has not seemed, to my eyes, nearly so wholesome as she used to be.”

“Does she drink much strong tea? for that makes a person more fidgety, and nervous, than any other one thing.”

“Well, I don’t know that she drinks more or less than the rest of us; the fact is, that in Shetland we all take tea by the pailful. As for the women of the lower sort, why they are actually mad after it; and now the trollie boats have made smuggling more difficult, they will go without bread and clothes for weeks in order to enjoy this expensive luxury.”

“Does she get up early?”

“Earlier than most Shetlanders. Between ourselves, you know, they may talk about bracing air, and all that, but I can’t help fancying that there is something very sleepy in the atmosphere of this country; everybody lies in bed of a morning; the worms have to wait till noon-time, for there are never any early birds to pick them. For my own part, I always feel a different man here, to what I do in Aberdeen. There is one thing, by the bye, that strikes me about Margaret; she has a way of putting her hand to her side, as if something hurt her there. Eh?”

“O, that is nothing; some women get into a habit of doing it. Madame Piolini, of Her Majesty’s Theatre, has a trick of planting her hand against her ribs when she is acting, just in the same way as Miss Adie does. You have never seen her, I suppose. She is a charming actress. Oh, and I have been meaning to ask you for some time; are there any collections of old books in the town?”

“Yes; there is one next door, at Hicks the druggist, though I fear they are mostly medical.”

As he spoke, he went to the window. Then a light blush came upon his face, and he smiled

awkwardly, as he turned round to his companion.

“I am afraid that I must go now, Mr. Rauch, for I see Mr. Saxon coming down the hill, and I wish to speak to him about—about something.”

Rauch waved his hand mechanically, and Blance left the room without paying much attention to the Englishman's abstraction.

As he was going down stairs he met Mrs. Tulloch, ascending, with ‘a little Shetland hosiery’ under her arm.

Generally speaking, when this lady encountered Mr. Blance upon the stairs, in a narrow passage, &c., she had found him straddle his legs, and spread out his arms, to prevent her passing till she had paid forfeit for the many scarfs she had tried on him, and the many purchases she had weaned from him, in the course of their acquaintance. She never objected to this, regarding it in the light of discount for ready money payments; a discount taken instead of given, that was all.

But when she drew to one side of the wall, with demure lips, and averted eyes, she was amazed, to find him also sidle and pass her, in a most unmanlike manner.

However, she consoled herself with the hope of finding Rauch alone, and of bamboozling him without fear of interruption.

We all have our black days, and on this one poor Mrs. Tulloch was born to be disappointed. No voice responded to her gentle knock, and when she entered the room, her lodger was sitting in a chair, apparently looking at the sea, with his back towards her.

She murmured, "a little Shetland hosiery, Sir," in the sweetest tones her dulcet voice could command.

She drew nearer, and said, with a voice that began to be tremulous, "Mr. Rauch."

She glided up to him, and placed her hand upon his shoulder.

He stalked hastily from the room without giving her a look, or a word, rushed down the stairs, stopped at their foot to compose himself, and three minutes afterwards, sauntered slowly into Mr. Hicks' shop; in five minutes more he was rummaging among a heap of black, and torn, and dusty books, and, in a quarter of an hour from the time he had left her, Mrs. Tulloch saw him re-enter the house with a book squeezed between his hands, and real fire darting from his eyes.

Edward had gone up to Mrs. Adie's house to take tea there, at the request of its mistress, who was proud of her art as tea-maker, but was not above seeking for an extra hint or two from a foreign source.

Edward chatted away at a fine rate as they were preparing the beverage together; telling her how it puzzled him, when he first went to College; how he had made it the first night, thin as water, the next night, muddy as Oxford wine; how he always found the fire black and cold when he came in, and how, when it at length burnt up, when the kettle at length boiled, and when all his troubles seemed to be at an end, he had more than once turned over the lid of the kettle and been obliged to pull it out with the smutty tongs, which, of course, so dirtied the water that he had had to fill it again with cold water and begin afresh.

Mrs. Adie was charmed with this volubility, and became sprightly too. On this, the young gentleman's tongue galloped along like a mill-stream; he related all the torments which the lad must submit to, on being installed into manhood, as the child of darkness suffers, on being initiated into the glorious state of free and ac-

cepted masonry. And in giving her all these stories, he did not, (like most Oxford boys), take it for granted that she knew all the collegiate customs and phrases by instinct, but gave himself the trouble, by rendering them intelligible, to render them amusing.

From this they got into an argument. Mrs. Adie upheld the superiority of Shetland over every other country in the world, a motion warmly contested by Mr. Edward Saxon. Just as they were in the heat of it, Margaret came in, and took the vacant chair. She wore one of those light summer dresses, which on some ladies appear so fresh and pure. Her blue lustrous eyes grew round with astonishment, as she caught them in the midst of their boisterous glee.

The conversation stopped for a moment, as it always does when any one comes into the room, but Mrs. Adie, thirsting for the battle, soon crowed forth new notes of defiance.

Now her antagonist had nothing to say either for himself, or for the world, his friend. The arguments he did make use of, like spittle heaved towards Heaven, only descended upon his own head, and Madame was left on the field of contest victorious and alone.

“Why is he always so stupid and silent when

my daughter speaks to him, or looks at him?" thought she to herself. "It must surely be that he dislikes her; something has happened to prejudice him against her. I will speak to him about it, and she shall convert him."

All tea-time, silence reigned profound. Mrs. Adie was revolving her projects; Miss Adie was thinking; and Edward blushing for his unfortunate bashfulness (if that can be called bashfulness for which there is no real name) sat brooding over his cup and plate, only daring to glance by stealth at the beautiful creature before him.

"You wish to call upon Mrs. Mouatt this evening, do you not, my dear?"

"Yes, mamma, we agreed to go there together, if you remember."

"I am afraid that I shall be too busy; so you must make my excuses to Mrs. Mouatt in the best way you can, and go there by yourself—or, perhaps, Mr. Saxon would be kind enough to escort you: it is not very far, and it is one of our favourite walks."

Edward was overwhelmed with confusion and delight. Mrs. Adie perceived this emotion and attributed it to reluctance.

Miss Adie ran up stairs to put on her bonnet and shawl. Her mother having also gone up,

and having said something to her, came down again, and carried him off into a room where he had never been before.

"This is my daughter's sanctum," she explained; "I seldom venture inside it; and here she learns her lessons from Hay Blance every morning."

"As he comes from college," thought the good old lady, "he will be sure to form a different opinion of Maggie, when he sees how many books she has, and how industrious she is. It is very odd indeed that he should have taken this violent dislike to her. Nobody else does. However, she will be sure to talk to him pleasantly in their walk, and I dare say he will soon change his opinion."

Poor Edward had not thought once of his rival all that afternoon, and these last words made him more unhappy than ever. . . . . Then he taught her lessons out of books! Doubtless they both held the same book in their hands; and, doubtless, their voices, and eyes, and breath, and hair, would mingle as they read! O, how he envied this man who could speak to the woman he loved, and could be with her as often and as long as he chose! It was evident that the mother looked favourably upon his suit; she spoke to him as if he was already her son; and Margaret



addressed him, or seemed to address him, as if he was already her husband. And doubtless all three looked upon Edward Saxon as a mere stranger, who lingered on in Shetland, for no other purpose than to shoot, or to fish. They could not see that he loved Margaret; and perhaps it was better so, for did they know it, they might drive him away, and prevent him from seeing her, or speaking to her any more.

He went up to the book-case, to Margaret's book-case. "From the books that she reads," thought he, "I shall be able to learn what subjects please her most. If she loves poetry, I will sing to her those verses which now I waste upon the air, or for which I am only rewarded by the sneers, and sarcasms of my companion. If she is romantic, I will recount the wild anthologies of the Ancients, and the spectre-rhapsodies of the prose-poets of Germany. Or if she be devotional, I will recall the lessons of my childhood, and will, discourse with her upon the noble chronicles of the Jews, the sublime mysteries of the Apocalypse, and the sweet promises of the Great Redeemer."

While forming all these grand resolutions, he forgot that he had first to pluck up his courage, and to overcome those barriers which either

Margaret, or himself, had unconsciously raised between them.

As he stepped across the room, and raised his hands to the shelves, a harsh, but plaintive voice, sounded from behind him.

*"I shall soon die, I am going to die."*

At these words, he trembled, and felt a cold perspiration pour over his frame. He turned round quickly, expecting to see somebody standing behind him.

There was no one in the room.

His eyes roved wildly round, and, while his body still trembled, his ears were stretched to the utmost, to catch some sound which might lead him to the origin of that mysterious voice. Before three minutes had expired, he heard it again.

*"My poor bird, I must die! I must die soon."*

He looked upwards.

A single gas-lamp hung suspended from the ceiling; this served as a perch for a large grey parrot, which sat there motionless as if dead, with its eyes closed, and its head hanging to one side.

While still gazing, he shuddered; for the beak again opened, and the words again croaked forth as before :—

*"I am going to die: I shall soon die: my poor bird I am dying—I am dying."*

While Edward was remaining in the same posture, in which he had first heard this ominous voice, Miss Adie entered the room, calm and smiling as usual, though perhaps a little pale.

"I have been looking for you everywhere; I did not know that Mamma had brought you here, till I met her in the passage a minute ago. Now that you are here—"

She stopped; her eyes were fixed with an anxious, almost frightened expression, upon the parrot, which, on hearing his mistress's voice had descended from his perch, and was hopping gravely towards her. She took him up in her hands, and kissed his plumage, whispering,

"How is it that you have come down here, naughty bird? I keep him in my room, Mr. Saxon, where I can depend upon his being safe from cats and dogs, and other pet-destroyers. Besides, he sometimes says things which would frighten people who—has he spoken since you have been here?"

"No, I have not heard him talk yet," answered Edward, who told a falsehood without knowing why, and yet, feeling all the lighter and happier for having done so.

Miss Adie left him for a moment, while she took the bird up to her chamber. He heard her lock the door as she came out.

"You see that I take great care of my treasure," she said, displaying the key.

"I do not wonder at your prizing a bird, which must be so rare and valuable, in an isolated country like this."

"I do not prize it, because it is rare and valuable," she answered gently, "but because it is fond of me, and I should feel very sad if I lost anything that loved me."

Edward felt so angry with himself for having said what he had. "She thinks that I have accused her of being cold and unfeeling."

Margaret said to herself: "I am sure that he is angry with me for saying that, he thinks that I scolded him for misunderstanding me."

He offered her his arm, and blushed as if he was doing something wrong. She took it unaffectedly, and when he felt her arm rest on his, a thrill ran through him, and he felt as if he could have sunk into the ground with shame and pleasure. This familiarity, conventional though it was, appeared in his humble eyes a greater boon than he could ever have dared to expect. But he felt ashamed as well as enraptured; by her

side, he considered himself a being too vile, and worthless to deserve the same breeze which ruffled in her hair, the same light which shone upon her face. "If she knew all the wickedness I have done," thought he, "she would turn from me in horror, as we start back at the sight of some hideous reptile.

"And yet she said that she would not wish to lose anything that loved her. . . .

With these thoughts for his company, and with Margaret by his side, his heart was too full for his tongue to speak. And perhaps she had her thoughts too, for she was as silent as himself.

There seemed little probability of Mrs. Adie's scheme being carried out, as she had proposed.

They had walked some distance. Edward began to fear that his happiness must be near its end.

"Is Mrs. Mouatt's house much farther off?" he asked faintly.

"My mother is right," thought Margaret, "he has really taken an antipathy to me. However, I will at last say something; he must not think me rude."

"It is not very far," she said cheerfully, and

walking a little quicker, in order to relieve him of his unwelcome companion as soon as possible. This dismayed Edward. "She is tired of me," he sighed, "and wishes to get into pleasanter company. Ah! I do not wonder at it. I must appear very stupid."

"What is your opinion of my little library?" she said. "However, it is scarcely fair to ask any one's opinion about it. It is simply a collection of all the books I could possibly lay hold of. In Shetland, the books are so scarce that we devour anything, and everything."

"But there is the circulating library; if we are to believe Mr. Hicks' catalogue, he has a great many books."

"They are novels, are they not? and they have always told me, that novels are not proper books for a young lady to read."

This simplicity enchanted Edward.

"If Hay Blance was not so kind to me," she continued, hastening away like a true maiden, from the very shadow of the bad, "I should be compelled to live entirely, upon the small stock I brought with me from Edinburgh, six weeks ago, and which I have read through a great many times already. But he brought me an immense number from Aberdeen; and when his holidays

come round again, he will bring me as many more. Besides that, he, who has to work so hard at college, and who is so fond of the open air, even takes the trouble to drudge with me over my German and Latin. He says that I am very quick ; I dare say that is all flattery, don't you think so ? but even if I am, it must be a great sacrifice for him to sit moping in-doors, when the sun is shining, and the air is calm, and the sky-larks are singing, and the waters are murmuring, and everything invites him to come out and join them."

"You love Mr.—Hay—Mr. Blance?" faltered Edward.

Margaret's heart glowed into her face, and sparkled in her eyes, and sang in her voice, as she exclaimed,

"Love him ! O yes, Sir, I love him dearly ; he is so kind, so unselfish, so affectionate. We were brought up together from childhood ; we enjoyed the same little pleasures, we endured the same little troubles ; we shared the same rewards and the same punishments as we deserved them : we had then, and have now, everything in common ; our tastes are like, our enjoyments are mutual. O yes, I love him, and you will love him too, when you have known him a little longer ; for no one, I am sure, can know him without loving him.

If you wish to please him, ask him to do something for you; he is never happier than when he is trying to give pleasure to other people—but—how your arm trembles! are you ill, Mr. Saxon? your cheeks are white as stone, and your lips—O tell me what can I do? what can I do?”

Edward raised his sad brown eyes, and looked at her mournfully. She saw this look, she saw a tear rolling down his cheeks, and she guessed it all.

She sighed, and bent on him those eyes, so full of sorrow and of pity, which had fallen upon him three years before.

He also sighed, and stole gently away.

“Thus my hopes are destroyed, and the last rose-bud of my short sad life is withered from its stem. And she pitied me! she pitied me! another woman would have rejoiced and triumphed, but she, who is so good, was sorrowful as myself, (if any sorrow can equal what mine will soon be) when she detected in my look, in my tears, this love which it is not in her power to return.”

Thus murmuring to himself, Edward went down the hill, which sloped towards the town; he lifted his eyes, in which some tears still lingered, and through these tears he perceived Hay



Blance coming towards him with long unequal strides, his hair flowing in the wind.

At this sight, his heart burned, and the tears scorched with anger, dried within his eyes. "This is the man," he cried, "who will snatch from me, her for whom alone I desire to live ; her, whom alone I desire to possess ; this is the man who will exile me from pleasure, from happiness, from hope itself, through whom I must fade, must die, like a plant in a desert, without a drop of water, or a breath of air. If he had never been born, if he was not living now, Margaret would be mine.

"Yet why should I hate him, when he is loved by her ? While children, they were lovers ; while youths, they were lovers ; and now grown into men and women, they are lovers still. He has been hers, and she has been his, for many years ; can I, a stranger, an alien, dare to repine at that which could scarcely have been otherwise. This man deserves her far more than I do ; he does not, he cannot love her as I do ; yet he has loved her before I saw her face ; while I only loved her in my dreams, he has loved her with words, with letters—with embraces ; while I debauched myself in the company of beasts, and sold my body day after day, night after night, to the brutal pleasures of the town, this young

man was still constant, still attentive to the love which he felt, and to the woman's heart which he possessed.

“And if he was not, as he is, so much more worthy than I am to have her : if he were inferior to me in body and in soul ; if he were a dastard and a villain ; if he had loved her but one short week while I had loved her for many years—is it not sufficient for me that Margaret loves him ? I am still hers, though she will never be mine. If she loved a dog, or a bird, would not I love it too ? if she cherished a flower, would not I cherish it too ? I love her so greatly that all whom she loves, I must love as well. . . . . Hay Blance will be her husband, he shall also be my friend.”

Thus, this poor young man, who had lived so short a time, but who had learned so many terrible lessons, who in three years had been mourner, dreamer, dissolute by turn, now gave up all his pride, all his passion to this beautiful love which had transformed his nature from that of a man which is small, and mean, and selfish, to that of a woman which, at such moments as these, shows itself generous, self-devoted, and heroic.

“Mr. Saxon, I have come to speak to you on a

matter which lies nearer than any other to my heart, and on which the future course of my whole life depends."

Edward felt sick and faint, for he understood him too well. He waved his hand and motioned to him to proceed.

"I am conscious," said the good Shetlander, "that in asking you for your advice, which will be so valuable to me, I request a favour which I do not deserve. We have known each other but a short time, and I have rendered you no services which would warrant me to trouble you, as I am doing now."

He waited for an answer. Edward bent his head. His lips moved too; but they could not speak.

"You think it strange, perhaps, that I did not speak to Mr. Rauch about it first, since he is older than yourself, and has seen more of the world. But do you know, I am almost afraid of him, I am nearly certain that he would sneer at what I had to say to him, and not tell me what he really thought, but say something very clever which would turn me and—somebody else into ridicule, and I should not like this very much between ourselves because I am very sensitive—not for myself, but for her. Besides that, he has been

all his life in India, where there are only black women, and where you may marry as many as you please. So of course he could not give me good advice, since I have only one lady whom I wish to marry, and she is not black at all, but on the contrary very fair."

"Then you wish—"

"To speak to you about my marriage. You have been to Oxford, which is a much larger college than Aberdeen, and of course one must pick up a great deal of experience there. And I wanted to ask you what your ideas are upon the question of early marriages. Do you think I am too young? I am twenty-three the next 4th. of November. And my betrothed is just turned of age."

"I should have thought now," said Edward, composing himself a little, "that Mrs. Adie—"

"O, she has no objections—none in the least. Only she is a silly wavering sort of body, and she says that she is not so sure about the money. But I am her adopted son, she has paid for my school and college education, and till I derive a certain income from the University, she allows me £90 a year; Mrs. Blance that is to be, is an only daughter and will be sure to have something.

But putting that out of the question, I think £90 a year plenty to begin with, don't you ?

" If Mrs. Adie approves of it."

" O yes, she approves of it: in fact she has done everything that she possibly could to bring the match about. Only she wants us to wait."

" You have loved each other many years."

" Many, many years," answered Blance, aged 23.

" And you love each other, as much as ever ?"

" If I can believe her words, and if I can trust my own heart, we love each other more and more every day."

" Then marry," cried Edward, " for no wealth can give you those riches which spring from true hearts, like May flowers from the rich earth. Marry while you are both young, and do not waste your first, your precious years, while the bliss which married love can bestow, lies within your reach."

" I will marry her," cried Hay, who was only too glad to receive an advice which tallied so exactly with his wishes. " I will marry her directly. Thanks, thanks, you are a real friend. You have

made me decide upon immediately taking one, whose beauty, whose talents, whose affections——”

“Yes,” cried Edward, with enthusiasm, “she has beauty, she has talents, but her heart is the treasure which you must value most.”

“Then you know her! But of course you do. You have been to Aberdeen, and who could go there without hearing of Jessie Rae, the belle of the Eastern shores? who could hear such praises lavished upon one person without wishing to see her, without wishing to know her, without wishing to marry her? Congratulate me, congratulate me, on possessing the noblest, the loveliest of her sex.”

“Jessie Rae! Aberdeen! I thought that Margaret—that Miss Adie——”

“Is my sister, that is all. What an odd mistake! A sister is very different from a sweetheart, though one may love them both. No, my heart is free from Maggie’s, and Maggie’s heart is free from mine. . . . . ah! you smile. . . . . you are turning white. . . . . you are ill. . . .”

\* \* \* \* \*

“I cannot understand these Southrons, Mamma Adie.”

“They are all odd creatures. I dare say that you have heard the tale about the Englishman

who hanged himself, because they forgot to bring him his cream at breakfast time. Which is the one that has puzzled you last."

"Mr. Saxon."

"He is queer-tempered certainly; I have noticed that. But the other appears to me, the greater enigma of the two. He is always starting suddenly; and then his face gets dark, and such a smile comes over it . . . . But what has Mr. Saxon done? I sent him out a walk with Maggie just now, who by the bye has not given me any account about the matter."

"I met him as he was coming down Lerwick Hill, and I spoke to him about Jessie Rae, and asked him whether I had better marry her soon or wait a little while. And I did not mention any name at first, but simply spoke about marriage in connection with myself and a young lady unknown. And he asked me if I loved her, and if she loved me, and of course I said she did, and then he said '*marry her*,' and marry her I will in spite of you, Mamma Adie."

"Very well, my dear, a wilfu' man maun hae his way. But go on, you have interested Maggie; see how she is staring."

"And would you believe it? he had been thinking all the while that I was going to marry sister

Maggie ! and when I told him that I was not, he looked very sick indeed, and shivered, and would have dropped, if I had not caught him in my arms ; and I bathed his face with water out of a burn that luckily runs close by where we stood, and after he had come to, I walked with him as far as Tulloch's. He was very pale when I left him, Mamma Adie, and I think that he must have been crying, and he squeezed my hand—O so hard ; I cannot understand it all."

"No more can I. What do you think of it, Maggie ? She is going out of the room ! Margaret, Margaret, what are you crying for ?"



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE PHYSICIAN.

TIME went on, and the two Englishmen were still located at Geordie Tulloch's. They had proved an actual god-send to this establishment. Tourists are not in the habit of stopping a very long time in Shetland.

Rauch had at first grumbled, as only a man can grumble when he is English, and as only an Englishman can grumble, when he has been a sailor. However, the steamer smoked southwards Monday after Monday, and no Rauch went with it. It may be noticed, that after the excursion to the Orkney-man's Cave, as if resigned to his fate, he no longer spoke of England *vid Aberdeen*.

Edward would sometimes apologize to him for the insipidity of his present life, which he ima-

gined Rudolph was only enduring through friendship for him.

Rauch would always reply that he liked the country very well. Blance had procured him abundance of snipe shooting at Delting, sea-trout fishing in Deal's Voe, and even first-rate rabbit ferreting on Bressa Farm. "Now that I can get something to do, and somebody who will answer a question when he is asked one, (though I own you have been much less absent lately), why I am as happy as a king, and could hang out here for ever almost."

Edward would often surprise him poring over an old book, or reading sheets of foolscap voluminously filled with his own hand-writing. He also discovered, that his friend constantly absented himself at a certain hour in the afternoon, and displayed no inclination to be communicative when he returned. This puzzled him greatly, till, one day, having occasion to go into Hicks' to get a book, he there discovered Mr. Rudolph Rauch in shirt sleeves and perspiration over several coloured glass bottles, a pair of scales, and a pestle and mortar.

"You are a doctor, you mysterious man."

"If you remember, they used all to call me *The Physician* at Liberty Hall, though I do not

think that they had discovered anything to lead them to the supposition that I really was one. O yes, I was in Guy's Hospital for some little time."

"Why have you kept this a secret?"

"Because I should have been bored to death; dogged all day by a set of stupid idiots, who would have wanted to be ill, nursed, and physicked whenever they had a headache after a night of brandy, or felt a little languid after an hour of Jericho, or St. Clements. Here I have plenty of spare time on my hands, *ergo* I have taken off the mask of the cowan,\* and have assumed the furred gown of the master physician."

"I think that I can guess something."

"Try."

"It was you that saved Foster's life."

"True. But that was easy enough: as soon as I heard that the Oxford doctors had sentenced a man to death, I knew that his recovery would be almost certain. Had they stuck at him to the last, their remedies would doubtless have murdered him. I found it just as I had expected; they had been using mercury in doses all the more fearful because it was a serious case. How-

\* A masonic term for those who are initiated.

ever, I conquered the effects of the physic upon his disease, and the effects of the disease upon his body, but I allow that I had to work hard for it.

“ Well, I carried him round at last, and I wish that all doctors might receive a few drops of that gratitude which this poor fellow showered so bountifully upon me. It is true that the professionals deserve little gratitude from their patients ; but in many cases they do deserve some return beyond the graceless thankless money, which whether they kill, or whether they cure, is paid to them the same. Were they to obtain this, I am sure that it would serve as a great antidote against the vitiating, hardening effects of practice, and render them much less indifferent to the sufferings of human creatures than they are now.

“ You must have observed how poor Foster used to seek out my company, and would insist upon doing me little services. This you all ascribed to toadyism ; he knew it, and like a noble soul as he was, despised the opinion of fools, when his own heart and conscience assured him that he was right. But it was not in public that he showed how he loved me ; he did not trumpet his gratitude in the market-place ; he even attempted to hide it from myself.

“Often when I woke in the morning I would find my chamber full of flowers, still damp, and still shining with the morning dew, and which spread a delicious perfume around. I knew that he must have gathered them by day-break, from the fields near the town, and have stolen into my room while I was asleep, to strew them upon the chairs, upon the floor, and upon the bed.

“Once, the Vice-Principal gave me five hundred lines of the Eneid to write out as an imposition. That was at five o’clock in the evening. The next morning at ten I sat down at my table sulky enough, Ted, at the prospect of such a laborious waste of time. On taking my Virgil into my hands, I saw that the leaves were bulging out at the sides, and on opening it, I discovered the required imposition in foolscap, in a handwriting so like mine, that I could scarcely persuade myself that I had not turned sleep-writer, and done it in my dreams. A Chinaman could not have imitated it better.

“If I praised a book or a College print in his presence, before three days had passed I would always find the picture hung tastefully upon my bed-room wall, or the book inserted unobtrusively within the shelves.

“I often remonstrated with him about this, for

I knew that since he was poor, and could obtain no credit, he must have pinched himself terribly to settle these involuntary demands of mine. However, he always denied having done, or thought of doing anything of the sort, with the most earnest, truthful face in the world. Then he would sidle up to me, and coax me to let him tell everybody how I had saved his life, that they might respect and honour me as he did. And when I once answered that few men had a heart so pure as his, and that these young fellows would think better of me as a bad man than as a good one, he looked troubled, and said, 'that he had not thought of that.' As for disbelieving me, that never entered into his head for a moment.

"He has now got a curacy in Huntingdonshire, and is married to the girl whom he had loved for years. He still writes me long letters, which are full of hopeful transports about his wife and child, and of the living that may some day be his."

Not long after this conversation, Lerwick was in an uproar. A foreign gentleman from Tulloch's lodging house had cured several inhabitants of diseases, which had defied alike the medicines

of the town doctors, and the charms and incantations of the wise women of the land.

The same man had made as great a stir among the indolent Masons of the Shetland Lodge. He had taken its management into his own hands, and had re-established its falling pillars. They elected him Grand Master, and it was under his rule that Hay Blance became initiated into the apprenticeship of this science, and that Edward passed within the sacred shadow of the Royal Arch.

As a surgeon who treated the sick with marvellous skill, who addressed their sore hearts with kind words, and their aching limbs with a velvet hand, the Shetlanders regarded him with love and devotion.

As chief of the sublime and mysterious order, these poor people bent before him in awe and veneration. They believe that a Grand Master is gifted with many supernatural endowments, but that his chief attribute is the power of detecting a thief, and the place in which his treasure has been concealed.

Indeed, at this very time an instance of the sort occurred. Some seal-skins had been stolen from a shop near the Quay, and suspicion fell upon a sailor, who, fortunately for Rauch, happened to be a

native, and as superstitious as his more honest comrades, for the mere threat to take him before the black-bearded stranger, was enough to make him confess that he had taken the skins, and to show where he had hidden them.

“Will you come for a walk, Mr. Physician?”

“With pleasure, Mr. Blance, since it is my duty. I have just received a message from one Johnnie Leask imploring me to come directly, I do not think it will be a matter of life or death; however, we may as well lose no time, when we have found the way. Here, my good fellow, can you tell me where Johnnie Leask lives?”

“Which?” answered the native stolidly.

“Can you direct me to Leask’s cottage?”

“Who?”

“You must not ask questions so directly as that,” whispered Hay, “let me try.”

Hay Blance entered into a conversation with the man about the weather, and the fishing, and ascertained that Johnnie Leask was not going after the cod that night because *he was serious*, and finally was informed that he was to go south till he came to a peery (little) house aside the gaet (path).

“To go south are we?” said Rauch. “They



seem always to direct you by the points of the compass here, when they condescend to direct you at all. That was a Scotchman though, wasn't he?"

"No," said Hay, "the Scotch accent like other bad habits is picked up very soon; and a great many Scotch laddies and lassies come over here with their broad words, and canny ways, and long red hair."

"Which last appears to be the chief characteristic of the Caledonians. They are not ashamed of it either, that is the worst of it. In England, if a man has red hair, he is awake to his misfortune, and endeavours to disguise it with dyes, or pomatum; but to be red-haired in Scotland is like being bald among the Myrcaonians, or being plucked at Liberty Hall, Oxon; all are companions in misery and the misery ceases to exist."

Blance stopped his companion before a shop-window in which veils, shawls, and stockings mingled with loaves of bread, piles of herrings, and jars of lollipops.

"As you see," said he, "all the tradesmen here retail home-manufactured woollen work. The reason is, that specie is so scarce among the peasant classes that they are obliged to pay their groceries &c., in the gloves, veils and shawls which are

worked by the young women, and in the stockings which are worked by the old ones."

"As in Devonshire with the lace-makers."

"But I wish you to observe the style of plain close knitting in which these waistcoats are worked, how much more elegant they are than the rest. They come from the Fair Isle, whose inhabitants (the men as well as the women) not only knit all the year round, but even dye their own colours from a sort of lichen they procure off the rocks. The art was taught to them by the Spaniards, at the time of the Armada; the ship of the Admiral, the Duke of Medina Sidona was driven northwards to these seas, and wrecked upon the east shore by the same storm which had first dispersed the fleet, and which had saved England from tyranny and torture. The Admiral with two hundred men got safe ashore, and while wintering there, taught the hospitable natives the art of knitting, as it is there practised now. My story is substantiated by the fact of the Spanish and Fair Isle knitting having been compared, and their styles found to be precisely the same."

"These coincidences are no proof. The peasants here have a mode of cupping (with a ram's horn perforated at the top, and a piece of soft rag tied round it), which I have seen practised among

the natives of northern Africa . . . . However, I have heard some odd stories about Fair Isle."

"Those who will subscribe so largely to clothe nudity in Patagonia, who will form a new sect and build a hundred chapels on the squabble of a word, forget that island whose shores are washed by the same waters which ripple past us now, whose soil nourishes three hundred living souls. They have no minister; they have no kirk."

"All the better," said Rauch, "if they had one, they would soon want two. Why there are no less than four different chapels in miserable little Lerwick. But how do they manage about marriages and so on?"

"A minister does go over there once a year to marry and baptize."

"Once a year. Then it appears to me, that all the children would be born on the same day."

"They anticipate sometimes; in fact I have heard it alleged, that it is by no means an uncommon practice for the couple to bring a baby with them to the altar, and so get the marriage and the first christening done on the same day."

They stood before a cottage built of grey stone, without windows, or chimney, and its roof covered

with pieces of thin turf (called *pones* or *flaas*) and thatched with straw.

Having stepped across the threshold, they found themselves in the dark, although it was only two o'clock in the afternoon. The smoke from the peat forced itself between their lips, and into their eyes and nostrils; long tongued flames blazed up soon after they entered, and from the farther end diffused a dim mysterious light throughout the room. By this they were able to distinguish the objects nearest the fire-place, and little by little, one by one, all the furniture and live-stock upon the premises.

The murky forms of two old women crouched near the blaze.

A line extended from wall to wall, with the bodies of many fish dried and drying suspended therefrom.

Several children playing on the floor.

A white sow wandering anxiously to and fro.

A large four poster bed with heavy curtains hanging round it; and a fine-sized calf tied to it by a rope.

Rauch having threaded his way to the bed, drew the curtains, and spoke.

The two old women crept up towards him, in order to hear what he said. Johnnie Leask with

the best of lungs for a sick man, roared at them to keep off.

Upon this, they beset Hay Blance with innumerable questions, not only cross-examining him about the Hakim, but also requesting his opinion about the Noss-head, and the new brig, and Laird Mouatt's south-bred sheep, and the other lions of the land.

A Shetlander's morning salutation, and his evening's valediction are invariably couched in the form interrogative. His remarks are questions, his comments inquiries.

This inquisitiveness is all the more strange, since they themselves are reserved and suspicious to the last degree. With that love of the improbable which is common to most savages, and with that passion for contrariety which is inherent to all civilized races, they discover sinister designs in the questions of the tourists, and immediately transform themselves into statues of silence and stupidity.

Blance returning succinct answers asked for a drink.

One of the women dipped a pannikin into a pail which stood behind the door, he drank and passed it on to Rauch, who had apparently finished his case.

They left the dwelling with distorted faces, and

pursued by a shower of questions clad in the disguise of thanks.

“What is that stuff?”

“It is the scum of the milk after churning; we call it *blàànd*.”

“Call it lemon-juice. It is not wholesome is it?”

“It is very unwholesome, and if drunk in large quantities, produces on the skin a kind of leprosy, some instances of which, I have no doubt, you have met with.”

“Yes, Maggie Aitcheson has got it. I put it down to the way they have of eating putrid fish here, and forbad her to touch so much as the tail of a sillach till I gave her leave. And now I must stop her *blàànd*. Do you know why your countrymen prefer foul fish to fresh, Hay?”

“The same reason I suppose that prevents you Englishmen from relishing venison except when it crawls about on the plate. They like it with a game flavour. . . . . But about your patient?”

“Sham Abraham. He pretended to be ill in order to have me inside his house, to wean physic out of me, to hear me speak, and—to ask me questions. . . . . Look at these two old people coming along the road. Why, each is carrying enough peat to load a donkey.”

“Ah, this is the country for a strong old age!”

cried Hay, proudly. "What land can boast of a man, who, like Tairvil (about two centuries ago) lived to be a hundred and eighty years old, without touching anything stouter all his life, than milk and water, and oatmeal; and who, the day before he died, went out sailing in a small boat and a rough sea."

"These traditions are amusing," replied Rauch.

"However, the couple you admired were both bed-ridden last Sunday, and will be bed-ridden next Sunday, and the next, and the next."

"Why?"

"They will not go to kirk unless they are clothed properly, and they deprive themselves of their holiday clothes, and of their holiday too, in order that their daughter may be as gaily dressed as other girls, whose parents have more money to spend. Formerly, the lassies were content to wear their jacket of blue, and their petticoat of scarlet *claith*, and a pretty coloured cotton handkerchief tied over their heads. But now they must starve themselves, and make their parents starve too, that they may be able to have bonnets, and stays, and tawdry calico gowns. . . . But what do you think of us on the whole?" said Hay, "are we a healthy nation?"

"~~Shetlanders~~ may be naturally healthy, but they

certainly do all they can to 'counteract nature. They cripple their daughter's backs under terrible loads, and their boys are sent to sea by night, in order to catch immediate rheumatism, and to lay the foundation of half a dozen still more serious diseases ; and N.B. they are *never* taught to swim. Well, having obtained these diseases, they go to the town doctor to be made worse, or to the wise women to be made no better. However, they have their own valuable recipes for every kind of disease which answers either of these two purposes, such as, scurvy grass for cutaneous complaints, butter-milk for dropsy, shells of whelks calcined and pounded for dyspepsia, and a variety of steal-tite called *kleber* for excoriations."

" You should not revile these poor people, Mr. Rauch. It is not their fault that the town doctors are blind and stupid, and it is not to be wondered at that they often are compelled to resort to the aid of charms and incantations. The Trows, the people of the hills, and the Mer-women, the spectres of the waters, will at times attack the Shetlanders, and drag them down to beds of sickness and of death. . . . . The very man whom we have just now visited, had once a daughter whose eyes were more clear and blue, whose hair was more long and golden, whose



limbs were better formed than those of any maiden between Saxaford Hill and Sumburgh Head. One morning—for it is always by day-light that these things are said—she was mad enough to brave and to ridicule the hill-folk, the mer-folk, and all the spirits which haunt the sky, the sea, or the land. . . . . That night she stood upon a rock near the sea, surrounded by her playmates and companions ; she was very sad, and her eyes were fixed, and her words ran upon a glorious star which none but her could descry in the heavens. . . . . Three days afterwards, she went wandering upon the moors ; she felt tired, and sat down to rest herself upon the summit of a small round hill ; a lethargy fell upon her, and she laid herself down upon the grass and slept. And as she slept, the fairies wasted her heart away. They stole it from her, and left only her corpse, dull and dead as a withered log upon the grass, which grew within the enchanted ring.

“ That evening, the parents beheld the form of their child moving slowly towards the house. They ran out to welcome her ; it was late, and they had become anxious, for they loved her dearly. Her eyes were dull and glassy, her feet moved mechanically, and her tongue was mute. They took her hands in theirs ; they found those

hands cold and heavy as lumps of marble. They led her into the house, and sat her down. She smiled once when the doctor spoke to her, and died, or seemed to die without uttering a word."

Hay Blance had some other motive in relating this little legend than the amusement of his companion, or the display of his own powers of narration. However, he walked along, preserving a silence, which he resolved every moment of breaking. The other knew what was coming, and was only waiting for him to begin.

"I think," he said at length, "that both you and I know somebody whom the trows have touched, or at least one who is really ill, and who does not send for any doctor."

"And who may that be?"

"My friend and sister—Margaret Adie."

"Miss Adie!"

"Have you, a physician, never observed her nervousness when she was once so firm, her languor when she was once so vivacious? Have you never observed the face which grows paler every day, the spasms which flit across it, and which must wring her to the heart? Have you never observed how often she places her hand

upon her side, her chest, her bosom, and how she pants for breath after the slightest physical exertion."

"I have seen something of all this, certainly. In fact we had a conversation about it, if you remember, some little while ago—on which occasion, I explained to you that a temporary indisposition will often produce symptoms, which, though alarming in themselves—"

"You admit that they are alarming?"

"No; I say that if considered merely by themselves—"

"That is enough. You must see her."

"Why should *I* see her? There are plenty of doctors in Lerwick, and it is likely enough that they will understand Lerwick maladies better than I should."

"Mr. Rauch, the last time that we discussed this subject, I thought with you, that these symptoms proceeded from a slight and passing illness. I do not think so now, and God pardon you, Sir, if you believe her to be ill; for you are advising us to trust that girl's life into the hands of men, whose inefficiency you have been the first to expose."

"You do not understand these things, my dear friend; you forget, in the first place, that I am

no regular practitioner. I have treated some few cases with the best of my poor skill, and I have been fortunate. I have been fortunate because I have not been anxious. With this young lady it is different. There are certain relations which exist between doctor and patient—”

“Which I understand very well. And that you may understand me, I ask you which will the mother prefer to sacrifice—the health of the daughter whom she loves, or a few scruples which, at the best of times, are absurd?”

“The mother will not think the daughter ill. If I know anything of that girl’s nature, she will deceive her mother in order to prevent her from being anxious. Take care what you do; you will make me a Paul Pry, an officious intruder.”

Hay Blance answered him by walking quickly towards Mrs. Adie’s house, which stood a little way out of the Lerwick Road.

“Stop,” cried Rauch.

“Do not fear,” said the other, turning round, but still walking, “I will acquaint them with your hesitation, and your modesty. They shall not think you an intruder, they shall implore you to come.”

“Stop again. I command you not to say one

word to the mother, or to any one else, till the proper moment comes. I must watch her a little longer before she suspects me, and puts herself on her guard against me."

Hay Blance returned to his side.

"In two days," said he, "I leave Shetland for Aberdeen. When shall you begin?"

"There will be no harm in letting the mother know what she already half suspects; I will go up with you there to-night, and break it to her. I have reasons for wishing to see Miss Adie on horseback. Can it be managed?"

"Easily; Monday is my last day, I will ask for a riding-party."

"Very well. Where is Miss Adie now?"

"I left her," said Hay, smiling, "with your friend, Mr. Edward Saxon."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE HEART THAT WAS FOUND.

“You told me, Margaret, that one night as you were lying in your bed, your head resting in the moonlight on the pillow, your face composed, and your faculties melted into rest, a Voice without sound but of resistless power, awoke you from sleep, and commanded you to rise and pray.

“You descended to the little room beneath; you knelt down on the cold floor; and there, while the tempest howled in the sky, while the spray from the great waters beat against the panes, and while the whole house shook beneath the wind, there, with your hair falling on your shoulders, and your night-dress fluttering loosely on your form, with eyes, hands, and heart upraised to the Almighty God, you prayed Him to forgive those who might then be sinning against His laws.

"On that same night, at that same hour, I was committing a terrible crime; I led another to be guilty too. It was for me you woke, for me you knelt, and for me you interceded.

"May your prayers save me, Margaret!

"I held this from you for a little time for I feared to lose you. I trembled lest you should hate me, despise me, and cast me from you for ever. But I could not keep it secret long. Every night my conscience reproached me for attempting to gain the love of a pure woman, when I was so guilty, so polluted. I felt that I could never be happy while this chasm existed between us. To you it was invisible, but it was always before my sight, black, deep, and terrible. And I felt that this chasm could only be filled by my confessions, and by your forgiveness. I determined to risk all, and flinging myself before your feet, I confessed to you what I had done.

"I confessed it to you as I had confessed it to my God, as I had confessed it to my own night-thoughts, but as I had confessed it to no human being but yourself. For you alone, I opened the coffin of the past, and dragged forth its corpse, naked, hideous, with the flesh that was mouldering, and the worms that were falling from its eyes.

“When I had finished, I was looking on the ground, as I had been looking all the while ; I did not dare to encounter your eyes, for I knew that my fate might in them be read ; and I feared that fate too much to wish to know it so soon.

“I could not see your face, but I believe, that I saw it ; that I saw it full of horror, of fear, and of aversion ; and your form shrinking, and your hands clasped before your eyes, and your head turning slowly, mournfully away, never to be bent towards me again.

“I grew very cold ; a shiver ran through me. I remained still crouched before you. I was paralysed.

“Then I heard you bend closer and closer towards me, till your hair caressed my cheek, and your dress swept before my face, blinding me ; and I felt your hand descend like a wreath of flowers upon my head. I looked up, trembling ; then my heart bounded ; I saw that your eyes were glistening with tears ; I saw that you pardoned me, that you excused me, that you loved me.

“You pitied that unhappy girl—yes, pity her, for she has suffered, for she suffers now.

“And you pitied me, for you said that I also must have suffered. It is true. I have been very wretched.



“Through my sin, the life of a poor woman has been tainted with shame, and withered in despair. . . . . It may be that she provoked me, tempted me. . . . . But did I not offend her first? . . . . . I cannot triumph in this thought as most men do: I cannot boast of this seduction as most men boast; I cannot call this a victory which I have won. I feel sad, I feel ashamed; I feel that I took a mean advantage of a woman’s self-confidence and pride; that I acted like a wretch, like a thing without brains, or soul, or heart.

“It hurts me to look back into the past. Not only do I meet the spectre of remorse, which reproaches me with the evil I have done; I also evoke many bitter regrets, and awaken many pensive memories.

“I have related to you the first part of the history of my life, the babblings of my childhood, the dreams of my boyhood, and the first sins, the first follies of my manhood. Three years remain between now and then. I will tell you all which I did, and thought, and suffered during those three years. It is a dull and lifeless story enough; the tale of sorrow and disappointment which so many carry in their breasts, and which so many have already told. But I shall not be quite happy till you know all; I will pass through it as quickly as I can.

“When I returned from Oxford to my country home, my parents, who had just returned from abroad, received me with cold looks and cold words. I had left college that I might restore to them those pleasures of which they had deprived themselves, in order to pay for my University education. They attributed my departure to indolence, and instability.

“I requested my father to obtain a commission for me in the East India Service. He refused bluntly, declaring that he did not desire any member of his family to fail twice in public examinations ; and that even did I succeed in scraping through, the chances were that I should grow tired of India, as I had grown tired of Oxford, and would return by the first home-bound ship. He did not wish to exert his influence with the Directors for nothing, and he certainly did not wish to expend £400 upon outfit and passage moneys, in the same manner in which he had already spent a large sum upon college fees and expenses, in order to pander to my idle caprices.

“It was in vain that I pointed out to him the differences which exist between the examinations at Oxford, and at Addiscombe ; in vain that I represented to him that to renounce a profession and an income would be one thing, to withdraw from

an expensive, perhaps useless preparation for a profession, another. . . . . He would not listen to me.

“I was too proud to explain my real reasons for leaving Oxford, and the sacrifice which I had made in parting from my luxurious chambers, and my joyous companions. Thus I was saved a new mortification, for he would not have believed me.

“I had behaved very foolishly after I had been plucked for my examination, and as soon as my creditors had discovered that I had left the University, they sent in their bills. Each morning brought fresh reproaches, fresh degradations; each morning, letters in blue envelopes, with the Oxford post mark, streamed in; each morning, my father (who though he had been at the University himself, had never cautioned me against extravagance) exclaimed that I had ruined him.

“My blood was then hot and proud; I should have left that house again and again, for ever, without one shadow of regret, had I not had—a sister.

“O, Margaret, I cannot describe to you the holiness, the warmth of a sister’s love, holy and pure without harshness, warm and tender without passion, it excels the love of the mother, it surpasses even the affection of the wife. A sister

denies herself everything, gives up everything, her time, her amusements, to satisfy the whims of the too often ungrateful brother. And what does she want in return? With one look, one word, one little smile of thanks, she believes herself amply rewarded; and to obtain these from her brother, she will toil day and night. . . . . When I was a boy, like other boys, I was ungrateful, not through badness of heart, but through blind stupid ignorance. I could only understand those favours which were held up close to my eyes, and then crammed down my throat. I could not appreciate the silent kindnesses, and the secret sacrifices which she made for me every day.

“ But when I had become a man, when I had tasted the bitter cup of sorrow, when I had learned what it was to be wicked and to be unfortunate too, when my parents shrunk from me, and I was removed from my companions, I found one who would always listen to me and sympathise with me when I wished to speak, and who would always cheer me, and console me when she found me silent and gloomy.

“ It was not till afterwards that I learnt how she had interceded for me with my father, it was not till afterwards that I learnt how she had secretly intercepted many of the Oxford bills, and had

exhausted all her meagre pocket money in discharging them.

“When my poor sister died, I thought that my eyes would not be large enough to weep out all my tears; and yet there were moments when I would have given the world to have cried just one little tear—it would have done me so much good. I remained in my bed for days and days scarcely eating, scarcely drinking, scarcely uttering a word.

“The house was now dark and silent; dark—for the beautiful face which had once beamed therein, was now dark within the tomb; silent—for the voice which had once rung there so merrily, was now hushed for ever.

“My father and mother feared to lose me also; they hung round me in my illness, and tended me carefully, unceasingly. They were sorry for their past unkindness. I did not reproach them; I did not thank them; I could not speak to them at all.

“I thought only of one, I spoke only of one—my poor sister Jane!

“In that country house I spent two long dreary years. I had no friends; I had no pleasures; I had no companions but my thoughts, and they were sad company, Margaret. Yes, I was alone in the world; with no heart to repose upon, no ear to whisper to. The past terrified me; for it

recalled to my memory the girl whom I had deceived and whom I could not assist, and the sister whom I had ill-treated, and who was lost to me for ever; the present and the future alike terrified me; all was cold and dark. I often tried to hope that better days might come; but when I searched within my breast I found that all heart and hope had long since died away.

“ Soon after my recovery, my father no longer paid me any kindness. His manner towards me was even colder than before, as if he was ashamed of the temporary weakness he had shown, and was making reparation to his pride for the injury he had so done to it. A little while after, he bought a bill-hook, a saw, a hatchet, and a ladder. With these he went every morning into the wood by the house, and there having set the ladder against a tree he would prune or ‘shrag’ off the lower branches of the trees thus condensing their sap into the main trunk, and removing obstacles from the growth of the young trees which were springing up beneath. Thus he spent all his time, never returning before the dinner hour, and seldom conversing on any subject but that of his exploits among the trees. He often asserted that if he succeeded in ‘shragging’ the whole wood, he would die a happy man.

“Once, (and in my presence) a neighbour remarked to him that he seemed to think of nothing else but his trees. ‘What else can I think?’ he replied, with a fierce glance at myself, ‘unless it be of the son that is idle at home, or of the daughter that is rotting in her grave.’

“My mother never crossed the threshold of her own chamber. There either lying in bed, or upon a sofa with blankets piled upon her, she employed herself in reading pious commentaries, and in taking the medicines of the village apothecary.

“She sometimes sent for me, but it was only to repine to me about my father, about the servants, or about her own ill health.

“She often said bitterly, ‘If Jane was alive I should not be treated thus.’

“To speak of my sister in that manner, and in that tone, appeared to me like sacrilege; I shuddered when I heard it.

“Soon ennui, like a cold and icy rain, began to fall upon me, and to pierce through my very bones; I determined to seek some occupation if only to release myself from this terrible enemy. I began to study.

“At first I read the ancient poets and philosophers. I gained unalloyed pleasure from the first, instruction mingled with delight from the second.

I took the heavy with the light, and the dry with the luscious. I read Propertius, and Ovid, and Petronius Arbiter through in bed, with a candle blazing on the chair, and its flame-shadows flickering on the wall. And I read Plato, Seneca and Socrates by the winter fireside, or beneath the shade of the summer trees. And, like King Henry IV. of France I read them all in the English translation, and like them none the worse.

“Not content with this, I rode to Haley to receive lessons in German. I made rapid progress, for I was ardent, and I was not a dunce, although I had been plucked at Oxford. Having mastered the formidable Tiark, I dived with a glowing heart into the grand works of Schiller, of Fouqué, above all of Göthe. I read Werther again and again, and finished my Faust time after time only to recommence it with fresh ardour, and to find a fresh pleasure in each hour I passed over it. The gloomy character of these books pleased me; their dark grave fancies struck those strings of my heart which now must only echo to a melancholy strain.

“One day I resolved to write down in a book, not only that which I should do, which would be little, but that which I should think, which would be very much.



"I devoted my Sunday nights to this task which soon became the chief pleasure of the week. For this I forsook even my poet-readings with delight, for this I waited anxiously, through the morning of that day which my parents had taught me to dislike, through the long services in the cold damp church, through the silent and cheerless family meals.

"When the tea-things had been cleared away, and the candles had been brought, and my father had buried himself in his arm-chair, with a pair of candles standing on a table at his elbow, and a book of sermons in his hand—when nothing could be heard but the crackling of the wood-fire, and the rattling of the plates and the opening and shutting of doors, and the murmur of voices from the distant kitchen, I would tread softly to the closet where I kept my books, and taking the precious manuscript in its dark cover from the shelf, I would sit down and write upon its pages everything which was in my heart at the time; I reserved nothing, I arranged nothing. I emptied myself of all my thoughts, and all my emotions.

"Every Sunday night before beginning, I read over that which I had written the week before. Thus I compared my present ideas exactly with

my past ; thus I learnt the folly of human wishes, and the instability of human resolutions ; thus I succeeded in retaining many joys that I had felt, many tears that I had shed, which, otherwise, would have escaped me for ever ; and thus I now gain a real pleasure whenever I choose to look back upon these pages (as some day you shall do, Margaret), to recall the darker or the lighter moments of my past, and to be able to say, ‘ On such and such a day I was happy ; on such and such a day I was sad.’

“ It was by such means as these that, as time glided on, I felt less disposed to die, more willing to live, more able to hope. Though I had not ceased to lament my sister, though I had not grown reconciled to my life of solitude and gloom, yet the violence of my grief had abated, as the sea is calmed when the sirocco folds its wings.

“ My books did me more good still ; in them I read of men who had been misappreciated by their families, who had quarrelled with them, and who, having gone out into the world, had fought themselves into high positions, and had earned the reputations of *great men*. I now understood for the first time that I was a fool, an idler, a dreamer. I determined to be so no longer ; I determined to be *great*. I went to my father,

and informed him of my resolution. He smiled sarcastically. I told him that I was willing to adopt any profession he thought fit to point out to me, and that if he did not wish to interest himself to that extent in my behalf, I should trust to myself on that point, as I intended to do, for the future, upon all others.

“Three days afterwards, my father told me that he had obtained me a clerkship in a merchant’s office in the city, that the hours would be rather early in the morning, and rather late at night; that the office would be very dark, the windows being never cleaned, and might possibly be unwholesome as it stood upon the brink of the Thames; that the principals would be very strict, and that my fellow-clerks, would be very familiar, and, perhaps, a little ungentlemanly, but that of course I would not mind these things—great men never did.

“To his surprise, I accepted the offer. It was not an inviting prospect, but I had grown weary of my idle life. My father began to feel a little compunction, and tried to dissuade me; this only strengthened me in my determination. I now regarded myself as a martyr, and the idea was too new, and too pleasant to be relinquished.

“It was my last morning at home; I had

packed up everything in the house which I could possibly claim as my own. All the presents that had ever been made to me, from the silver cup which was buried in the plate-chest, to the 'Sir Peter Lely' which was the finest work of art in the whole house, (both these had been given to me when I was three months old) I stowed carefully away in my trunks and boxes, and I own that I felt a kind of malicious satisfaction in beholding the chasms in the bookshelves, and the spaces on the walls, and in reflecting that something would be gone besides myself, to remind them of my absence.

"It was my last interview with my father.

"'Well, Sir, since you say that you wish to go, go you may.' (This he said with an air of magnanimity and self-denial). 'But be pleased to remember that I have not driven you away from home . . . . I forgot to say,' added he, 'that your salary will be merely nominal at first, and although great men are generally above receiving any support from their families, you will oblige me by taking that sum of money from me, to which your office exertions will honestly entitle you.'

"I was touched, and was about to answer, when he continued with :

“‘The estate happens to be entailed upon you, as you doubtless are aware. Be pleased to keep yourself alive for its sake, as I prefer, if I am allowed to have any wishes upon the subject, that it went to one of my own name and family.’

“‘I will endeavour to accord with your wishes,’ I replied, adopting his own tone, ‘and permit me to hope that they may be gratified as speedily as we all desire.’

“These were the last words I spoke to my father, I do not think that we shall see each other again.

“As I was getting into the carriage, the postman entered the gate, and handed me a letter, which was edged and sealed with black. It announced the demise of a Sir Henry Saxon, and the conditions of his will, by which I was left sole residuary legatee. This was a singular caprice—a very fortunate one for me. I folded the letter up, and put it into my pocket without making any remarks about the matter. As you may suppose, it was not a circumstance which would alter my intentions about going to London.

“Arrived in town, the lawyers, (who informed me that owing to another death, there was only one man, old and childish between my

father and the title), supplied me with some money, and I immediately rented a suite of fine apartments in a fashionable quarter of the metropolis.

“I do not know whether I ought to be silent about that which followed. Perhaps, since I have told you so much, it will be better for me to tell you all. There will be at least no need for me to assure you how it shames me to speak about it. I must finish my story in a few words, and they will seem to scorch my lips as I utter them. I feel my cheeks burn even now.

“In a few weeks, Margaret, I became more vicious than I had even been unfortunate. I fell among a set of bad men, who showed me *life* as they called it. A little longer, and it would have been my death, as it has proved the death of thousands.

“When the sun had sunk behind the houses, and the lamps were lighted, and when all good people had gone to their homes; when the day had ended for business, and had commenced for pleasure and for vice, I, like a dark creature of the night would issue from my house, and plunge head-long into the vortex of debauchery and dissipation. Each night saw me with swollen cheeks, and reeling gait, and stammering words:

each morning saw me creeping home, pale, jaded and miserable.

“One night I met Rudolph Rauch, whom I had known at college: he, also, tired of vice, proposed that we should leave London, that we should travel, that we should visit the Shetland Islands. I agreed.

“Our preparations for the voyage were soon made. Rudolph painted the pleasures of the sea, the comforts of the majestic steamer in such glowing colours, that I, unacquainted with the Portuguese maxim which I have since learnt by rote and by experience, *Loda il mare è tienti à terra*—praise the sea, but keep on land—I, possessing weak nerves, and a land stomach, did actually agree to go by that filthy villanous steamer which I might easily have avoided as far as Aberdeen.

“We drove into Wapping, through narrow streets lined by tall and dingy warehouses, where we saw the white casks ascending by ropes and pulleys, and disappearing within the dark cavernous windows of the lofts.

“We stopped at wharf No. 1787, we went on board the steamer; bells clanked, and ropes creaked, and voices howled around us. The smoke poured upwards from the funnel, the

paddle-wheels foamed in the black waters, and the last cable was loosened from the pier.

“We passed along a watery avenue. The trees were masts, loaded with a tangled foliage of ropes: the borders were gloomy wharfs filled with wood-piles, and with the corpses of shattered boats.

“They hoisted a sail which heaved its white bosom to the wind, and which helped to bear us more swiftly on.

“Our horizon was smoke, through which towers dark and distant loomed mysteriously.

“The avenue widened; the wharfs were past, the houses receded from the banks and were seen only in the distance. Green meadows stretched themselves down to the water’s edge, the sun smiled forth—and three gulls, harbingers of the sea, flew round the vessel in endless circles, and uttering strange, mournful cries.

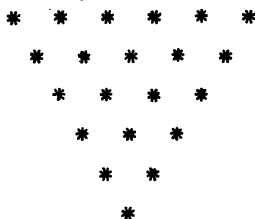
“By the time we had got clear from the river, a head-wind rose; I laid myself down in my narrow scanty bed: I drew the little red curtains, and for three days I slept and was ill by turns.

“When I landed upon the quay at Aberdeen, the ground seemed to heave and roll beneath my feet; all was haze before my eyes, and I could eat no food.



"From Aberdeen, after two days of repose, we travelled by train to Inverness: and from Inverness by coach to Thurso: from Thurso we sailed to Kirkwall: and from Kirkwall by steamer to Lerwick, the metropolis of the Shetland Islands."

"And from Shetland," murmured Margaret, with a blush, "from Shetland you will sail home, and forget. . . . ."



By the side of the sea, a man and a woman were walking together. Both were young, both were handsome, both were happy. They exchanged glances of love, and sometimes they spoke.

Once they looked into each other's eyes for a whole moment.

Her eyes were of a fine calm blue; you could look into them without their moving, as you look into the bosom of a shady stream.

While his, in motion, were bright and powerful

as fire ; in repose, they were dark and deep as a mountain lake.

He asked her something, in a voice which trembled, which was faint.

She answered him with one word.

This little word was a poem in three whole glorious cantos.

1. The burial of care, and doubt, and anxiety.

2. The resurrection of smiles, and rosy cheeks, and joyful hopes.

3. The happy future prepared for two dear hearts, which created for each other, linked to each other, were now dissolved and welded into one.

It was night.

In the Shetland summer they have no darkness : that which we call twilight, is there called the dim, and lasts all the night through.

So they could still see each other's faces, and the love which rested like sun-light upon each.

The breeze, cooled by its passage over the waters, murmured round them, and fanned their cheeks, and nestled in their hair.

The voice of the sea mingled tenderly with the lovers' words ; the moon bathed them in soft radiance.

And now they began to talk so madly, so rapturously, that their words would burn the cold paper upon which I write.

Come back with me, my children, to those days when your hearts were young, and your thoughts were warm, and your blood was fire—when you idolized the image which your souls had chosen. Recall the words which you uttered at such moments, and you will not ask me why I hold back those which these two were shedding on each other.

The language of the heart is sacred ; it should only be heard, for it can only be comprehended by the one to whom it is addressed. To other ears, cold and unimpassioned, it sounds like the raving speeches of a fool.

You have perhaps seen people dancing in the distance ; you have laughed at their extravagant gestures, and at their movements which appeared to you aimless, idiotic. But when you have drawn closer, and have come within ear-shot of the merry stirring strains, you have insensibly joined the crowd, and capered with the rest.

But I cannot hope with my poor tuneless lyre, to kindle within your breasts the fervour which glowed within theirs—to fill you with that flame which devoured them—to make your souls flutter,

and your brains whirl, and your bosoms burn. And without this power I could not dare to describe the wild fancies, the silvery nonsense these children prattle to each other, and how they wandered within the limits of an ideal land they had never known before.

I will tell you what they said when they had grown more calm.

They were sitting together upon a slab of rock, and gazed down upon the sea, in which their shadows were reflected.

Her hands, white and moulded as those of the Albanian women, he held in his, and pressed them as he spoke.

"We will turn over a new page in the book of our lives, and keep nothing to remind us of the solitary years we have spent till now."

"I am tired of rocks and water," she answered, "I often long to see those great woods of which you often speak."

"Listen to me, and I will tell you where we may live:—

"I know a spot where the trees are tall and green, and the ground is smooth as an English lawn, and the birds sing, and the brooks murmur sweetly. It is enclosed by trees on all sides

but one, and through this side you look down a beautiful valley, with its blue river, its meadows, its willow trees, and its cattle, and the wooded hills which rise on the other side, and are lost to sight among the clouds of the horizon. The air is fresh and pure, for it is the summit of a hill, the air is warm and perfumed for the trees shelter it, and a million flowers grow around. Here Margaret we can build our house."

"And we will have a garden too."

"Which we will fill with flowers only. We will have lilies, and tulips, and carnations."

"And we will raise a trellis work all round, and will cover it with creeping plants—with clematis, and jessamine, and myrtles."

"We will build a verandah that we may be able to sit out of doors when it is wet. Its pillars shall be of the knotty yew: we will shroud them in ivy. Its floor shall be made of coloured pebbles. We will have a fine porch which we can embower with a gorgeous green mantle, and we will twine white roses against the walls, till they shall encircle our windows, and perfume our chamber."

"We must have a dining-room," said Margaret, "where we can take our meals, and a drawing-room for grand occasions when gentlemen and

ladies come to see us ; and a kitchen and a back-kitchen, and some out-houses."

" We must have a coach-house and a stable, for at least we will keep a couple of ponies and a carriage to drive when we wish to go out visiting, or to the town."

" But we have not finished inside yet ; let me see we have a drawing-room, and a dining-room—ah, we must have another little room where we can sit together all day long and read or work."

" It shall be called ' Margaret's parlour' because Margaret thought of it," said Edward generously.

" We have yet to consider, Mr. Architect, where my parlour is to be."

" It is your room, and you may have it wherever you please."

" No, Edward, let it be a present from you. You shall build it, you shall furnish it, and I—well my dear I will receive it."

" You put its arrangements entirely into my hands?"

" Entirely."

" Very well, first it shall be on the ground floor ; it can then have a large window which will reach from the ceiling to the floor. Thus we shall have heaps of light, and plenty of air."

"We can also use it as a door on fine afternoons when we want to stroll into the garden, or on wet ones when we wish to sit in the verandah."

"We will furnish it with one large sofa, and with many easy chairs. It is possible that Margaret may sometimes be tired."

"Impudent creature! he wishes to say that I am lazy."

"We will have our portraits hung upon the walls—not those black dismal photographs which make people look as if they were going to die—we will have them done in crayons."

"I prefer them in water-colours."

"It is of little consequence to me what you prefer; however, they shall be done in water-colours if you actually desire it."

"Are we to have a table?"

"Yes, a table with a drawer on each side. One shall be yours, the other shall be mine: in these drawers we can hide away our mutual secrets."

"My drawer must be made without lock or key, if you please."

"There shall be a piano on which you shall teach me to play; the window ledge shall be filled with pots of your favourite flowers; on the wall,

outside the window and beneath the verandah, shall be hung a wicker-cage in which I will place two turtle-doves."

"And we will name them Edward and Margaret."

"Lastly there shall be a book-case to be filled with those books that we may give to each other, and a cabinet for those letters, and those tokens of our love which we shall soon exchange."

They were silent for a little while.

"Our house," went on Edward more rapidly, "need be only two stories high; on the first floor there will be our own chamber, the servant's rooms, and two state apartments, the best of which shall be devoted to your mother, who is now also mine, when she comes to see us, and the other to Hay Blance or to Rudolph Rauch, or to any new friend who may be coming on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Saxon."

"We ought to have two more rooms," said Margaret after a few minutes, finding that he did not continue.

"Two more rooms upstairs! have we not enough for ourselves, and our visitors, and our servants, little greedy one?"

"But we shall want some more rooms when



we have been married some time and . . . .  
and . . .”

She blushed, and he felt her hand tremble in his. Edward, who strange to say had not thought of these visitors, also blushed, for he was more a girl than a man in her presence. They both fell to thinking, and the thoughts of all the joys that were in store for them transported them beyond their senses.

“We are too happy, we are too happy,” said Margaret in a fainting voice. “Oh, it must be wrong to love each other as we do now. God can never allow us to enjoy so much happiness in this world of tears and sin.”

“If hearts upon earth,” answered Edward, “were only to be united in misery, do you think, dear, that the birds would sing so sweetly when they mate? Do not doubt God, Margaret, for has he not brought me to this unknown isolated land that we may both be happy.”

“I do not doubt God,” she answered gently, and raising her eyes to the yellow sky, “I do not doubt God, for I know that if He is cruel to us in this world, it is only that He may have a just reason for making us the more blessed when He takes us to Himself . . . . Promise me, Edward, always to trust Him, always to love Him, what-

ever may befall you, as you trust Him, as you love Him now. . . . . Say this, *I promise that I will ever believe in God's kindness, although he should make me suffer more than I have suffered yet, although he should make me suffer more even, than I should dare to think of now.*"

Edward repeated the words after her like a child, and promised, with his eyes fixed upon her face, and his hand extended towards heaven.

They returned by the hill-path to the house : they chatted merrily as they walked along, their arms clasped round each other's waists.

Mrs. Adie received them with a strange anxious look, as they entered the room : but they were both too absorbed by other thoughts to observe it. We can colour objects exactly as we please.

In the eyes of the murderer all objects are blood-red ; in those of the mourner, everything is black ; and in those of the happy man, dark is light, brass is gold, nettles are exotics, frowns are smiles, and gloomy clouds, glad sunlight.

And this look soon melted beneath the warm proud light, which streamed upon her from their eyes.

"Then you are to be my son," she said, as Margaret knelt before her, and, after a little

whisper, had hid her face blushing in her mother's lap.

Edward drew near and knelt before her too.

And she kissed her new son upon the forehead and placed her hands upon his head.

"Has anybody been here, Mamma," said the young lady, glancing at the decanters and glasses on the table.

"Yes dear, Hay brought—Mr. Rauch up here; but he did not stop long, and Hay is gone to bed."

As she spoke, she could not refrain from glancing at her daughter's face with the same expression of anxiety as before.

It was John's-mas Eve—the twenty fourth of June, old style.

Margaret remembered that it is on this night, that the peasant girls who are betrothed, test their own love and that of their lovers, through the medium of flowers.

It was singular that on this very night her love should have been plighted with another's, and the coincidence made her determine to follow the example of her superstitious, and untutored countrywomen.

Having accompanied Edward as far as the Lerwick Road, with a shawl bound over her head, after the fashion of the fish-girls who travel by night, she returned to the house across a piece of moor-land, where she knew that the species of gilly-flowers, denominated the John's-mass flowers, grew in great abundance. However, so many fingers had been at work there before her own, that it was not without some difficulty she found two of the flowers she required.

She carefully pulled off all the flowerets, and twisted the stem of one, in order to distinguish them apart in the morning, and said, 'This is the love of Edward.' She placed the other by it in a 'docken' leaf, and whispered 'This is the love of Margaret.'

Having wrapped them up closely in the leaf, which she had taken with her for the purpose, she laid them under a lump of turf.

"Now," she said to herself, "if these flowerets 'spring' in the night, and if their stems are covered with small yellow tipped hairs, our loves will be true and lasting. But if the stems are bare, the loves will be short-lived and false.

That very morning, Mrs. Adie had paid her daughter a compliment on her blooming look

and had admitted that she had been very foolish in fancying that her little girl had anything the matter with her.

But when Margaret had volunteered to escort Edward as far as the road, she had remonstrated with her on the danger of going out at night, and would not permit her to do so until she had wrapped her up very carefully.

"What can have revived her suspicions?" thought Margaret, as she undressed herself by the half open window, and, with her long golden hair falling over her bosom, and blown in all directions by the moist sea-wind—she leant out.

Then she felt a sudden chill, and drew herself in. As she did so, she remembered that Rudolph Rauch was a physician, and that he had been there that night.

"I have another sentinel over me," she said to herself, and carefully closed the window.

"Poor Edward," she murmured, "I must be prudent for your sake. Each minute that I save of my own life, is a minute saved for you."

She crept into bed, and soon fell into a confused dream, in which Edward, and her mother, and Rudolph passed by her in turn, and afterwards—Lucy Leddiard.

## CHAPTER IX.

## TWO EPISODES.

AN episode in the life of a foolish woman.

Who had wandered to the brink of that which she had known to be a precipice.

Who had stooped over those flowers which she had known to be poisonous.

Who had thought that she could balance herself upon tip-toe, and gaze into the black depths, and yet not fall.

Who had thought that she could inhale the sweet treacherous perfume of the flowers, and yet not press them to her bosom and her heart.

A sad dull morning with no sun, and with a cold wind.

A cold wind which moaned among the house-tops, among the trees, and over the cold blue waves.

A small narrow room with a ceiling which was low and dirty ; with a floor which was uncarpeted, unwashed ; with curtains which were old and torn ; with chairs and tables which were broken ; with one great bed which filled a whole side of the room.

Upon this bed, on the outside of the clothes, a young woman was lying. She was half dressed ; her gown was off, and she held it in her lap, as if she had been engaged in mending it. Now her hands were idle, and were clenched together upon her work ; her eyes were closed, and were shaded by their long black lashes ; one of her legs hung over the side of the bed, and with her foot she rocked a cradle which was placed upon the ground.

Although the silence of the room was undisturbed, except by the wind which moaned among the housetops, among the 'rees, and over the cold blue waves ; although the cradle still swung to and fro, a feeble moaning cry issued from within, as if something had warned the unhappy child of the life which opened out before it.

Roused also from her slumber, if slumber it had been, the young woman raised her head, and stared round her as if to ask what it was that had called to her.

The infant again uttered a cry ; this time it was louder, and more plaintive than before.

Stooping forward, and bending her arms over the counterpane, she snatched it roughly from the cradle, and took it into her arms.

And as if contented, it no longer struggled, but clung a little nearer and babbled ; and flinging its arms about, tried to take in tiny handfuls of bedroom air.

The mother darted a look upon it which was almost fierce in its intensity ; then she clasped it so tightly in her hands that it began to cry again.

"Ay, weep, weep," she whispered hoarsely, "weep away my pretty babe ; you were born on a tearful day ; if you had never seen the light, my baby, your mother would never have seen distress. Weep away, there are plenty of tears behind, and you will need them all before you die."

"Do you forget that you are a mother?"

This rebuke came from the dry white lips of a harsh-featured, squalid old woman, who, half sitting, half crouching, occupied a corner of the room.

"Forget it !" she said, letting the child fall upon the bed where it writhed, but did not cry, "Forget it !" she added with a scream, and bounding on to the floor. "Can I forget it while I have



eyes? Can I forget that we are living in a garret; that we have no clothes, no bread. Can I forget what I was once, and what I am now?"

And she pointed with a dry and bitter laugh to her hollow cheeks, and her thin bony arms, and to her bosom which was distended, and covered with broad blue veins.

"It is your own fault," said the old woman, "it is not your child's."

"It is not my child's fault," answered the girl, and she took it up tenderly in her arms and laid it back in the cradle. There she gazed at it, till the tears burst from her eyes.

"It is a love-child," she cried, flinging herself upon the bed, and covering her face with her thin white hands, "it is a love-child, a thing born for its mother's shame, and its own disgrace; a thing born to sneers, dishonour, and perhaps to the lowest infamy. Yes, let me reproach my daughter now, for as soon as she has learned to speak, she will reproach me."

"It was silly of you," said the old woman, "to run off in that mad way with scarcely any money in your pocket. You ought rightly to have made a friend of your aunt at the time. You couldn't hope to keep this a secret for ever, why make it a secret at all? And directly you were got over here,

you write to tell me to come over with what money I could, and not to say a word to any living soul. So what did I do, but off to the Haley Savings Bank where I've been lying by money these many many years, and with fifty bright sovereigns in my pocket, I crossed the seas to the land of the Frenchers. Fifty pound is a good bit of money, but if you once begin on it, it soon goes. It takes a long time for a servant like me to save fifty pound by honest ways, but it don't take long for a lady to spend it, specially with all the expenses of doctors, and such like. There! it's all gone sure enough, and we aint so well off for meat and drink and that, as we were at one time, but cheer up Miss Lucy. You've written and told it all to your auntie—how Mr. Saxon asked you up there as if the rest of the family had been at home, and how wicked he behaved, and how you are starving here without a penny to pay the rent that is owing. There, it's lucky that it's a French-woman isn't it? An English landlady, and we should have been in the dirt of the streets, or the prison cell long before this. Nay, but they are neighbourly people after all—the French."

"She will know my secret," said Lucy proudly, and walking up and down the room with her old

stride, "but nobody else shall. When I get home, I shall soon get all my good looks back again, and then I can marry the clever man, the witty man, the man who knows so much about women . . . . Edward Saxon must take the brat. I have had enough of it, and when I once get rid of it, I shall never want to see it again . . . . My good old nurse though, I shan't want to forget her. Cheer up, old lady; you told me to cheer up just now, and here you are drawing a face as long as the Atlantic Cable. Come, come, we mustn't have you draw anything but cheques for the future—cheques upon the Haley Savings Bank—cheques upon the account of Mr. Jameson, the rich man—Ho! ho! the clever man . . . . Why don't you laugh, nurse? Why now that you have put me into good spirits, I fancy that I hear the marriage bells in every gust of wind."

"Better be single," moaned the old woman, "better be single, for both will rue the wedding day."

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An episode in the life of a bad black-hearted woman.

Who hoped by a second sin to expunge the fatal consequences of her first, and by dragging another being into the pit in which she had fallen, by his shoulders to escape therefrom.

A bright cheerful day, with a blue sky, and a clear sun.

A small country town, with white dusty streets, and dark old fashioned houses.

A fine square built church, with a high bulky tower, and painted windows, and marble slabs.

A peal of bells which rang the last notes of a merry chime.

A couple of carriages near the door, the horses grey, with nose-gays in their ears—the postilions red, with nosegays in their button-holes.

A crowd of people standing round the porch—of ladies and gentlemen in broad-cloth and muslins—of artizans in velveteen and leather—of women in calicos and ribbons—of pilgrim-beggars in torn clothes and dusty boots. All were looking through the iron net-work of the church-gate; all were contemplating the sight which to all is more interesting than any other.

At the communion table, stood a man with a white gown upon his person, and a black look

upon his face. He was not in a bad humour. Quite the contrary, for he had been asked to the breakfast. But he was reading from the liturgy, and clergymen think it necessary to look ill-tempered when they are reading from the liturgy.

His words came forth in a harsh, unpleasant tone. This was not natural—far from it. The gentleman's voice, as God had given it to him, was excessively sweet and melodious. But he was reading from the liturgy, and clergymen think it necessary to speak harshly and unpleasantly when they are reading from the liturgy.

The bridegroom was a man of about thirty years of age ; he had an eye as cold and grey as the church wall, a nose as long and straight as the verger's rod, and a face which was covered with red wrinkles and blue spots.

The blue spots had emanated from a peppering which he had received, when out sparrow shooting in his early boy-hood. For the red wrinkles, he was indebted to the efforts of his parents, and to the mysterious co-operations of Mother Nature. The bride was a woman of three or four and twenty. Her form was tall and commanding, her head was tossed back with an air of pride, and almost of defiance, her lips were pressed resolutely together, and her eyes roved restlessly round the church.

Her face was pale but beautiful ; her arms were white, and finely moulded ; her bosom displayed more embonpoint than is usually found in young unmarried women.

When she uttered the responses to the service, her nostrils would dilate, her lips curl, and her eyes flash, as if she dared, at the very foot of the altar, to acknowledge how she despised the proceeding which it sanctified.

As they pass down the aisle, the crowd seeing that they would soon be out, pressed closer and closer to the gate, still preserving a kind of lane for them to pass through to their carriages.

The fair sex attendant paid very little notice to the bridegroom, and with the simple ejaculation, "Lawk ! what an ugly man !" they directed all the batteries of their eyes and tongues against the face and figure, above all the dress of the bride, and afterwards of her bride'smaids.

But there were some who did more than this.

Two ladies had secured the best places outside at the early commencement, and had waited, (one at each side of the gate) with all the patience of female revenge throughout the whole of the ceremony.

At the moment that the bridal couple issued from the church, the elder of these two ladies,

with a face which had seen better days, and a gown which hung from her two shoulder bones like a great coat from a couple of passage pegs, stepped forward and handed a letter to the bride.

She started, recovered herself, and accepted it with a smile of thanks, and a slight bow of recognition.

The other lady was pretty. Of her shape, it was utterly impossible to say anything, except that it was artificial. Before and behind, on the right and on the left, she was blown out and expanded like a paper bag before the lips of children. My heroine existed in the absurd age of crinoline, established by aristocratic skeletons—1858-9.

She possessed what one would certainly call a virtuous cast of countenance; a brow fair and gentle, cheeks soft as down, and eyes so sweet and so limpid that you might read, or fancy that you might read, all the secrets of her heart therein.

With one gloved hand she modestly pressed back a truant lock to its place, with the other she presented a letter (the fac-simile of her companion's in size and colour) to the happy bridegroom.

He stared at her, nodded side-ways, took the letter, glanced at the direction to see if it was for him, and crammed it into his breast-pocket as

coolly as if he had received it through the customary medium of the postman's knock.

The whole party got into their carriages and drove away to the hotel.

The crowd dispersed.

"They must have finished reading them by now," said the young lady capering down a by-street on tip-toe, and adjusting her dress, which had been rumpled by the crowd behind her, in a manner that was slightly indelicate. "They *must* have finished reading them by now. It will sharpen their appetites for breakfast, wont it, Clemmy dear?"



## CHAPTER X

## ON HORSEBACK.

“Tha tór Edda  
Okunn leif  
Thúngann oi thyckvann  
thrunginn sádum.

SONG OF KING ERIE.

“WHAT guillotine windows these are!” exclaimed Rauch, “they won’t stick half-way like they do in civilized countries; they are as heavy as lead to pull up, and if you let go, down they come with a crash.”

“Come along, Doctor,” said Hay, “the horses are ready.”

“I must contrive to open the window before I go out, or the room will become the Black Hole of Calcutta, plus Shetland peat-smoke.”

“Don’t you understand our windows?” said Margaret, coming into the room in high-feather,

(for the flowerets had *sprung*). "I will shew you the way. You see this cork and these two bits of wood on the sill; well, if you want the window ajar, you lift the sash and prop it up with the cork, and you use the long bit of wood, or the short bit as you want more or less air."

Edward was lying on the sofa reading *The Northern Ensign*.

"Here are some bad news for you, Rudolph," said he, "Madame Piolini of Lumley's is dead."

"Dead!" cried Rauch, thunderstruck.

Hay Blance remembered that it was the actress of whom Rauch had spoken to him some time before, and looked at him narrowly.

"She was acting at St. Petersburg," continued Edward, "and was in the middle of her part, when she was suddenly seen to thrust her hand against her heart, and to drop without a word or cry. Poor woman! she was very young, too, Rudolph. It is generally supposed that she fell a victim to heart-disease. Here take the paper and read it for yourself."

Rauch took the paper mechanically between his finger and thumb, and read the article which was headed. "*Remarkable death of Piolini, the singer.*"

"She is gone," said he calmly, "and I have lost another friend. Piolini is gone—well, there will be a biography of which 500 copies will sell, one more valuable addition to the wax-works of Madame Tussaud, between eighty and ninety expressions of regret among the *habitués* of the stalls, and Piolini will be forgotten."

Four poneys were standing at the door: a red-haired, bare-footed urchin had their bridles twisted over his hand, and four small whips under his arm.

It was Hay Blance's last day at home; he had asked for a riding party as a favour, and a riding party had accordingly been concocted.

"Do you call these horses?" said Rauch, "why you might as well call that little abortion there, a man."

"We always call them horses," said Blance. "The word poney is never used in this country, except by foreigners. Don't you like riding?"

"Yes," said Rauch, still looking with an air of disgust upon his steed, and upon the torn, patched saddle, and the rusty stirrups, "yes, very much upon anything better than a rocking horse. This is rather low in the world after the back of a dragoon charger: and I'm so afraid of killing the little creature, and having to pay for him."

They were soon fairly outside the town, Rauch

and Hay riding on first, Margaret and Edward a little behind. It is one of the great inconveniences in Shetland travelling, that only two people can ride abreast upon the roads.

Before they had gone far, they were met by numbers of women who were walking quickly towards the town. They wore neither bonnets nor gowns, nor shoes nor stockings, but a black petticoat, and a white upper garment of which I don't know the name, and which, with sleeves descending to the elbow and a loose body, can only be described as a cross between a night-gown and a chemise. Their heads were stooped upon their breasts; on their backs were yellow baskets, which looked like bee-hives turned upside down, and which were loaded with lumps of peat rising above the brim, and which were secured by strings tied over them from falling to the ground. Some actually carried extra pieces of peat wedged in under their arms, and all held worsted in their hands, and plied their needles as they walked along.

"What is the meaning of all this, Hay?"

Blance pointed to a hollow between two hills.

"You see those great peat-stacks over there. You can see some women there now picking peat,

and fifty others on the road going and returning. Those stacks are at least a mile and a half from the town, and the women of Lerwick have to walk there every morning of their lives, to fill their *keyshies* with firing for the day, and to carry them home."

"Why should they come all this way?"

"Because they cannot get peat any nearer. See how black the hills are close to the town. The whole country is peeled, sir—peeled of its bright green skin till the soft black flesh shows beneath. Turf takes a long time growing. Every year a fresh hill is peeled, every year these poor women have farther to go."

"Where are the men?"

"The men will 'flay the muir,' that is to say they will take off the top layer of vegetating moss which is called the *feal*; they will cut the peats with their *tuskyers* or long narrow spades; they will 'cast' them from the depths to the surface, and afterwards they will stack them. They will do all this, which is beyond a woman's strength, and when they have done it they will make a great festival; and there they stop. Like the Indians of the New World, I have read of in books, who will hunt and fight with ceaseless perseverance and indomitable fortitude, but who

set their squaws on to jobs which would almost break their own backs, our Islanders will pass nights on nights of toil and danger to obtain a maintenance for their wives and families ; they will brave tempests in the smallest, frailest boats ; they will sit fishing in winter, shrivelled up with the cold that pierces through their otter-skin caps, and their seal-skin coats, and their wooden boots—but they won't carry peat. And though they are often compelled to be at home for weeks on a stretch, you may see them slouching about the streets all day with their hands in their pockets, and their pipes in their mouths. Although, the Highland, Irish and Farœ men make considerable sums by the netting of coarse hose and seamen's frocks, there are only two men in Shetland who can knit, and they are ashamed to own it, and practise it in secret. They deem the art derogatory to the majesty of the Zetland subject, and consider it a more man-like occupation, to stand idle and look on at their wives who are not only carrying peat, but engaged in farm-work—hoeing potatoes, making hay, drying and grinding corn, carrying sea-weed for manure, and digging and harrowing the ground."

"Why not grow trees, and burn them?"

"It has been often tried, and has often failed.

Since no part of these islands are more than two miles distant from the sea, the spray which mingles with a high wind withers up everything, even when surrounded by sea-walls as all our gardens are. Besides has not our great St. Olaf ordained that no trees shall grow here any more. Have you not heard how he asked the Hiatlanders whether trees grew in their country? They answered 'No,' for at that time a tax was issued upon trees. 'Be it so,' said he, and immediately all the forests which covered the hills sunk into the ground. And even now, in many parts, the logs and trunks of mighty trees may be found decaying within the moss. Then the poor Islanders lived wretchedly for many years, with no fire but the sun, which in winter sets so soon after it rises, that the whole season seems little better than one long night; till in the ninth century, Einar, an Earl of Orkney and Hiatland, taught them how to obtain fuel from turf."

"Excuse my opposing the prose of science to your legendary explanations," said Rauch, "and permit me to inform you that trees decay naturally in mossy soils; the green leaves fade away, the barks peel off, and the trees in time cast themselves up by the roots. The moss overgrows the timber, and the tree-trunks sink lower an

lower as the ground becomes more and more moist."

They were now riding past fields of corn. It was harvest time, and the sight before them would have petrified an English farmer. The oats and *bear* (a coarse kind of barley) were half reaped, and laid littered about the fields. The ricks were half made, and uncovered by straw or canvass, were evidently left for the day.

"Your farmers," said Rauch, "know their trade well, don't they? Now you told me the other day that about two years ago a whale ran into a voe, and having been killed there, lay like a great black island in four fathom water, that a six oared boat was rowed down its mouth, and that it was a custom for the gentlemen and ladies here to ascend upon its back by ladders, and to do pic-nics on its shoulder *à la* Sinbad the sailor. Well, the whale is dragged on shore by piece-meal, and is divided among its captors. They sell the blubber, or flinch and boil it themselves; and then the bones and carcase are left to rot upon the beach, and there becoming a public nuisance, fields-full of invaluable manure are thrown back into the sea by the *farmers themselves*. They not only let their sheep and poneys starve through the winter on what they can pick up (beside diseases) on the



hills and the sea-shore—they not only object to making their hay till the end of August, by which time the grass is over-ripe, and then won't rick it till it has been rained black as a coal, for fear of its 'taking heat' in the rick, but also when harvest time is come, and the corn is ripe, and the weather fine, instead of reaping their winter bread, and getting it away safe, as quickly as they can, they cut a few slices in the forenoon, and then go tranquilly out fishing. A gale of wind in the night, or a storm of rain, and the crops are irretrievably spoiled. But that does not matter in the least, it is just the same the next year."

"It is true," answered Hay, "and the reason is, that though the hands of the Shetlander may be in the ground, his heart will always be away at sea."

They were now on the summit of a mountain; below their feet a turf valley, in the midst of which was a beautiful lake with calm blue waters, and a flock of sea-birds hovering on its surface.

The carriage road wound circuitously the hill; but there was a path broad enough to be called a bridle road by the brave, and steep enough to be called a precipice by the timid, which descended right into the valley. Down this road, the poneys, of their own accord, directed their steps.

Rauch, who thought of Miss Adie, was about to remonstrate, but checked himself, and contented himself with curbing in his poney, and permitting the others to pass him.

"Let us go by the other road," said Edward. But he had spoken too late; their ponies were already over the brink of the hill.

The Shetland ponies are tolerably docile, and tolerably sure-footed, but they are not immaculate, as they are supposed to be. A Sheltie once shied at a tree, (in Sunderland) and its rider was killed with the fall. However, this is scarcely a fair example, as a tree would necessarily appear as a frightful and supernatural object to any true-bred native of the country.

But Margaret knew that any attempt to force a Sheltie from the shortest and customary road, would be ineffectual, and turning a little paler, she twisted the bridle tightly round her hand. The ground was covered with huge masses of stone. These jolted her terribly; her cheeks grew paler every moment. Presently her poney, placing its foot on the side of a stone, stumbled, but recovered itself immediately. Margaret thought that it had fallen, and screamed. They were all round her in a moment.

"Why, Maggie," said Hay, "I have heard

heard you boast a hundred times, that no horse could fall while you held the bridle."

"I do not know what is the matter with me to-day," she answered, "I feel a little fidgetty."

Rauch and Blance exchanged looks.

Margaret wiped away the tears which terror had brought into her eyes.

"You talk about these brutes being sure-footed," said Rauch, "they are knock-kneed-stumblers, compared with the Ghoorka poneys of Hindostan, which climb like cats, and which would soon slide if there was any ice in the country for them to learn upon. There is a story told about one of them, which will give you a faint idea of what they are. A young Sepoy was riding over some nasty country in the hills; the animal's hind legs slipped over the edge of the precipice, and the rest of the body gradually followed, accompanied by that of the Sepoy, who closed his eyes, and resigned himself, with all the imperturbability of a predestinarian, to his fate. Presently, he found himself still in the air, when he ought to have been lying a crushed and mangled corpse at the bottom of the precipice. Bending his head a little to one side, he soon saw how it was. At the very last moment, when his mouth was scraping the edge of the rock. the

poney had seized hold with his teeth of some brushwood which vegetated on the brink. The Sepoy climbed back to *terra firma* over the neck and nose of the suspended animal, and once there, being a young fellow who had been brought up to athletic exercises all his life, he experienced little difficulty in assisting his noble preserver (by means of the left ear and right forefoot) to the same situation of security."

This made Margaret laugh very heartily, and as she cantered across a small plain of drained marsh towards a good-sized house on the borders of the lake, one could scarcely have recognized in the girl whose eyes were sparkling, and whose golden locks were tossing gaily up and down, the woman who, a few minutes before, had been trembling all over with fear, her heart quaking, and her face marble.

"This is Tingwall Loch in front of us, Edward, and the house is Tingwall Manse. The minister is a delightful old man, and—"

"Will be sure to give us plenty to eat and drink," put in Hay Blance, whose appetites were sensuous.

Leaving their steeds to graze on the grass by the gate-side, they passed through a kind of yard in which was an enormous stack of peat, three

piebald poneys whose chins reposed upon the wall, and who stared at them as they went by, while ducks struggled hysterically out of the way, and chickens screamed from between their feet.

They tapped at the only door, and a servant girl who appeared, requested them to go up to the drawing-room. Neither Hay nor Margaret had ever been higher than the dining-room before, and wished to know where it was. The maid, with a face which expressed profound contempt for their ignorance, complied by ambling before them up-stairs, and by showing them that her birth-day stockings slightly deviated in hue and smoothness from the state in which she had first worn them.

"The system of nudity applied to the feet and calves," whispered Rauch to Edward, "which seems to be quite the rage here, is very pretty in print, in paint, or even, on occasions, in an English bed-chamber; but—bah!—it almost turns one's stomach like that, doesn't it?"

The minister entered the room almost directly with a warm hasty hobble, and welcomed them heartily to the Manse, and lost no time in asking them at what hour they would like to take dinner. Having made them name an hour, he bundled out of the room, bawled at the servant, and

hobbled back with a lot of bottles under his arm, closely followed by the girl with glasses, and plates, and dishes piled with short-bread, burstane brunies, flour scones, and other home-made dainties.

The minister was not one of those hosts who sit over you, and watch you as you are eating, and who make you conscious by their anxious looks, and strained manners, and warmed up words, that they are afraid of your eating too much of the visitor's cake, and drinking too much of the drawing-room wine. No, like a good fellow, he fired away at his own victuals as he made the rest do, as if to show them that he did not keep one sort for himself and another for his friends, and it was only by the time that he had nearly choked himself over his own cake, that the Englishmen had an opportunity of inspecting his thin grey hair, his broad, deep-marked, almost repulsive features, (a sweet kernel under a rough shell), the thick black silk handkerchief which was tied in a singular fashion round his neck, and his suit of rusty black, stained in many places into invisible green.

"This is like the hospitality one reads of in books," exclaimed Rauch, as, after some difficulty, they succeeded in getting out of the house to stretch their legs for a little while before dinner.

"I was very near accusing your countrymen of inhospitality, Miss Adie, as well as of most other vices. But this has brought them round three points in my esteem."

"Lerwick," she answered, "has grown a little English of late, and therefore behaves coldly to strangers; but I think that if you were to travel through Shetland, you would meet with the same kind reception from the Manse to the hovel."

"Heaven forbid that I should make the experiment. The little tour I did make was quite sufficient for me. Hay and I went down to Coninsburgh after a few miserable snipe, and the treatment we received was of the most extraordinary description. We had changed our minds about going home that night, having some wretched intentions about sea-trout; it was night, and it was raining. At three different cottages we implored a night's lodging, offering to pay liberally for the hospitality, and three different doors were consecutively shut in our faces. Soaked and despondent we tried one more, and after a deal of grumbling they let us in, and gave us one bad mattress for the two. Well, I was fool enough to suppose that they would let us have our dreams out in peace. I was

deceived. It was as dark as pitch when the old woman, who had evidently kept herself awake all night for the purpose, woke us up, and with a most imposing gesture said—what did she say, Blance?”

“She said, *myrkin i livra ; lurein i liunga : timin i gvestin i genunga*. It is dark in the chimney ; it is light along the heath : it is now time for the stranger to be gone.”

“She was glad enough, I’ll be bound, to get such an ill-looking fellow out of the house,” suggested Edward.

“No, it was evidently a set speech for occasions of that unhappy nature. She could not have done all those hard words in the time, if she had not been making a practice of it.”

“You have fallen upon the only district,” said Margaret, “where you would have been treated in that manner. The inhabitants of Coninsburgh are as uncouth, as the inhabitants of Unst are gay and dressy, and the inhabitants of North Mavin sober and decorous. And you were quite right, Mr. Rauch, in supposing that the old lady kept herself awake on purpose, and that the speech was a set one. In expelling you at the first glimpse of dawn, she was keeping up an old and inhospitable custom, which is yet held



as sacred among these people, and which has gained for them the proverb, '*as rude as a Coninsburgher.*'"

"However, we must not forget," said Blance, "how the women of Coninsburgh once armed themselves with pitch-forks and tuskyers, and rescued their brothers and husbands from the hands of a press-gang."

"Hay made up for the discomfort I endured at Coninsburgh," said Rauch, "by taking me to a Foy. A Foy, Edward, is a feast of gladness, in which the fishermen join with their wives and families, boats' crew by boats' crew, at the close of the herring season. The season is not quite over yet, so Hay tells me; but this crew had been lucky, and had done all they meant doing before any of the rest. They gave us *bear* broth, pickled pork and cabbage, and hotch-potch. At the end of the meal, the white-headed man who sat at the end of the table, rose and gave the old time-honoured toast. *The Lord open the mouths of the grey-fish, and hold his hand about our corn.*"

"The grey-fish," explained Blance, "are those little sillachs which you caught such numbers of the other evening. Upon these, the Shetlanders live all through the winter, and which only on

Christmas day, and at weddings, are inadmissible at the cotter's table. The white fish are the ling and cod."

"I am ashamed to say," added Margaret, "that they also live upon wrecks in great measure, upon the ships that are cast by the winter storms upon these shores. The peasants will not steal the linen that is left to dry all night upon the rocks, they will not enter the doors of the cottages which are always left open, but they seem to consider wrecked ships and their cargo as their own exclusive property."

"To be sure they do," said the indefatigable Rauch, "just in the same way as schoolboys rob orchards, as German students *shoot geese*, (*i. e.* commit petty larcenies), as lodging-house landladies take tea and sugar, and as young Englishmen obtain goods from their tradesmen without intending to pay for them. Custom has sanctified it all, and they all forget that they are stealing."

Rauch having delivered himself of this shell, proposed that they should get into Mr. Bruce's boat, and row about on the loch. Margaret would not go. When asked her reasons, she stammered, looked red and confused, and acknowledged that she had had superstitions about Tingwall Loch—more she would not say. They

went in doors, and were welcomed with the information that dinner was ready.

They dined off hotch-potch and tusk, a fish unknown in the English markets, but for which Shetland is as famous among Scotch epicureans, as is Greenwich for whitebait, Yarmouth for bloaters, and Plymouth for John Dorics. Besides this, there was a dish placed before Hay Blance which made that young man (who was a bit of a gourmand in his way,) grin with pleasure, when he saw that it was *croppin moggies*, a treat which Mrs. Adie never admitted at her table, except under circumstances of a grand and solemn nature. It was made of the liver of the cod, compounded in some peculiar manner with spice and flour boiled in the fish's stomach. A variety of other piscatorial dainties were scattered over the table; *liver huddocks*, (haddocks stuffed with liver and broiled); *stapp* (the liver and head divested of bones and beat up with pepper and salt;) and *scur skate*, (fish dried and hung out in the air till they had acquired a game flavour, when alone they can be relished by the true Shetlander.)

After the fish and meat, there came something which made the eyes of the foreigners twinkle, and their mouths chuckle with astonishment and delight. It was *cream*. Not a couple of tea-

spoonsfull of thick milk at the bottom of a small jug, as you get in England, but a noble glass pitcher holding nearly half a gallon of the richest and the best, and with which the host inundated the plates of his guests, till their helpings of rice pudding looked like white conical islands rising from a vast yellow sea.

Over the mantel-piece was a portrait of the veteran, who even at that time, twenty years back, had been an old man. Indeed, his features seemed scarcely to have altered at all since then, and his clothes also were the same. The cumbrous handkerchief was twisted into the same remarkable bow, and Rauch went so far as to affirm that many of the stains on his trowsers might be traced into the production of the too faithful artist.

Many of you, perhaps, will have observed that after a certain pitch in old age, the face for five years, fifteen years, or even longer, changes no more. It would seem as if time had done its utmost in hiding their brows with wrinkles, and their hair with snow, and is then compelled to leave them as they are, till Death shall create the last transformation.

One window of the dining-room looked out upon the Kirk-yard, the other upon the Tingwall

Loch, and before the minister let them go, he led them to each of these windows by turn.

"In that yard," said he, "my wife lies buried ; in that loch, my sons and daughters were all drowned. Thus, whenever I approach the doors or the windows of my house, it is to view the grave of my sweet spouse and the sepulchre of my babes. And often, Sirs, in the long cold winter nights, as I lie awake upon my lonely bed and hear the wind which mourns upon the roof, and which creeps whispering through the ivy on the wall, I fancy that I am listening to my poor wife's sighs. And often when the waters are murmuring against the shore, I dream that I am listening to the voices of my children."

The four visitors of the Manse now took their leave of Mr. Bruce, and rode towards Scalloway, which was not more than two miles out of their way home. At first they galloped along very fast, Rauch urging them on deliriously.

It was curiosity—but not about Scalloway. Unperceived by the others, he kept his eyes fixed upon Miss Adie's face as they galloped on. Soon he saw spasms flit across her face ; he saw her gasp for breath ; he saw her press one hand against her side, and with the other clutch convulsively at the reins.

"I say, gently, gently young ten stone and a half. Please to remember my weight and the animal's size. It feels to me as if the poor little beggar's back was coming in two. He is gasping for breath like a trout chucked upon the grass. Let us go a little steadier."

Rauch pretended not to have seen the look of gratitude which Margaret gave him as he said this. With her it was involuntary.

"The rising town of Scalloway," exclaimed Rauch, quoting guide book in a tone of intense scorn, as they looked down upon a batch of small houses, with what is called the Castle rising from the midst.

Having dismounted, they went through a small gate and along a gravel path, under the ancient gateway upon which, was this inscription :—

"List ye to knaw this building quha began  
Lawrance the Bruce he was that worthie man  
Quha earnesttie his ayris and offspring prays  
To help and not to hurt this wark alwayis."

In spite of this request, no ruin could have been more complete. Only one part of the Castle still preserved the aspect of an apartment. Arches of stone, covered with a green coating of age, alone remained to tell of the vaulted passages and the lofty roofs of this once majestic fortress. Grass

now grew where heroes had once feasted, rock pigeons now built their nests where the swords of war, and the spears of the chase, and the helmets of the knights had once proudly been suspended.

Edward was delighted, "What a noble pile of ruins," he exclaimed. But Rauch thought otherwise. "You find poetry here," said he, "and you cannot find poetry in old men. Yet old men have hearts which beat, tongues which speak, and limbs which move, while these ruins are cold and motionless. Old men and old stones have both had their youth of poetry, romance and love, of feasting, of hunting and of battles. But I can extract no more poetry out of a place like this, than I can from a heap of dull cold ashes, with their last spark of fire burnt out a hundred years before."

Riding home, their steeds began to lag, and displayed a total indifference to whip-cord. Even Hay Blance had been unable to acquire the peculiar whistling note with which the peasants urge on their poneys, as the Arabs urge on their camels through the Desert with a song. Sometimes they passed children driving cattle, men slouching, or women drudging home with their *keyshies* on their backs. All these considered it a point of

honour, as well as of amusement, to speed the travellers on their lonely way.

"That high hill," said Blance, in answer to an observation from his companion, "is called the Knoss of Kebister or Luggie's Know. Luggie was a varlet or wizard, who used to live in a house called Kebister. Among other feats, when the sea was too 'coorse' and stormy for fishing, he would go to the top of the hill and let his line down through a hole in the rock, and pull up as many ling or cod as suited his fancy. He also used often, when out fishing with others, to catch fish ready gutted and cooked to hand. This hurt the feelings of his friends, who formed their own opinions concerning the fire over which these fish had been fried. So it ended with poor Luggie being convicted of witchcraft, and formally burnt at Scalloway.

Just then they turned a corner which gave them a sight of the sea-coast for miles.

Edward and Margaret were riding some little way behind, building their cities in the sun, and as happy as two bees on a summer day.

"Now," cried Blance, turning round in his saddle, and calling out to the former, "now you shall see a specimen of real Shetland life."

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It was a herring station.

There was a quay by which the boats must come close into shore, and an out-house in which the casks filled with herrings must be piled by thousands.

As is his rifle to the back-woodsman, his horse to the Arab, his chisel to the sculptor, so is his boat to the peasant of Thule.

As the harvest-time is hailed by the labourers of England, so the herring season is welcomed by the people of the North.

The women standing on the quay, watch the boats anxiously as they come sailing in. If their motion is slow, and their gunwales deep in the water, they know that the haul has been good ; but the boat which bounds along airily and bird-like, carries empty nets and sullen men.

These women are the wives, the sweethearts or sisters of the fishermen. Their hearts, therefore, as well as their eyes, follow those who work in the dim from star-light to star-light, and from sun to sun.

Edward and Rauch could scarcely recognise in the industrious fish-girls, the gay lassies they had seen 'kirking' the Sunday before, with their glaring bonnets, their radiant calicos, and their pinched-in waists. Now they wore the oldest and coarsest

of all possible attires ; for at this season they threw aside coquetry, and devoted themselves entirely to business. Head and feet bare ; *mutches* or dirty napkins tucked up close under their chins ; beneath which, ancient wrappers, and primeval petticoats surmounted by oil-skin aprons.

With one dexterous slit of the knife, they removed the whole interior of the fish which they flung aside, casting the herring thus gutted into baskets. These basketsfull come under the province of another band of women, who packed them into casks, a task for which no slight skill is wanted.

In the course of an hour or so, they were all bathed in the most sickening of smells. Their robust and finely moulded arms, naked to the shoulder, were bespattered with blood and entrails ; their rosy cheeks were smudged with dirt ; but their eyes still sparkled, and their teeth still shone, as they laughed their loud, clear, boisterous laugh. Their alacrity and good spirits seemed only to increase. They were taken round the waist, and carried bodily on by their thoughts and hopes of the good time coming. Their pockets were soon to be filled with hard money. The Foyes were at hand.

When all the fish which had been brought in that day had been gutted and packed, that

day's work was done, though in times of extraordinary success, their labours had to be prolonged by the dim, or if late in the season, by candle-light.

Now the women washed themselves, and throwing off their reeking clothes, donned their every day habiliments. Very few put themselves to the trouble of retiring to a secluded corner for this purpose. They effected the change in their toilets, standing on the top of the barrels, and bantering the young fellows who were sawneying in and out amongst them. The men were spectators, but not curious ; the women naked, but not ashamed.

There was a little knot gathered together in one corner, from which peals of feminine laughter, and loud masculine guffaws proceeded every moment.

Presently it opened, and a fine young man sprang into the space before the white barrels. His hair was almost as long as a woman's, and fell down upon his breast in thick clustering curls. His eyes had a merry and sometimes a wicked look, as they played hide and seek with the faces of the ladies who encircled him.

He wore the fishing costume of his country—a worsted night-cap of loud and varied colours ; a surtout of tanned sheep-skin covered his arms, and descended almost to his knees, overlapped by

an apron or kilt; and sandals of untanned cow-skin, called *rivlines*, upon his feet. From his neck, by a piece of pink love-ribbon, hung an instrument which resembled a guitar, but which only boasted two strings of horse-hair.

"This," whispered Margaret, "is the most wonderful man in Shetland. He is the most skilful fisherman, and most fearless fowler of the Northern seas. He is a poet too, and a musician. A musician—for he composed *Lord Kellie's Reel* of which you must have heard, even in the south; and a poet—for he wrote a long poem on the Seasons. Unfortunately, while on a trip to Aberdeen, he fell in with Thompson's celebrated work, and was struck so forcibly with the superior genius of the latter creation, that he threw his own into the fire and has never written a line since. But let us listen. He is going to play upon his *gue*, and perhaps he will sing as well."

Olè Olafson with a toss of his head, and a gay rejoinder to some female criticism, ran his hand over the strings of his instrument, and after a few preliminary touches, carolled forth to a merry jingling measure, the following song—

"Jockey said to Jeanny, 'Jeanny, wilt thou do't?'

'Ne'er a fit,' quo Jeanny, 'for my tochergood.

For my tochergood I winna marry thee.'

'E'ens ye like,' quo Jockey, 'ye may let it be.

“ ‘I hae gowd and gear, I hae land enough  
I hae seven good owsen ganging in a pleugh,  
Ganging in a pleugh, and linking o’er the lee  
And gin ye winna tak’ me, I can let ye be.

“ ‘I hae a good ha house, a barn and a byer,  
A stack afore the door, I’ll making a rantin’ fire,  
I’ll make a rantin’ fire, and merry shall we be  
And gin ye winna tak’ me, I can let ye be.’ ”

He had got so far in his song, amid the smiles and frowns of his fair auditory, when the tune was taken from him by a very handsome girl, who was leaning against a pile of casks with her arms folded on her breast, and her eyes dancing at Olafson with a saucy fire.

She smiled in order to show him her teeth, which were as white as snow, and then with a rich full voice—

“ Jeanny said to Jockey, ‘gin ye winna tell  
Ye shall be the lad I’ll be the lass mysel’,  
Ye’re a bonnie lad, and I’m a lassie free,  
Ye’re welcomer to tak me than to let me be.’ ”

This was followed by loud shouts of laughter, and Olafson making a rush at the songstress was intercepted by the other girls. The men joined in, and the scene promised largely to partake of the Bacchanalian.

As they rode away smiling, Rudolph began to reflect whether he had not done the islanders an injustice, in supposing them to be immaculate.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

WHILE Hay Blance was tossing in his cabin-berth, and Margaret, and her mother, and Edward were sleeping in their beds, there was one light which shone through the night and died not out; there was one man who laboured through the night and took no rest.

Bending over black pages with faint mutters on his lips, and with pen rattling crisply over the dry blue sheets.

If the hand reposed, it was in order that the eyes might pore; if the eyes were fixed and vacant, it was because the brain was hard at work.

When the candle-light grew ghastly, and the wan light of morning streamed in upon him from the East; when the stars were melting slowly away, and the sun was rising in a sky of molten gold,

• he closed his books and flung himself upon his bed.

In three hours he woke, sponged himself all over with cold water, and bathed his temples with eau de cologne. He sat down to breakfast, could eat nothing, but drank several cups of strong tea.

And now this strange man rose and walked restlessly up and down the room, glancing out of the window each time as he passed it. He sat down for a few moments, and glanced hurriedly over his vast pile of foolscap; then sprung up again and resumed his uneasy pacings.

At length he appeared to have seen through the window what he was expecting, for he started, changed colour, and took down his hat from a peg.

The servant entered at that moment, and reposing her limbs against the door-post began,

“Please, Sir, Mrs.—”

“I know, I know,” said he, pushing past her.

\* \* \* \*

Mrs. Adie and her daughter were sitting at breakfast, and discussing those little matters which mothers and daughters generally do discuss before marriage; where they were to live, how they

were to live, and so on. Mrs. Adie had remarked that as Edward Saxon was so rich, they might easily engage a French cook. To see her daughter married to a man wealthy enough to afford this luxury, and whom she loved as well, this was something which had exceeded the dear old lady's wildest matrimonial dreams.

While they were thus disposing of the future, as calmly as if it had belonged to them, Margaret coughed, and drawing her shawl of thin but warm texture closer round her shoulders, moved towards one of those snug little fires which they burn in Shetland all the year round.

This reminded Mrs. Adie of the visit they were to receive that morning. She wondered she had not remarked that cough before; it was unlike anything she had ever heard.

In order to carry out her plot, as it had been laid down, she was obliged to wait for a second cough before speaking.

Margaret coughed again.

"Maggie, love, I fear that you are not quite well to-day."

"Oh, nonsense, dear mamma; I thought you had done with all your suspicions."

"But you coughed, my child. I have never known you cough till lately."



"I left my window open the other night as I was undressing."

"That was imprudent; but you are pale."

"I am pale because I did not get any sleep last night."

And she gave a sly little smile at her mother, to make her suppose it had been only from thinking of Edward.

"These little colds ought always to be attended to; you wouldn't like to fall ill, would you, dear? And prevention is better than cure."

"As you please, mamma."

"Then we will send for a doctor."

"Oh, not that absurd Mr. Reekie; I am sure that he would only make me worse."

"You are quite right," said her mother warmly, "you would perhaps prefer Mr. McDowell."

"Who sent the wrong bottle and nearly poisoned a family; no, thank you."

"Who else is there," said Mrs. Adie pretending to think. "Yes, of course there is Mr. Rauch."

Margaret looked a little scared.

"Are not all the poor people full of his praises? Have they not all told you themselves, Maggie, how kind he is and how clever he is; how he seems to know in a moment what is the matter

with them, and treats them so tenderly and yet so firmly, with a soft hand and a strong will?"

"But he is not a doctor, mamma; he is a gentleman."

"He is not a regular doctor, my dear; but since he has cured half the diseases in Lerwick, he has at least earned the title fairly enough."

"I do not know why I should; but—but I am a little afraid of him, he says such bitter things; and besides, I have seen such an expression come over his face, mother, when he has thought that nobody was looking at him. I fear that he must have done something wicked, and—"

"Tush, tush, Maggie; we want the man's knowledge, not the man himself. I own that he is not the man I should select for your husband. Dear Edward is worth a hundred of him at heart, I know. But now we want a doctor, a clever doctor; and he is really the only man of science in Shetland."

"Very well, mother dear," answered Margaret, who, being compelled to yield, determined upon doing so with a good grace, "we will send for him as soon as you like, and we will have the dreadful business over. I must own that I should dread an interview with Mr. Reekie, for I find

it all I can do to prevent myself from laughing in his face; and I am afraid of Mr. McDowell who does not know arsenic from magnesia. O yes, let Mr. Rauch come, I do not think that my disease will exhaust his stock of knowledge."

Mrs. Adie sent a messenger to Rauch, as had been preliminarily arranged. Hay Blance had also had his share in the conspiracy, by making Edward promise to take an enclosure over to Mr. Bruce at Tingwall himself, as it was wanted there very soon. Thus he was got out of the way.

Margaret smoothed her hair before the glass, and rubbed her eyes with eau-de-cologne to make them bright. She also bit her lips, and rubbed her cheeks as she went down-stairs, on the physician's arrival.

"I have managed to hoodwink the other two easily enough: this will be more difficult; therefore I must take more pains."

They had shewn him into the room where Margaret and Hay Blance used to study together, and where Edward had been frightened by the strange talking of the parrot. He had never been there before. He stared round at the gas-lamp which hung from the ceiling; at the two small book-cases in recesses of the wall; at the

gloomy old-fashioned furniture; the dark sombre prints; and the large deep sofa which filled one whole side of the room.

Volumes of thick blue smoke rolled upwards from the moist peat, for the fire had but been lately lighted.

There seemed to be something ominous, something terrible about this room, its atmosphere weighed down upon him, he felt as if he was choking.

The door swung open, and Margaret Adie, agile as a fawn, bounded into the room; she greeted him with a clear and mellow laugh, and bantered him gaily upon the new relations they now resumed towards each other—those of doctor and patient.

She was astonished at his pale clammy face and his hand, which felt so cold and moist as she took it.

“Your mother tells me that you are not well, Miss Adie.”

“I plead guilty to a cold, Mr. Rauch; it was really very absurd for us to send for you; but I knew that you would not mind the trouble, and you are so clever that you would be able to relieve mamma’s anxiety in five minutes, while

a Scotch doctor would require five weeks for the purpose.

"Allow me to feel your pulse."

She held out her hand, pursing her face, when she saw that he was going to look at it, into an expression of comic gravity.

He pushed back the sleeve from her wrist and poised her hand between his fingers. In his other hand he held a watch upon which he fixed his eyes; she could see his lips move as he counted the beats.

His features were now tranquil—almost stolid.

He released her hand and returned the watch to his waistcoat pocket.

"I hope you won't ask me to put my tongue out, Mr. Rauch; it will make me look hideous."

He did not speak for a few moments. Then he led her to an arm-chair which was placed in an embrasure of the window, and requested her to sit down there.

She was now so situated, that the sun streamed in a blaze of light upon her face.

He stood close to her, and spoke in a low grave tone.

"I have several questions to ask you, Miss Adie. You will oblige me by answering them concisely, and without prevarication."

Margaret began to feel frightened, she tried to meet his look boldly, and faltered out a half audible assent.

"Have you ever had one of these colds before?"

"Yes, I have had slight colds."

"Accompanied with a cough or without a cough?"

"I do not remember having ever had a cough like this before."

"You have never had great illnesses?"

"No."

"Of what disease did your father die?"

"I cannot say, he died when I was a child, and my mother—"

"Never speaks of his death. As I had expected, now I have an idea that you are subject to a little giddiness occasionally—most young ladies are."

"Yes, I am—a little."

"The blood rushes to your head when you stoop?"

"Exactly."

"Your eye-sight troubles you now and then."

"My eye-sight is very keen and clear as a rule. I can distinguish objects at a greater distance than most people, and I can read the smallest print

with ease. But occasionally, when I am giddy, a feeling of sickness comes on, and with it a sort of hazy blindness."

"A sort of hazy blindness!"

"I mean that everything seems mist, grey mist, till I can see nothing, and when this fog begins to clear off, real objects are shadowy and indistinct, and dance before me and frighten me; bright colours flash round me, and if I try to read long, black spots run up and down the page."

"You dream?"

"Yes, often."

"You have had more dreams within the last six months, than you can recollect having had in your whole lifetime before."

"It is true; scarcely a night passes in which I am not tormented by dreams so frightful, that I should be afraid to describe them; and, indeed, I try my utmost to drive all recollection of them from my mind."

"You do quite right, you often wake up in the middle of the night drenched in perspiration, and oppressed with a feeling of indefinable dread."

She nodded without speaking. This interrogatory in which such system and such certainty prevailed, began to make her anxious.

"I have a few more questions yet," he said,

"and they are important ones. You have been subject for some little time past to fits of nervousness?"

"They scarcely merit such a high-sounding name," she answered, endeavouring to smile, "I am certainly a little fidgetty now and then."

"You find a difficulty in breathing?"

"I am naturally short of breath and—and—"

"I will save you the trouble of prevarication, Miss Adie, by describing your sensations."

"You were once bold and intrepid, you are now nervous and excessively timid. When you look from the summit of a precipice, you shudder from head to foot, your brain turns, you are forced to close your eyes, you clutch the feeble roots and the thin blades of grass to save yourself. In other things the same, a piece of broken ground when you are on horseback, a sudden gust of wind when you are at sea, the report of a gun, the terrible blackness of the caves; in short, all those little things which are the terror of weak minds, but which once you laughed at, even enjoyed, now appal and overwhelm you.

"When this nervousness attacks you, it is accompanied by pains near the heart and by a difficulty of respiration. Any unwonted exercise tires you, and robs you of your breath, a gallop on



horseback, a quick run down stairs, even the momentary flash of an idea, or a sudden turning in bed—Is it not so?”

She murmured to herself, “This is sorcery.”

Though he had not heard her words, he had derived them from the motion of her lips.

“No,” he replied calmly, “it is not sorcery, it is science; the fruit of experience, of hard readings, of careful watchings. But I have not mentioned the idea which is predominant upon your mind; it may leave you while you are with others, and are occupied, or while the memory of Edward’s face and Edward’s words are fresh upon the mirror of your thoughts. But by day, when alone and seated on the rocks, you look forth upon the black and boundless sea; by night when you watch the stars, or close your eyes, you wait for sleep upon your bed; the presentiment or rather the conviction *that you will soon die* forces itself eternally and vividly upon you.”

She still sat in the chair, her form bent almost double, and her hands clasped, and her eyes glaring in horror upon him.”

“What shall I do?” she half spoke, half whispered, “he sees into me as if there was a window in my breast.”

She threw herself upon her knees before him.

“O, Sir, do not tell my mother, do not tell Edward that I am really ill. I know that I am ill, I feel that I shall die. I have hid it from them all this time; they are so gay and so happy, why should I make them ill? Why should I make them share my pains? Why should I take away their sleep at night, their rest by day with useless complaints. They must know it all in time. O consent to keep this a secret within your bosom, as I have kept it within mine; permit them to love me a little longer, only a little while longer, without presentiment, without restraint . . . . Do not tell them anything . . . . . promise me. . . . .”

“For two months, Miss Adie, I have been aware that a dangerous disease was creeping upon you, I have known it almost as long as you have known it yourself, and I have pursued the same system of silence and deceit, which you have pursued. But since I have been summoned by your mother to examine your case, and to acquaint her with my opinions on the subject; since you are about to marry Edward, and since his health and his happiness will henceforth be only regulated by yours, for he loves you devotedly—”

“Dear Edward!” murmured Margaret.

“I must consider it as my duty to warn your

mother that your state of health requires immediate medical attendance. Do not be afraid, there will be no occasion to alarm her ; medical attendance is all that will be required to ensure your recovery from this illness. Dr. Reekie or Dr. McDowell will doubtless understand your case in a moment ; they will prescribe a certain regimen, and with moderate skill on their part, and moderate care on your own, I do not think we need tremble about you."

" But these two doctors have already declared to my mother that I am perfectly well in health ; how will she be able to put any trust in them ?"

" I confess that it would be difficult," answered Rauch, taking up his hat, " they do not understand your complaint, that is very certain."

" And if these pains of mine are not alleviated, if these presentiments are not removed, if in fact I do not get better."

She could read nothing in the cold impassible face of the man who stood before her.

" My mother," she continued, " has requested you to see me, you have consented to prescribe for me ; you have consented. Is this not true ?"

" It is true," he answered, " I have seen you ; and I assert that you are suffering from some disease of the heart or lungs, more than that I

cannot say ; it is necessary that you obtain the advice and attention of a professional man, more than that I cannot prescribe."

" But my mother—" she began in a tremulous voice.

" Your mother has deputed me your physician," he said, " and you are asking me why I do not fulfil my commission. I will tell you. There are certain relations which exist between doctor and patient, which I can only resemble to the relations which exist between the Penitent and the Father Confessor of the Roman communion. Indeed, the relations are stronger still—not only must the patient unbosom herself to the physician and expose her inmost thoughts, her secret emotions, but she must suffer him to take what would be freedoms, were they not precautions. These questions, these methods are indispensable in diseases of the nature to which you are now unhappily a victim. Without these, not I, not the most skilful surgeon whom the world ever saw, could learn that which is absolutely necessary for him to know before he can prescribe with surety. If I become your physician, you must endeavour to forget that I have ever been your friend ; if I become your physician, you must learn to treat me henceforth as an automaton, and no longer as a human being."

She did not answer.

Fearing that her virgin delicacy would conquer her fear of death, he hurried on to the other side of the question.

"It is my duty to warn you of this; it is also my duty to warn you that I, and I alone can save you; that if you confide yourself to me I can carry you safely through this ordeal, and preserve you for long years of health and pleasure."

When at length she spoke, her cheeks were pale, and her eyes were moist, and her voice was faint.

"Not because I am afraid to die, but because I know that my mother loves me, that my husband loves me, and that my death would be their death, I yield myself to you. I will answer those questions you may ask me; I will submit to whatever you may think necessary."

\* \* \* \*

Meanwhile the mother was tortured by the most terrible anxieties. I need not describe the emotions of a mother who has just lately learnt that an only child is ill, and who is waiting for the verdict which the doctor shall pronounce.

After the first ten minutes, she found herself unable to restrain her anxiety. She went outside and looked up at the windows of the little room;

both the blinds were down. She crept up to the door and listened; she could hear nothing but the confused murmur of voices, and the throbbings of her own heart. She tried to still this sound that she might hear better; and she held her breath and listened again. She could hear nothing.

She could not see anything through the key-hole, for the door was locked from the inside.

She wandered up and down the passage; for the minutes seemed to have grown into hours now.

At last the door opened; she ran up and caught Rauch by the hand.

"Well," said she, leading him into the dining-room, and making him sit down by her on the sofa.

"Well," he answered, "it has not got on so far as I had expected. I have percussed the chest, and find that her malady is pericarditis, one of those diseases of the heart which have baffled the faculty, perhaps, more than any other, and to which, perhaps, more than any other I have devoted my attention. But I have yet to learn whether this disease is chronic in your daughter's constitution or temporary. Have you ever caught her with that cough before? now answer me

candidly, or I shan't know how to set to work."

"I am certain that she has never coughed like that before in her life; it is such a singular cough, so harsh, so dry, so—"

"Very well; and I suppose that *you* have never had any pains about the left side; never found any difficulty in breathing?"

"Never."

"One more question, and I am satisfied. *Of what disease did her father die?*"

Mrs. Adie blushed and stammered.

"You must answer me, my dear madam. It is an all important point."

"He—he died from apoplexy."

"Do you mean, by dying from apoplexy, that he died from diseased lungs?"

"No," answered she sadly, "I mean, by dying from apoplexy, that he died a death of sin and debauchery. He—"

"Say no more, my dear Mrs. Adie. You are quite certain that his lungs were sound?"

"Quite."

"Then I pronounce your daughter's disease to be temporary. I shall be able to cure her."

"And had it been chronic?"

"No power on earth could have saved her."

“And now, is there any danger?”

“If you do as I tell you, there is no danger ; if you disobey one tittle of my injunctions, there will be a great deal.”

“Tell me what to do.”

“Make her take the physic I shall send her, at the hours ordained, unless she happens to be asleep. No violent exercise, no climbing hills ; as little running up and down stairs as possible ; when she does walk, she must walk gently.

“I strictly forbid horse-exercise. Carriage-exercise on the Ladies Drive I recommend.

“We must lower her diet to white fish, vegetables, farina, and slops. In a week or so, we can get on to meat on alternate days, and so on.

“She will probably suffer excessive thirst ; fortunately I happened to bring some soda-water over from England when I came ; this will be the best thing for her. No spirits, no wine, and above all no tea. She is extremely nervous ; it is the principal feature in this disease, and must be fondled not irritated. Remove everything that may tend to alarm or irritate her ; do not bounce into the room noisily, or speak to her suddenly in a sharp tone of voice. These little things are important.



“And recollect this, *she must not take cold*. As it is, she is five times as ill as she would have been if it had not been for some act of carelessness. She would not tell me what it was. Make her wear flannel next her skin, night and day ; guard against draughts ; and of course put a veto upon moon-lit strolls for the future ; in fact she ought only to go out in the middle of the day.

“Mind,” said he, as he was leaving the house, and held up his finger ; “there is quite as much hanging upon your shoulders as upon mine. Prudence is half the battle, when we fight against disease.”

He sat down on a stone-seat by the road-side, and rested his face between the palms of his hands, and his eyes upon the dull black sod.

“How this poor girl must have suffered,” thought he. “What agony it must have cost her to stifle and drive back these pains from her bosom without uttering a word or a cry, without changing a muscle of her face. This is woman’s bravery ; to my mind more great, more noble than the rash courage of the men.”

And as he thought, and thought, the remembrance of her great beauty flashed upon him like a gleam from hell ! He felt his cheeks grow

crimson, and his blood boil to his marrow, and his whole frame quiver with desire. He could stand no longer; he was driven to walk, to run.

“And this glorious woman is to be sacrificed to a boy,” he cried out loud; for now he could no more subdue his words than he could his thoughts, “to a boy, who has none of the passions even of the oldest man, whose heart is as cold as a fish’s roe, whose blood is as thin and as poor as water, and who looks upon women as he looks upon pictures, and statues. No, she shall be mine! she shall be mine. Without me, she would die; it is fair that she should live for me, and for me alone. She is his friend, that is all—and he makes her his bride. What for? To talk to her, to look at her—Margaret, you shall be my bride; but first I must save you!”

He threw his clenched hand upwards, and uttered these words which hissed like a serpent’s through his teeth.

“And I swear before Heaven that I will save you, that I may love and enjoy you.”

## CHAPTER XII.

## A TRUE LOVE AND A FALSE.

“ My heart rebell’d  
Against itself; my thoughts were up in arms !  
All in a roar like seamew in a storm !  
My reason and my faculties were wrecked !  
The mast, the rudder, and the tackling gone ;  
My body like the hull of some lost vessel  
Beaten and tumbled with my rolling fears !”

LEE.

ONE afternoon, Edward happened to be walking past the kirk. The door was open, and he went inside. There was no one there but an old woman, who was dusting the seats and arranging the hymn-books and bibles, with which the ledges of the pews were furnished.

He passed by another door into the burying-ground, and wandered slowly backwards and forwards among the tombs. Sometimes he paused for a few moments to read the verses or the texts, which were engraved upon the stones.

He soon became conscious that he was not there alone, for he had perceived the form of a lady, who was stooping over something at the other end of the cemetery. She was dressed in black.

“It is a widow,” thought he, “who is bending over her husband’s grave.”

In Shetland, the widow’s weeds are never laid aside, unless (as is seldom the case) she should marry again; and even then her garments are sombre and sad-coloured.

It would seem that it is only in this desolate and unknown land, that wives are afflicted by the deaths of their husbands. For not only do they dress in black, in memory of those whom they have lost; many also seclude themselves from the society of their friends, and spend the remainder of their days with their bibles and their God.

Although he felt that it was wrong to pry, or seem to pry into that reverie which is sorrowful, to interrupt the tears of the mourner who has sought the solitude of ‘the field of God’ in order to weep out her woes unseen, unheard, yet something pushed him towards her in spite of himself.

As he drew nearer and nearer, he felt as if

with each step he was treading on a new made grave.

He was now close behind her. She started and looked round at him. He saw a white oval face, and a pair of sweet blue eyes, which wandered up to his in surprise, and rested there in recognition. But there was an expression on her face, when she had first shown it, which bewildered, and almost terrified him. It was not grief, it was not pain, it was not resignation, and yet something of all three.

She rose from her knees, and he found that she had been nurturing a rose-bush, which some hand had planted there. She had been nurturing it; that is to say, she had been fondling it with her taper fingers, and smoothing the earth down by its stem, and disposing its fragile leaves to receive the glow of the sun, which even in Shetland afternoons is sometimes warm.

When he asked her if she had planted it there, and why, she answered that she had planted it three days before, and that she had chosen that spot, because there was a fine high wall which would protect her favourite from the salt sea wind, and from which the rays of the sun would reflect with double heat.

"And now let us go home," she said, "or

rather let us take a short walk on the cliffs. Mr. Rauch has given me permission to stay out till five o'clock. It will do me good to breathe the fresh air and the bright sunshine."

She gathered a flower in the green path behind the town.

"We have few flowers here," she said, "but we cherish those we find. Let us sit down, and I will teach you the language. And since the flowers in Shetland are different from those in all other countries, you must learn an alphabet which I have composed myself. You are now my pupil, Edward."

In a few days, she had taught him the whole of her little science, and he, an apt scholar, climbing those hills which were now inaccessible to her, hanging over those crags upon whose brink she could no longer venture; in two days he had collected a small but varied nosegay. And when she counted them over one by one, she found that each bestowed a silent compliment upon her; for each was a symbol of those virtues which women are said to possess in the verses of a poet, and the earnest rhapsodies of the true lover.

It was not long before he learnt how this girl thirsted for knowledge, and with what ardour she devoured even the driest and most prosaic matter.

He brought her his three pet books. They were "Paul and Virginia," "The Sorrows of Werther," and Mrs. Inchbald's "Simple Story."

She cried very much over these, and read them again, and again, and again. He brought her more books. She read them all, but appeared only to love those which ended sadly. Such is the case with most women; it is not that they prefer the painful by itself, but because it is only in pathetic stories that they find the heart of the writer; and it is only this heartfelt, earnest writing that women really love.

One day Margaret said to him, "What are these books which display such knowledge of life, of human nature, of human passions, of human hearts? Who are these men who develop such pure sentiments, who portray such noble sacrifices, and all wound up within a history which, whether true or false, enthrals me while I read it?"

"These are the wicked books," answered Edward, "which you have been advised or ordered not to read. They are novels, and the men who attempt to infuse fine emotions into the bare breasts of mankind, are worshipped by a few, but are denounced by the million as bad men—for they are novelists. Still all are not like these; bad men write, and bad books are published in the

shops, as bad men enter the church, and as bad sermons are preached from the pulpit. Let me choose your books, Margaret, and as you taught me the language of love from the petals of flowers and the opening of their leaves, I will teach you the language of the heart from the woes and the transports of those great men who have written."

When the Shetland winter has arrived, and the idleness and pleasures of the whiskey-shops have succeeded to the labours and perils of the fisheries, those couples who have been bethrothed during the spring and summer are duly and merrily married.

It is also customary for the bridegroom to incorporate the last three weeks of his bachelor existence with the lives and habits of his bride's family. For the three weeks antecedent to his marriage he dwells under the same roof, partakes of the same meals, and often sleeps in the same chamber with the woman he loves, a privilege shared by her mother, father, brothers and sisters, and in many cases by the family white sow.

In three weeks, the Adies with Edward and with Rudolph were to bid their adieu to Lerwick. This adieu with Mrs. Adie though, was to be only



an "au revoir." She had lived in Shetland all her life, and though her daughter would now be from her, though Hay Blance, also married, would now be from her, the same *amor patriæ* which binds the frost-bitten Greenlander to his snow hut and canoe, and which makes the starved English peasant often prefer his home of want and misery, to the new country which invites him from across the seas to warmth and plenty—and, perhaps the same force of habit which prevails among old Bengalees even at Brighton, and among old bachelors even when they become married, combined in determining this old lady to return to the dear bleak unwholesome country, and to content herself with annual summer visits to Hay Blance in Aberdeen, and to Margaret in England.

In pursuance with the old custom, she invited Edward to take up his abode in her house till the third Monday from that day.

So Edward spent his whole days and nights in the same house with Margaret.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of all exquisite pleasures, that of being awoke by music is the greatest, and yet one that is scarcely known. Margaret had been awoke in this manner one yule-day morning by Olè Olafson, who at the head of a band of minstrels came in accordance

with an old Norse custom to play a tune called the "Day-dawn," beneath the windows of their house. And when Edward came to sleep in the room next to hers, Margaret remembering how it had pleased her, rose every morning at seven, and every morning played some melody upon her glee, and sang one of those sweet northern ballads, which must be familiar to the ears and memories of many of my readers.

Before waking him, it filled his brain with delicious dreams. He was in rose-coloured palaces encircled by the perfume of flowers, the gurgling of streams, and the singing of birds. Then the palace would melt from him, and the streams and birds be silent, and he would feel the sound of a hidden voice shed over him like scented water from the taper fingers of his mistress. Cell by cell, faculty by faculty, his brain and mind would return to their powers of action. The voice would become clear, and become the voice of Margaret, whom only a wall of wood and paper divided from himself.

And there he would lie entranced, his eyes still closed, and his lips smiling. When she thought that he was awake, guileless as an angel, she would often come into his room. If his eyes were shut, she would kiss them till they opened ;

she would nurse him like an infant in her arms, and holding his head in her hands, would cradle it upon her bosom, or hide it all with her long and golden hair.

And he, like an infant, would lie still, caressing her, thanking her only with his eyes.

O, how they loved each other! From early morning till the late night they were never apart. They seemed to live upon the words, or even upon the looks they poured upon each other. They would often sit with their hands clasped together, their eyes blended into one long earnest gaze of love and worship. Beneath this eloquent silence, the hours slipped by quickly, almost unperceived.

When they looked back into their former lives, they wondered how they could possibly have existed; but they thought little of the dark past, they changed all their thoughts into hopes, for they turned them on the future.

Though their days were passed together, and passed so rapidly, they looked forward eagerly, and waited impatiently for the third Monday to come, and for the steamer to take them to their southern home.

When the sun was bathing its beams in the bright red waters, when the autumn night was falling softly from the sky, when the songs of the

girls might be heard from the beach, when the day's work was done, and everything was going home, Edward would press her hand with his, and would whisper into her ear in rich, full lingering tones :—

“ One day nearer happiness and love.”

\* \* \* \*

Meanwhile Rudolph Rauch, filled with mad and wicked thoughts, was preparing a scheme to gratify his horrible passion, to destroy the happiness of that man whom he called his friend, to destroy the happiness of that woman whom he thought he loved.

They all saw how pale he had grown within a few days. They ascribed it to his medical labours, and to his anxieties about Margaret's health. She herself implored him to take more rest. “ It is only selfishness on my part,” she said, “ for if you were to be taken seriously ill, what would become of *me* ?”

These words, and words like these from her mother and from Edward, stabbed themselves like knives into his breast.

Yet his passion still raging, overwhelmed him with torments, which soon drove the sight of these scars away. Before others he was calm. Before Margaret when he was alone with her, when he

was *a doctor* with her, his hand did not tremble, his cheeks did not redden, his eyes did not flash. But afterwards, when he had parted from her, and from them, he took as it were a velvet mask from off his face with his hand, and as a fountain released from the stone with which it is covered, by which it is pressed down, the secret emotions of his heart whirled upwards in a torrent of furious words.

He knew how deeply and sincerely she loved Edward. He saw how she watched him, scarcely ever taking her eyes from his face, except when his eyes began to rest upon hers. He knew that it was for Edward alone that she had consented to live; he knew that it was for Edward's sake she permitted him to approach her; and the consciousness that in her eyes Rudolph Rauch was nothing, and Edward Saxon all, enraged him and urged him on.

Passion is never to be surmounted by obstacles. It is a worm which must have food, and the food which it requires are these very obstacles. The object of passion which men call love, is a flower on the summit of a mountain; the higher the mountain, the more precious is the plant; the more perilous the path, the more rapturous the pleasure, and the more bitter the nausea which

succeeds. The summit is gained ; the flower is plucked ; its colours are radiant ; its perfume exquisite. He who has found it, falls into a trance of incomparable transport. He wakes in a few hours, and finds that it has died in his polluting grasp. It is scentless and decayed. He flings it away from him in scorn ; others pass by and tread upon it in scorn. The flowers that had bloomed by its side, and which had escaped because they were less beautiful look upon it in scorn.

As for the man who has not only blighted an existence, which is nothing, but who has endured dangers, fatigues to procure a pleasure which he does not enjoy, and who is equally ready to climb more mountains in order to arrive at the same dismal finales—satiety and spleen—this man who shows himself every day to be not only a monster but a fool, people admire and applaud. He may make enemies, who of course hate him ; but while hundreds envy him, it is singular that none can have the strength and the perception to despise him.

Such is passion. Love, real love it is impossible to define. It is so rare to find, so difficult to seize, that it is only one woman in fifty, one man in a thousand who is fortunate, or unfortunate enough to experience it. And having ex-

perienced love, they find it impossible to describe it. It can only be resembled to a tune of music, which we sing easily to our own hearts and in our own brains, and which escapes us as soon as we open our mouths to express it with our tongues. Yet as soon as any one plays this tune, we recognise it, we welcome it.

So I, who am unable to analyze the mysteries of a true love, can detect it in the eyes and in the words of others, and can carry home with me in my heart, and transcribe to paper the actions, and from these actions, the thoughts of such men and of such women as Edward Saxon and Margaret Adie.

\* \* \* \*

It was a fine bright morning.

Rudolph Rauch, pale and languid, after one of those nights of desire which exhaust the body, and which parch the mind, dragged himself wearily into the sitting-room. It was the last night that Edward was to spend at the lodging-house. He was not dressed yet.

Rauch sat down on a chair by the open window, and gazed sadly out at the sky, the water, and the distant hills. Everything seemed brighter than usual that morning, and he almost wished

that it had been otherwise—that the sky had been as clouded, the mountains as dark, the waves as high and foaming as his thoughts and passions.

Then he heard a bird singing. It was a long way off, and yet he heard it quite plainly. It was a sky-lark, the only songster of the Shetland Isles. Rauch rose peevishly to shut the window; he raised his hands to close his ears, but still sat, and still listened. The bird kept mounting higher, and higher, and higher towards heaven, and singing as sweetly as if it was already there. It was the same song which Rudolph had heard when he was a little boy at school, and which had seemed to lighten the hours of confinement. It was the same song which had always risen from the green orchard behind the house, to welcome him back to his holidays and his home. It was the same song which had mingled with his mother's words, when they sat together out of doors on the smooth lawn, and where she would tell him how tall and how handsome he had grown, and of all the treats which she had in store for him; and it was the same song which had warbled to him with such sweet sadness when he kissed his mother for the last time, and left her for ever with streaming eyes and a bursting heart.

Since that hour he had never heard a lark



sing, or, at least, he had never heard it as he did now.

And as he thought of his past, his pure boyish past, of the gentle mother who might be watching over him now—as he thought of what he had done, of what he was about to do, he sprang from his seat with a curse, and ran towards Edward's bed-room—not to confess his sin, not to ask for pardon, but to converse with the very man he was going to betray, in order to distract his mind from the remorse which, in this instance, forestalled the treachery.

The door was ajar; he looked in as he placed his hand upon the lock. He saw Edward kneeling at the bed-side, with his hands pressed together, and his lips moving. Some of his words were whispered, some spoken quite under breath, others out loud. From these, the Indian who had remained there almost petrified, learnt that he was thanking God for the love of Margaret, and for the friendship of Rudolph; that he was praying for them both; praying also that God would enable him to return the kindness of the man whom He had permitted to save Margaret from death, and who had been the means of saving him from a life of dissipation and sin.

He staggered back to the room which he had

left. "Is this the depraved young man," thought he, "whom I found in the sinks of town vice scoffing at all religion, and only worshipping the costly poisons of the wine-cup, and the painted harlots of the streets? It is Margaret who has saved him, who is leading him to Heaven. It is Rudolph Rauch, a wretch hardened in sin, who is attempting to destroy the work of an angel, ay, and the very soul of the angel herself."

Without kneeling, but with a face raised towards the sky, he prayed for help. And as he prayed, still looking up to God, he perceived a small speck in the distant clouds; and as it grew larger, and larger he heard the same song, which now appeared to him like a message from above.

Then the eye which had shone like the eye of a bird of prey was bedewed with tears, the dry heart of the *roué* melted, and a gentle languor stole, like a heavenly essence, upon the frame of the wicked and repentant man.

They all observed that after Edward had left him the lodgings to himself, he seemed to have grown into another man. His face, Margaret said, had quite changed; there was something

bright about it now ; it always looked as if the sun was shining on it. Mrs. Adie could not discover any change in the face, but she said the tone of voice was as different as could be. Formerly, there had always seemed something constrained about it, something harsh and unnatural, while now it was clear and ringing as a child's. Edward was the most puzzled of the three : prior to this, Rauch had seldom mentioned Margaret's name, except in connection with her illness, and had never once alluded to her proposed marriage. Now he did nothing all day but help them out of anticipated difficulties, and suggest ameliorations of unequivocal utility. He was always in a hurry to go, nevertheless, when he found himself alone with them both, and sometimes when he thought that the vacuum would be acceptable, he would take Mrs. Adie along with him.

At last they bantered him about this.

"Why, can't you understand, you geese," he said gaily ; "I have cured Maggie, haven't I ?"

"Well, you couldn't look happier if you had cured yourself," retorted Edward.

"That I call giving a man a black eye when you are stretching yourself, Master Ted," thought Rauch to himself.

If I was to write for a thousand years, I do not think that I could give you a prettier picture than this.

Two fond young creatures loving each other : the mother watching over them like a parent-dove, and the man who had conquered a guilty wish, now bringing her back to life in order to preserve her for his friend.

Thus it went on. The young lady stronger and rosier every day ; Rudolph lighter in face and lighter at heart ; the mother more happy, and more anxious about the French cook that was to come ; and Edward more and more puzzled to understand why this has been called a life of thorns and trouble.

Thursday night ; three days before starting. Rudolph was laying in a last allotment of Shetland millinery. Mrs. Tulloch was dressed in her very best that night. Her gown as nearly approached the night-clothes of the London ball-rooms, as the rigid decorum of Lerwick would permit. She had taken some toddy with Rauch before proceeding to business with him. This had thrown a soft rosy tinge upon her cheeks, and a merry light into her eyes which suited them remarkably well.

“ This will be the last scarf I shall ever try upon you, Sir.”

Her warm white arms were round his neck as she said this, and she did not take them away. (She wanted a large order.) He was sitting in an arm chair ; he passed his arm round her waist, and she glided on his knee in that charming involuntary manner some women so well assume when they do a thing on purpose, and try to pass it off as an accident ; her lips were pouted up towards him. He kissed them. Her eyes now rested upon him, now upon a two guinea shawl on the table, and which she intended him to buy.

But the arm which encircled her began to press so much more tightly, the eyes which looked on her began to gleam so much more hotly, the kisses on her lips began to grow so much more numerous and pleasant, that Mrs. Tulloch, like the crocodile who crawled in at a narrow hole and could not turn round to come out again, began to forget the Shetland hosiery and—her husband, and to droop her head nearer and nearer towards the scarf which she had not finished tying on.

There was a step on the stair ; a quick step, a hurried step ; Rauch sprang up, he thought it was the husband. It was not the husband ; it was a woman on the stairs,—a woman red, perspiring, and panting hard for breath.

She burst into the room and handed a slip of

paper, which came quite damp and crumpled from her hand.

These words were written in pencil :—

“Come. Do not lose a moment. Margaret is dying.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE ATTACK.

HE found her in her bed-room, lying upon a sofa. Her face was sallow and dusky ; her eyes were dull ; the veins on her cheeks, and neck, and forehead were unnaturally blue and distended. She gave him her hand as he came in, and received him with a mournful smile.

“My friend, you see that it is all over.”

“I see nothing of the sort,” he said cheerfully, and in a low gentle voice, in order that he might not startle her. He stepped lightly towards her, and took her hand.

“It is cold, is it not ?” she said, as with the acuteness of the invalid, she observed the start which he had not been able to suppress. “And my feet are cold, and my whole body is cold. It is the chill of the tomb which already begins to creep over me.”

These words were not spoken as I write, and as you read them. She uttered them in gasps.

“We must give you a warm bath,” said Rudolph, assuming the mellifluous tones of the professional physician, and which were given the lie by the dark shadows on his brow. “This is only a fit : we shall soon cure you.”

As he said this, he saw for the first time a hideous grey bird which was perched upon the head of the sofa, with its eyes closed and its head drooping on its wing. As he stared at it, it opened its beak and croaked forth some harsh and ominous words.

Margaret smiled.

Rudolph gave orders for the bird to be taken from the room, and for a bath to be brought up. He asked her if she suffered pain. She answered that her heart was beating so hard that it hurt her : it seemed to be springing up and down. As she was speaking, her lips became blue, her face dusky, a spasm shot through her frame, and she pressed her hand against her side. She said that a pain like fire had shot up from her heart to her shoulder, and had ran down to the elbow of her left arm.

After her warm bath, he dosed her with opium ; and in ten minutes she was fast asleep.



All this while, he had forbidden any one to come near the room except the servant.

Edward and Mrs. Adie had been standing in the passage for two hours, waiting patiently for him to come out. At last the door of the bedroom opened, and he stood before them with a lighted candle in his hand.

They questioned him with their eyes: their tongues were tied within their mouths.

He was looking dark and angry.

"Mrs. Adie, this may not seem a fit time for reproaches; but when such labours as mine have been, are to be frustrated by negligence—"

"O, sir! what are you saying?"

He took a book from his pocket.

"I found this book beneath her pillow; I found a cup of tea on a table by the bed-side. Last night she drank strong tea to keep herself awake, that she might read this horrible book."

Mrs. Adie took the book almost mechanically into her hand.

"This book horrible!" she cried. "O, Mr. Rauch, how could any one have supposed so from the title, and from the first chapters? I read them, and I read a story of two young lovers who were parted, and of a good clergyman, and who all lived in the tranquil provinces of England."

Edward looked at the title of the book.

"O, Margaret!" he exclaimed; "you promised me that I should choose all your books!"

"It is a book," continued Rauch, "that no invalid, I might almost say no woman, should be allowed to read. For I have known many women who have been ill for days, after reading those stern truthful descriptions of the agonies and the brutalities of the oppressed and the oppressors. With any one but myself to attend to her, your daughter would die; as it is—being unable to depend upon care on your part—I cannot promise a certain recovery. I told you that excitement would be injurious, perhaps fatal. You must be aware that melodramatic books written with any degree of power must cause excitement; and then having read three chapters out of a book which contains eighty-five, you feel quite certain that this master-piece of horror is a fit book for your poor sick girl to read."

"It began so quietly," protested the mother.

"And did I not forbid tea altogether? And now it appears that she may have it at night, (which is the worst possible time,) and as strong as she pleases."

"I cannot understand how she could have got the tea. She certainly did send for a kettle of hot

water, but how could I have supposed it was for that? And she must have stolen the tea-pot and the tea. O, why did I not go in and see her before I went to bed!"

"Well, go and see her now, madam. She is asleep, thanks to a dangerous sedative; but you left me no other alternative. I was compelled to employ something powerful to counteract—there, I will not say anything more. Go and watch over her for a little while. I will take a shake-down in the parlour, that I may be on the spot the moment she wakes up.

"It seems brutal to speak to a woman like that, Teddy, but it is like nasty wholesome physic, and will save her, and you, and Margaret from a great deal of future anxiety."

"Then Margaret will live?" asked Edward, almost breathlessly.

"O yes, she will live. We shall have to put off our voyage for a little while, that is all."

However, Rudolph was scarcely so assured as he pretended to be, and this the others suspected, when they saw that for five days he scarcely stirred from his patient's room. During this time, she appeared to suffer excruciating pains,

which, at first, the least movement, or the least noise were sufficient to awaken.

At the end of the five days she was very weak, but the pains had left her. She was allowed to have her window open for an hour or two in the middle of the day, to smell the flowers which Edward gathered for her, and to have a few pages read to her at a time from works of a genial and facetious nature.

In a few days more, the gruel and arrow-root diet gave place to sherry and soda-water, with those little dainties which Mrs. Adie knew so well how to prepare.

Three weeks after her first night of severe illness, Margaret was sitting on a chair in her little study, talking away merrily enough to Edward, who was standing over her.

"Shall I take you out on the Ladies Drive?" said he.

(In Shetland, there is one piece of smooth road about half a mile long; this is the only place in the country where ladies are said to enjoy driving, whence its name—the Ladies Drive.)

"O, no," she answered, "that tyrant of a doctor will not let me go out to-day."

"Why?"

"He says it is a Shetland day, and on Shetland days I am to stop in-doors."

"His opinion of the country has not changed then?"

"O no; he declares the country grows more and more unendurable; that his temper grows more soured as the night grow darker; and that he is only waiting for me to get quite strong and well to run away from it for ever."

"The good creature!" cried Edward.

"He has saved my life," said Margaret. "I sacrificed it through my own imprudence, and he gave it me back again. Yes, he has saved my life."

"And mine," whispered Edward.

"How can we ever repay him?"

"We must think over it after we are married, dear Margaret. But I think you will best show your gratitude to him now by getting well very soon, and so giving him license to depart. 'Going South' is evidently the wish that lies nearest to his heart. And tell me how you feel now. Does this physic do you good?"

"Oh, yes. The pains in my chest and side have quite left me, and there is just a little sensation about my heart which, without hurting me, acts as a kind of warning to me to be

careful. Then I breathe easily, I am not nervous, and I do not dream as I used to do at one time. O, Mr. Rudolph is delighted with the progress he has made, I can assure you, and declares that he has cured me all the quicker because he is in such a hurry to get back to his paradise at home."

"And you, Margaret?"

"And I sometimes dream that I am sitting with you in our little room, reading, and singing, and listening to the cooing of our turtle-doves in the cages by the window ; or, sometimes, that I am sitting with you in the shadows of the summer trees, looking down upon the green valley, and the willows by the river brink, and the cattle browsing in the meadows ; and then, as I begin to enjoy the shade, as the perfume of the flowers begin to rise upon me, as your voice, Edward, begins to speak, the morning light wakes me up, and spoils all my dream."

And she pouted her lips with a petulant air. But she could not pout them long, even in fun ; they soon sunk back into the calm, graceful smile, which, when Edward sat by her, seemed to be incrustated on her lips.

"I thought," said he, gazing on her with his fond, brown eyes, "that you had given up dreaming."

"I mean, such dreams as I used to have."

And she shuddered as she spoke.

Rudolph came in at that moment, swaggering along as jauntily as of old.

"Ah, Miss Margaret, that is all right; you are looking better already—never looked *very* bad though, did she, Ted? You need not go, my boy. Now then, feel pulse. Good. Now for the tongue, (Teddy won't look). Better. Got your flannel on? that's right. No going out on this national day, recollect; if you do, you'll catch cold; if you catch cold you'll fall ill; and if you fall ill you may get another doctor, for I won't stop here a moment longer than I can help. Ah! Mrs. Adie, you have come in at the right moment. Permit me to hand you back your daughter, a little paler, a little thinner, but otherwise all the better for her illness. I think that we have taken the mischief out of her system altogether now. Without this attack, it might have hung about her for years."

"Will she require any more physic?"

"Kitchen-physic that is all. You can give her any amount of good, wholesome food. We must make her as strong as we can; she has a long voyage before her."

"A voyage!" they cried.

"Yes," he answered, "on Monday week I permit my patient to leave Lerwick. Edward shall take her into Oxfordshire, and give her a few weeks of the English autumn. Then I command him to carry her to Italy, for in Italy there is a town called Nice; it is screened on all sides by noble hills, and the atmosphere is always the same—warm, sweet, and perfumed. In Nice there are no grey fogs, no bitter winds; and there, though sheltered, you will not be secluded; it is filled with English people in the winter. They have their riding parties, their dancing parties, and I am not certain that they have not an opera as well."

"How delicious!" murmured the young girl, with an askant glance of inquiry at her husband.

"That is an admirable suggestion," he said. "You know, Margaret, that even a London architect cannot build our little house in a moment, like the palaces of the Eastern Genii. We will go to England, and there we will fix upon our site, and will spend a few weeks together. Then, when the green leaves have begun to turn, and the flowers to wither, and the rosy fruit to decay, like the swallows, we will fly to a warmer land; and there, beneath that sun which is



always bright, beneath those skies which are always blue, by the side of those streams which are always soft, clear and melodious, we will build up our golden cities, and prattle of all the happy days that we have yet to come."

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE RED STAR.

“It may remind us of the eye of God which seeth into darkness.”

ONE evening, Mrs. Adie and her two children were sitting in the study. From the gas-lamp a soft and steady light was diffused upon the furniture, upon the books, and upon the faces of three happy creatures in that apartment, which by day was so gloomy, but which at night, with its dark heavy curtains, its rich wall-paper, and its warm carpet was comfortable, even luxurious.

Mrs. Adie asked her daughter, in a whisper, whether she did not think that Edward was looking very handsome that night.

Margaret glanced at him, as if she had never taken the subject into consideration before. But soon this glance became a stare. Her eyes rested

as if entranced upon his pure white forehead, upon his cheeks, flushed and rosy as the evening sky, upon his eyes which were now reposing in thought, and which were dark and fathomless in their beauty.

She stepped gently across the room to him, and placed her hand upon his shoulder. He started.

"Why do you start when I touch you?" she said. "You are not afraid of me, are you?"

He gave her a smile for an answer, but did not deny it. Yes, he was actually afraid of her.

There are some women even now in the world, who, without repelling those who flock round them, make themselves not only respected but feared. It is not boldness which does this, for the boldest woman that ever breathed has never made herself bolder than a man. It is not genius which does this, and it is not beauty. And it is certainly neither affectation of male vices, nor pure feminine impudence which produces the impression.

This singular quality is frequently to be found among invalids. It is, perhaps, that as we fear God because we love Him, we also fear those who are so much nearer to Him than ourselves.

I have noticed that those who have thus been drawn up towards God think differently, and view things differently from those who have long years of life before them. Their senses are opened and

quickened by the presentiment of death. They feel more than we do the desire to love something, and they see the necessity of loving it quickly. They feel a constant anxiety to enjoy the beauties of nature ; and God gives them the power to enjoy these far better than ourselves. For them, the sun has a warmth, the flowers a perfume, and the birds a song, unknown to us. Whatever be the object of their love, they will love better than we other men and women can love. They will find those virtues in men which the poets have sung, and which God has bestowed, although the world may have painted over and concealed them. And, till death chills them, they will love as all women would themselves wish to be loved. They will love and will die, dreaming that they could always have loved thus. They fade away in the spring of their lives, while the skies are still clear, and while the birds are still singing their songs of love.

It was thus that Margaret loved Edward.

\* \* \* \*

"I want to see the stars to-night, Edward. Draw back the curtains, open the windows, and let us go out on the gravel path before the house."

"It will be dangerous, will it not?"

"No ; for I will wrap myself up in this shawl."

"It is autumn now, Margaret, and the dim has passed; the sea-air is cold—the night is dark."

"The sea-air is mild; it is not bitter. The night is dark, and the stars will be bright."

He could not resist her.

They went out.

They heard the washing of the waters, and the cries of men; and those faint mysterious sounds which are heard at night alone.

They walked to and fro on the turf at the side of the gravel walk. They swept, spectre-like, along; their voices were hushed; their footsteps were silent; their faces were raised to the vast sky above them.

Margaret spoke first.

"On a night like this, when there are no clouds above to remind us that there are troubles below, when I gaze up at that calm and beautiful heaven, I reflect how thankful we ought to be that such sights as these are granted to such poor wretches as ourselves. And then, Edward, I fancy that a sky like the one we have to-night must be the smile of God. How glorious it must be to live within that smile, far away from pain and sickness."

Her eyes gleamed with a strange fire as if two of the immortal stars themselves had descended upon her. Now a new fancy seemed to strike her,

and she pointed upwards with her finger. "This is the floor of heaven : how beautiful it is ! those stars are angels, dear Edward ; they are watching over us now ; they are watching over us ; they are waiting for us ; ah ! now I feel as if my soul had left me to join them !"

He could not answer her, for his eyes were fixed upon her face. It was red and glowing.

Suddenly she stopped ; her face became pale, became livid. She pressed both hands to her heart ; she trembled all over like a leaf.

"Do you not see it ?" she hissed out, and clenched him convulsively by the arm.

And with those eyes, which now filled with tears, she glared up towards the sky.

"Do you not see it ? do you not see ? while all the rest are so calm, so pure, so pale ! Look at that star with its horrible red light : see, now as I speak, it darts forth lurid gleams ; it rolls in a halo like a grey cloud. Do you not see it, I say ?"

He looked, but could see nothing. Nothing, save the Great Bear, and the Charles Wain, and a million lights twinkling on the surface of the convex sky.

She stretched her arm out impetuously. Her long auburn hair flowed down upon her waist, her

eyes flashed horribly; the shawl fell from her shoulders upon the ground.

Again he looked but could see nothing. Nothing, save Neptune encircled by his moons, and Saturn girdled by a scarlet ring; nothing, save those sacred fires which people the unknown realms of space, and burn from horizon to horizon.

Still she cried and panted as she spoke; still she stood with her naked arm outstretched, and her hair dishevelled, and her tender form exposed to those frozen winds which, from rugged Iceland and from the snow-topped mountains, blow fiercely across the green waters of the Polar sea.

And he also looked and could see nothing. Nothing, save the gleam of the northern light, which, now rising, flickered across the heavens with its ghastly, spear-like rays.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE WHITE HORSES OF THE WIND.

THE next morning, Edward found her in the dining-room when he came down to breakfast. She did not rise to shake hands with him so briskly as usual, and her hands felt cold and clammy, and her eyes were red and dull.

He remembered her excitement of the night before, and paid little attention to these symptoms. At breakfast she eat little, and with effort. After the meal was ended, he told her that Rudolph had persuaded him to go out seal-shooting that day. Rauch wanted a holiday very much, and had affirmed that he should not be able to enjoy himself thoroughly, unless his old friend went with him.

Margaret gave an answer so listless, that it was no answer at all.



He asked her if she would prefer him to remain at home with her.

She replied that if the man to whom they owed so much wished him to do anything, he ought certainly to do it.

Then Edward declared he would not go unless she came to meet them on the cove by the east shore. Would she promise?

She inclined her head.

This silence perplexed Edward, who began to tease her.

Would she be sure to come? Was she quite certain that she wouldn't forget to come? He could see that she meant hoaxing him plain enough. Well, it would be a disappointment, that was all.

Margaret, with a little colour on her cheeks, and a little salt in her voice, retorted, that although falsehoods might be fashionable among young ladies in England, she herself was in the habit of speaking the truth; when she promised to do a thing, she did it.

Edward was a little hurt—a little frightened—and greatly surprised. Could this be the same woman who always consoled and softened him in his little moments of pettishness or anger?

A sudden thought fell like a hammer upon his

heart. Could it be that she no longer loved him? But he soon dismissed this thought, for he had only to recall the words which her eyes and which her lips had spoken to him only a few hours before, to feel assured that Margaret loved, and would always love him.

He joined Rauch at the lodging-house, and walked with him down to the boat, which was waiting for them at some little distance from the town, in a small cove in the beach.

They passed an old man who was perched upon one of the stone seats, which were erected by the side of the town road. He wore a red worsted nightcap, an immense jerkin of *wadmill* or Iceland cloth, girded round his body by a horse girth, and clumsy wooden boots—an article of wear imported into Lerwick ages ago by the Dutch sailors, and which are seldom worn but in the winter fishing.

“Eh!” said he, “ye’re bonnie lads—ye’re bonnie lads! Your faces are soft, and your hearts are glad. Eh! and your blood is warm. But it will na be so always. Faces grow brown, and then they grow white. Hearts grow hard, and then they grow weak. Young blood, hot blood, will a’ cool at last. Eh, sairs, we must a’ go home by weeping cross. Eyes must fill, and hearts must break, and a’ must go home by weeping cross.”

And he chuckled gleefully, and rubbed together his brown and withered hands.

"It is strange how that old man reminds me of the one whom we saw in Oxfordshire the winter we were shooting there."

"The same idea occurred to me," answered Edward. "In fact, there must be a wonderful resemblance."

They had now arrived within sight of the boat, in which Olè Olafson was at work mending a pair of stockings, as if there had not been twenty pretty girls in the Zetland metropolis, who would have given their ears for the honour of taking them off his hands.

Rauch glanced up towards Mrs. Adie's house, which was not more than three or four hundred yards from the cove.

"Who could ever have guessed," said he, "that I should have ventured to go out for a whole day without paying a visit up there—eh, Ted?"

"There never was such a cure. And pray, what was the name of the dragon whom you have so gloriously speared and trampled under foot?"

"An affection of the heart and lungs called —— bah ! the name is long, and the syllables are many. I will spare thee."

"Well, she has picked up another disease now."

"What may that be?"

"With any one but Margaret I should call it peevishness."

"What!" cried Rudolph, stopping.

"She was very cross this morning; but come on, Olè Olafson has finished his stockings, and has begun to hoist up the sail."

Rauch did not move.

"Did she seem at all absent, Edward?"

"I rather think that she did."

"A little restless too? Shifted about in her chair? Danced her feet up and down?"

"Just so."

"Ay, had a bad night, I expect—want of sleep—eyes a little red and heavy, weren't they?"

"Yes, her eyes were red certainly," said Edward, after a moment of reflection.

"Then I may as well just run up there and give her a dose of physic."

He started at a brisk walk. On passing over the shoulder of the hill, where he could no longer be seen by Edward, he ran as fast as he could.

The first thing he observed as he went in at the door, was a maid-servant crossing the passage with

a woollen shawl. It was tangled and dirty. He pounced on it like a kite.

“Where did you get this from?”

The girl said that she had found it that morning on the gravel-path near the door. There had been some rain in the night, which had covered it with dirt.

He entered the dining-room. Margaret was there by herself. She held out her hand with hesitation, and glanced at him timidly. He could tell by her eyes and manner that she had been doing wrong. Instead of releasing her hand after shaking it, he began to feel the pulse.

“You are not well, madam. Stop in-doors all day. Read no books. Keep yourself as quiet as you can, and take what I send you. I advise you to go to bed at once; but you need not, if you feel any very great reluctance to do so. You have been imprudent in some way, I don’t know exactly how; but I will have you all right by to-morrow, unless you happen to consider yourself a better doctor than I am, and do just what I tell you not to. And mind, we have awkward proverbs in our profession about relapses.”

She did not answer him a word.

He ran down to his lodgings, made up a parcel

of medicine, and packed it off by a messenger with a note to Mrs. Adie.

He found Edward yawning himself to pieces.

On stepping into the boat, they trod upon a small boy, who immediately rolled upwards into perpendicular activity, and assisted Olè with the mast and sail.

The wind was fresh. They ran up the great brown sail, the two sailors chaunting at intervals and pulling between the notes.

They had a side wind, and bowled along at a fairish pace. After sailing for some hours, they came in sight of a large black rock, which might almost have been called an island. And now Rauch and Saxon grasped their rifles tighter in their hands, and crouched lower and lower in the boat.

Now they were so near, that they could distinctly see the grass and moss which vegetated in the crevices of the rock. Olafson, who sat in the stern, with the tiller resting against his cheek, bent down quickly and gave a low "Hist!"

They peeped over the gunwale, and saw two black objects reposing on a low rock at the very verge of the sea. The rifles were cautiously raised, when a flock of large white birds dashed down amongst them with loud and screaming cries.

"The herring gulls watch over the fallen angels,"\* said Olè Olafson. "It will be better for you to land."

They scrambled up upon the rocks, and crawled towards the summit of the crag. Within a few yards of the apex, they heard a peculiar cooing or whistling sound. They stopped and looked at each other, smiling, for both recognized its cause. *It was the music of the seals.* Thus, these creatures so gentle, so beautiful, and so strong, sing to each other as they rest upon the rocks, which grow warm beneath the beams of the sun.

They stole a little farther on. They rested their rifles on the ridge of the cliff, and fired. They heard the wild screams of the sea-birds, and the rushing of their wings above their heads. They heard something bound heavily into the water, and they saw the sea-spray glisten round them, and something dark and shapeless stretched out motionless, lifeless upon a shelving rock beneath their feet.

They gave a shout of triumph, and with the assistance of Olè Olafson and the boy, dragged it with difficulty into the boat.

"Let us sail homewards now," said Edward.

\* The Shetlanders believe that the selkies or seals contain the spirits of the fallen angels.

"while our luck is good, and the wind fair. I promised Margaret that I would be back at four."

Olafson contemplated the body of the seal which was ten feet long, and quite black with age. One eye filled with exultation as he did so, and the other with regret.

He was double-tongued too, as well as double-sighted.

"It is six hundredweight if it's a pound, and will yield fourteen gallons of good oil," said one tongue.

"It's an unchancey brute, and will bring us na luck," said the other tongue.

"It will ha a bonny, bonny blubber," observed the first speaker.

"And may-be will bring down a storm that will drown us all outright," replied the second.

The wind had died; away the sun was buried under dark clouds; the boat rocked to a strong swell; the brown sail flapped heavily against the mast; the air was close and hot.

They were seated with their cheeks resting in their hands; and their eyes fixed listlessly upon the heaving waves.

Vague fears crept darkly upon them. At the same moment, each gave vent to his apprehension,



and the other's voice corroborating these presentiments each sank back overwhelmed.

"What means this rolling of the waves when there is no wind? when we pant for the very breath we breathe?"

No one answered at first.

Then Olè Olafson stood up. Bare-headed, bare-breasted he gazed proudly upon the waters below, and the still sky above—

And striking the strings of his gue, which was ever suspended from his neck, he sang :

Last eventide the sun went pale to his rest,  
Last night a yellow halo hung round the moon.  
And now the fish are rising to the surface of the waves,  
And the spiders are spinning in the corners of the beams,  
And the crows like hawks are wheeling in the air,  
And the sea-maws from the coasts inland are flying,  
And the swine are rubbing in the dust of the roads,  
And the dogs of the shepherd are sleeping by the fires,  
And the great mountains are looking nigh.  
The high grass is drooping and the wind is hushed,  
The storm is coming from the great sea,  
The dark cloud is rising over Rona's Hill,  
The wind will ride his white horses to the gates of Lerwick  
harbour.

And he pointed to the cone of a noble mountain.  
They saw that it was enthroned by a dark brown cloud  
which, while they yet looked, hid it from their eyes.

This cloud spread itself over the face of the

heavens, and whirled upwards towards the arch, darker and thicker as it flew.

They furled the sail, while Olè Olafson again sung to a mournful ominous tune 'The Song of the Storm.'

Now they could see a white haze descending the mountain, veiling the air, and sweeping towards them like a mist; it was sharp bitter rain, driven furiously upon them by the wind's breath.

They saw white patches of foam dashing towards them, now careering gaily, and flinging their sparkling drops towards the sky, now hissing fiercely along the surface of the deep.

These were the white horses of the wind.

The boat creaked and shivered beneath them; and bounded in the air, and danced savagely, with foaming prow, towards the land.

The three sat grimly clutching the sides of the boat, as she reeled in the depths of the great waters.

And the helmsman still erect, his hair blown wildly from his brow, and sparkling with the water from the sea and from the sky.

They were near the cove.

A black form was standing on the shore.

"My God! who is this out on such a day?  
A woman too!"

"We are punctual," murmured Edward, looking at his watch. "It is four o'clock."

"It is not a fish-wife. Her dress—it is a lady. O, Edward, Edward, it is Margaret!"

"It is Margaret," answered Edward, calmly, and he held out his watch. "You see that it is four o'clock. She promised to meet me at four."

"You have—"

He drove back the words from his quivering lips, and extinguished them in his heart.

"You would say that I have killed her. I know it."

"*Beach the boat!*" cried Rauch, "*beach the boat!*"

And he started up, and stamped, and gestured furiously with his hands and eyes.

The Zetlander smiled, and turned the prow of the boat towards the land.

"You Southrons," said he, calmly, "spend wicked lives. I advise you to pray to the guardian saints, and to the Holy Virgin to protect your bodies, and to save your souls."

When the boy saw what they were going to do, he gave a wild shriek, and flung himself at the feet of the sailor, so resolute, and so stern. He cried to him about his mother, and his sisters, and his happy home. But the wind roared above

his voice, and the waves rose on each side of the boat like walls.

At this sight, the boy uttered a faint cry, and fell upon the bottom of the boat.

Rudolph and Edward, mindless of danger, stood up in the boat with their arms wound round the bare mast, and their eyes searching through those clouds which had fallen upon the earth, for the black form they had seen a few moments before.

A flash of lightning gleamed through the heavens, and it seemed for a moment as if the whole world was on fire.

And by this terrible light of God, they perceived Margaret standing on the beach. She wore that dress in which Edward had first seen her. She held a bunch of withered flowers in her hand.

The tempest was increasing. The sky grew darker, the waves rose higher.

From the holm of Ska to the West Voe—from bleak Unst to the ridged Main—from the Mavin mounts to the Tingwall Marsh—from Romness Stacks to the Wild Noss Head—hissing from the frozen North the wind bore the salt foam from point to point, and from land to land.

It triumphed over the high sea-dykes, and withered the flowers in the bed, and the shrubs upon the wall.

All through the long night, the storm blasts roared, and yelling midway in the air, fought and struggled from the heights of the dark-vaulted sky, to the depths of the silver-crested waves.

Next morning at the ebb of the tide, a boat was found half buried in the sand, and the corpse of a poor boy, blue, and deformed, and covered with hideous gashes, was discovered by his young sister, wedged in between two sharp-pointed rocks, by the Cove, on the East shore.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE RELAPSE.

Two men were walking on the Lerwick Cliffs ; their faces were livid as the sky above their heads, dark as the sea, whose waves still rolled heavily along, although the wind had quite died away. Their eyes were blood-shot, and their words streamed out in tones of agony.

It must have been something terrible that could conquer the spirit of a man in the prime of his days, when his heart was strongest and hardest, who had enjoyed great dangers, and smiled beneath great troubles.

It must have been something terrible which could tear down a young man from that pinnacle to which, full of daring hopes, believing in the certainty of ineffable bliss, he had been raised by love, and which could make him believe that the

only great wish he had ever conceived, the only object he had ever really longed for, was to escape him at the moment he held it in his grasp.

\* \* \* \*

“Let us go, Edward, let us go ; and, by leaving the scene of this great misfortune, endeavour to erase it from our minds. If we stay, it will largen, it will crush us. To-night that steamer will bear us to our own country. In a few hours we may bid farewell to this unhappy land.”

And he flung his arm towards the vessel which was floating on the dusky waters, and which already began to vomit forth its black poisoned breath.

“No, no,” murmured the other. “While life remains, I also will remain ; I will stay and I will hope.”

“Edward you are mad. All hope is past ; I swear it to you. I, who night after night, while you slept calmly in your bed, was devising means to save her ; I, who had caught sight of those fatal symptoms, and had devoted myself to their study before the shade of a suspicion had crossed your mind ; I, who have expended the whole strength of my soul, and of my brain, to gain for her one year of life, to gain for you one year of

love. In a couple of moments, with a couple of senseless words, you thwarted the fruits of my labours ; and now you will not listen to me."

"I have killed her," groaned Edward ; "and you would have me desert her before she dies. No, I will remain. As for you, you have done all that man could do ; you have done more than man could hope to do. You are her physician ; you can go. And I—my God ! I am her murderer, and I must stay."

"O, my friend !" cried Rudolph, in a heart-broken voice, and placing his hand gently on his shoulder : "listen to me.

"When first I knew this girl, I loved her. I felt that this love was guilty ; for you had loved her before me, and she loved you also. I remembered that she was chaste and innocent ; I remembered that you were my friend, and that you trusted me, and with God's help I conquered this wicked passion. But I did not cease to love her. Ah ! what do I say ? I love her still !"

He was silent for a few moments. Then he brought down his thoughts and his words to the dull earth, and to him who listened at his side.

"Before long, I discovered that she was a victim to a terrible disease ; I determined, if possible, to save her life.



“I have told you that when young I had studied medicine. I did not tell you that I had thrown my whole mind into this science with all the ardour of my hot impulsive nature; I did not tell you that having slaved at it for some years, I mastered it as few men—as no men have mastered it before in such a short time.

“On examining a library in Lerwick the night after this discovery, as if by fatality, I fell upon a work which had been written in Latin by a Zetland sage upon this disease, and which, entirely unknown in the English collections, has obtained considerable repute upon the continent. With the valuable aid I derived from this book, I was enabled to outline a system which, if followed out, would preserve the patient’s life for a considerable period beyond its natural term.

“I found, on examining her, that, as I had expected, she was not destined to live longer than three months; but science, which battles with destiny and sometimes conquers nature, might, if undefeated by chance or negligence, prolong her life to as many years.

“My first intention was to reveal all, and to take you from her before it was too late. But I remembered the stubbornness of the human mind, and I perceived, also, that you loved her too deeply

to be able to tear yourself from her while she was yet beautiful, while she could yet love.

“So I determined to give her to you for these three years, for without me she would have died, as she is dying now.”

“But God has ordained it otherwise.”

“Let us then leave her to God, who will soon take her to Himself. By thus lingering, we add our own sorrows to hers; and we share that trouble which we cannot possibly avert.”

“We can avert it! She will live, Rudolph; she *shall* live. She is too young, too beautiful, too good, to die yet. She will not die; she cannot die!”

Rudolph folded his arms upon his breast, and spoke in a slow and a solemn voice.

“I have placed my head within her bosom. I have knocked, I have felt, I have listened at the door of her heart, and from within have risen strange murmurs, which tell a tale of disease, of danger, and of death.

“A cord is bound across her chest; she cannot speak, she cannot breathe; this cord will pierce in tighter and closer till she choke, till she perish. Her death will be accompanied with such frightful agonies, that her features will be changed till you will not be able to recognise her; her beauty will

leave her, and the sight of her face and form will excite your abhorrence and disgust. You may be able to pity a poor deformed woman who is dying ; you will not be able to admire her ; you will not even dare to address her by the name of the Margaret whom you had loved."

" Ah, Rudolph ! how little you know what it is to love as I love. I will not say what I think of you for trying to carry me from her, and for urging me to do a vile action. You think that I shall despise her, because her skin will be shrunk and her face distorted. You think that because her eyes will be less bright, her cheeks less rosy, that my love will be the less warm, the less constant ! Though the rose-leaves may fade, Rudolph, the perfume will remain ; though her features will be changed, her mind, her soul, ay, and her love for me will be the same. Will she suffer ? she shall lean on me, and I will share half her pains. Will she thirst ? I will bring her drink, which will seem cooler and sweeter than any she has drunk before. She shall look in my face, she shall press my hand, she shall hear my words when she is sick and dying ; it will ease her torments to know that her lover is by her ; she will at least die happy and believing in the constancy of men."

" It is true, it is true ;" cried the other. " But

I am a coward. I cannot see her die. I am a coward. I must go."

\* \* \* \*

The sky is darker ; the mountains fade away ; the stars, one by one, twinkle into sight ; black shadows descend upon the earth.

That dark mass, perforated by small and yellow lights, is Lerwick, illuminated by feeble gleams from the windows of the cottagers.

Those two red lights, that hissing sound, that hum of distant voices, and those subdued splashes of the oar, come from the steamer of the south, and from the boats which surround it with their living cargo.

Edward stood on a small and deserted quay. He watched the red lights, and the dim shadowy outline of the ship, and the boats which floated silently, and the distorted reflections of the stars which were dancing in the waters.

He heard a bell clank hollowly across the waves ; he heard the cries of the seamen ; he saw a flood of flame burst from the ship's side, and light up the harbour for a moment ; the roar of the gun, the waters foaming and blazing with phosphoric light, and the red lights passing slowly before his eyes.

He watched them till they were stars, till they

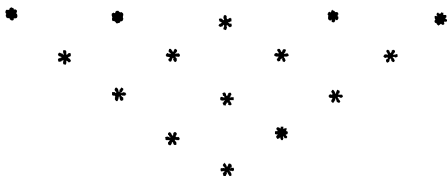
were motes, till they had vanished, as we watch that which carries a portion of our heart away.

“A little longer,” he sobbed to himself. “A little longer, and I shall be quite alone.”

He crept slowly, painfully homewards, his head resting on his chest, and his hand upon his heart.

He was met at a corner of the road by a man who, with haggard features and wild gait, was striding swiftly towards him. He seized him by the arm.

“I was wrong, Edward; I was wrong. It is all over now. We will lean upon each other’s hearts, and bear this blow together, and soften the last hours of this poor woman’s life. While I soothe the pains of her body with my drugs, I entrust the cares of her soul to you, who will be the best physician she can have.”



Day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, the disease crawled upon that weak fainting body, seizing it as it came.

Day by day, those who watched unremittingly

by the bed-side, by the sofa, by the pillowed chair, saw hope recede farther and farther from them.

She always complained that she was cold. Muffled in the warmest shawls, which the warmest wool in the world could afford, she crouched shivering over a fire which burnt at a white heat, and was still cold.

Twice Rudolph prescribed the warm bath. Each time that her feet touched the water, she fainted away.

Her face grew more thin and pale, and more anxious in expression as the pains gained upon her. She laboured and panted for her breath, which she could only emit in short and hurried gasps. Her voice had become very faint and low ; though still sweet, it was often reduced to a whisper.

In bed, she was restless even at the night-time. She could only lie upon her back, and, in her worst moments, she could only find ease in a sitting posture. She would pass whole nights in her arm-chair, with her head bowed down upon her hands and resting on the table, and the fire burning close to her side.

In this position alone she could sleep.

Every day, Edward read to her some chapters  
III.

from the Bible. He read with so earnest a voice, that her sick wounded heart would rise before the holy words, and her eyes would fill with tears, which trembled on their red rims, though they could not fall.

But at moments like these, when her mind became excited, or even when she moved her body, it was never without a terrible beating of the heart, and a dull, mysterious pain in her chest, her neck, her shoulders, and which extended to the left arm.

In her sleep she was troubled with frightful dreams. When reclining she was often tormented by fierce headaches, which lanced through her brain like strokes of fire when she attempted to move her head.

Thus she would lie for hours, restless, uneasy, suffering, yet fearing to change her posture, fearing to speak, endeavouring even to avoid thought.

When she spoke, her words were words of resignation, and sometimes of hope. But these words cost her so evident a pain, that they trembled as they listened to them.

She did not fear death for her own sake ; but the look of compassion with which she regarded

her weeping lover, showed how she pitied him, and how well she fathomed his great grief.

• Often would this young man fling himself before Rudolph, and with streaming eyes and sobbing voice implore him deliriously to save her.

And he, in reply, would show him the mother, who, kneeling at the bed, with her Bible in her hand, prayed ever to God for strength and consolation.

“ Ask for a miracle, Edward ; nothing else can save.”

One day, she asked Edward to go to the kirk-yard and bring her news about the rose-bush she had planted there. He went there, and found that the wind had torn it from the ground by its roots, and had shrivelled up all its leaves.

When she heard that it was dead, she gave a strange smile, and did not say a word.

Once she became delirious. Through all her ravings she had but one thought, and spoke but one word. It was Edward.

Rudolph had succeeded in alleviating much of her pain by bleeding her, and by giving her opium and mercury in large doses. But soon these remedies began to lose their power. She was now attacked by convulsive fits, which grew each time more fierce and more prolonged. In an in-



terval of relief, he requested her to describe the nature of her sufferings, as it was only by learning their nature that he could hope to counteract their violence.

She spoke in a feeble, almost inaudible voice ; her words were uttered in spasms.

With her own words she sealed her doom ; with her lips she pronounced her own sentence of death.

She said that when these fits came upon her, she felt burning pains in her bosom and her heart. Her chest would not expand ; something within seemed to be stifling her. In one posture only could she breathe, and then but with difficult and fearful agony.

*It was the respiratory anguish—the last stage of the disease.*

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE CRISIS.

“ There is an order  
Of mortals on the earth who do become  
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,  
Without the violence of war-like death.  
Some perishing of pleasure—some of study—  
Some worn with toil—some of mere weariness—  
Some of disease—and some, insanity—  
*And some of withered or of broken hearts.*  
*For this last is a malady which slays*  
*More than are numbered in the book of fate,*  
*Taking all shapes and bearing many names.”*

BYRON.

EDWARD was sleeping—a restless sleep, which was full of dreams. A thousand visions passed before his eyes ; they had no form ; they had no substance. He could not understand them.

A mass of indistinct colours came floating upon him like a cloud. From the midst of these, beamed the face and form of Margaret. She glided towards

him. His eyes swam—his heart heaved with emotion.

It became dark ; a spectre in a black robe swept between them. Her face was calm and sorrowful ; her eyes were lifted towards Heaven. With one hand she waved back the white-robed Margaret ; she placed the other upon Edward's sleeping form.

*It was the third time.*

He woke with a start ; Rudolph Rauch was standing by him with a lighted candle in his hand.

He understood it all ; he sprung out of bed and put on a dressing-gown. There was no time to dress. He did not speak ; he could scarcely think. One weary sensation, the conviction of impending evil weighed upon him like a mountain of lead.

Softly into the sick chamber. The curtains were drawn closely before the windows ; the gas-light was burning dim and veiled ; and the flames of the fire threw their yellow gleams upon the shadowed walls, the dark furniture, and upon the bed, with its snowy sheets and heavy quilt untouched.

The air of this room, so warm and perfumed, would have made it to be supposed that it was a boudoir of love, instead of a sepulchre of disease.

All was motionless and silent, save in a large

chair, where, supported by pillows, in the attitude of suffering, a young woman sat gasping her life away.

Her body was bent forward on her knees ; the joints of this body so thin, that it was almost deformed, were swelled and red and painful. She laboured and coughed for her breath ; each time that she breathed she coughed up blood.

This lasted for more than an hour.

Soon those who stood round her, who expected her to be choked, to be suffocated, to expire, perceived that her form had become less bent, that she no longer spat blood, and that the expression of her face had become less anxious, and less distorted.

Soon it seemed that she herself became conscious of this change. Her eyes began to sparkle ; her lips to smile. A look of relief beamed upon her face ; it was mingled with astonishment, as if she was unable to comprehend a respite so unlooked-for, so delicious.

She drew a long breath, as one who had escaped a great danger ; she shuddered as those shudder who look back upon the precipice, on whose brink they have wandered. She spoke ; her voice was faint ; but her words were uttered without effort, and without pain.

"O, Edward—O, my mother—all my pains have left me. I breathe easily; my lungs are free; my heart does not throb. O, my kind doctor, God has then permitted you to save me. Yes, I am saved! saved for you, my mother—saved for you, my friends. How happy life appears now! When I was so ill, I had resigned myself to die—but now to live! to live with you, dear Edward. . . . . I am a little weak yet; I must take some sleep, and with my sleep banish for ever the memory of those pains I have endured."

Mrs. Adie took her all up in her arms; the burden which sickness had made so light she carried to the bed, and covered her over with the clothes, as if she had been an infant.

And she smiled back her thanks in a playful, baby-like smile.

"I can lie down now, mother."

The milk-white lids closed upon her eyes, and the long lashes shielded them from the light of the lamp. She fell asleep almost directly.

The mother fell upon her knees, and thanked her God in a long and fervent prayer.

Edward was too excited to pray. He sat down by the fire and stared into the blaze, while thoughts whirled through him till he feared that he was going mad. Mrs. Adie came to sit by

him ; she cooed to him every now and then. He answered her mechanically. His joy was too great to express itself in words. The mother's emotion was of a different nature ; she could not understand his silent transport ; she attributed his taciturnity to gloom and misgivings.

"Do not fear, Edward," she said, with the view of dispelling his doubts, "Margaret is saved. Do not fear. Heaven will bring back the sunbeams to her eyes, and the roses to her cheeks. *The crisis is past.* See how tranquilly she sleeps ; how regularly she breathes. She is saved. And, after this, Edward, we must be very strict with her, very strict indeed. We will have no more of these fearful illnesses. And we must be strict with you, too, Sir, for I do not mind saying now, that if it had not been for your teasing her to come and meet you in the storm—there it's all over now, isn't it? And she does not love you any the less for it either. When she felt herself recovering just now," said Mrs. Adie, sighing, "she spoke to you before she did to me."

And by one of those strange transitions to which the human mind is subject, this lady became jealous of Edward, and began to feel thoroughly wretched.

Two hours had passed like this. Edward, still

sitting before the fire, was dreaming of a certain little house, with its garden, and its flowers, and its trees, and of his wife who, restored to beauty and to health, was caressing him, and laughing to him—when he felt something touch him.

He started, as he had started from his sleep a few hours before. It was Mrs. Adie who had touched him, and who sought his look with anxious fluttering eyes, and who pointed to Rudolph with a trembling hand.

It was almost incredible that, at such a moment of happiness, they should have forgotten the man who had laboured so earnestly to procure it for them. But so it was. Absorbed in their own ecstasies, they had not exchanged a word, nor a look with the physician.

He was standing by the door; his face was gloomy and lowering; his eyes were fixed upon the sleeper.

They went up to him on tiptoe; they whispered to him. He answered by stretching his arm towards the bed.

They spoke to him again. Again he extended his arm with a grim and sombre air towards the bed.

Their eyes followed the direction of his arm,

and with his eyes were fixed upon the face of the sleeping girl.

Those two short hours of healthy sleep had already imparted a little colour to her cheeks. Her lips seemed less pale, as half open, like the leaves of the budding lily, they expelled her sweet and warm breath.

She was reposing on her left side. One arm was folded beneath her head; one arm was stretched out upon the quilt.

But while they were still gazing at her, they saw the colour fade from her cheeks, the smile from her lips. Her face, with wonderful rapidity, became sallow and dusky; her lips, and her finger-nails tinged with blue. Her breathing became rapid, and was expelled in sharp and hurried gasps. Long, deep streams of perspiration ran down her face; her features assumed an expression of anxiety, her eye-balls protruded, and her heart throbbed savagely and loudly.

A low crackling sound issued from beneath the quilt.

It was the last murmur of the heart before it died.

She awoke with a frightful scream, and cried—  
“It is returning!”



She sprang into a sitting posture, and glared round her with her blood-shot, frightened eyes. With her hands clenching the sides of the bed, with her body cowered forwards, and her knees drawn up to her head, with eyes expanded, and eye-brows arched, and nostrils dilated, and her mouth distorted with a sardonic grin, she awaited the excruciating agony. She cast round her one hurried and distracted look of horror, and anguish, and supplication. It came! it rushed upon her! She shrieked, and writhed. Now moaning piteously, she implored help in quick broken accents; now cursing the impotence of human aid, and speaking wickedly in her madness of pain; now drooping her head upon her bosom, she cried to God to kill her that her anguish might be ended.

At length, exhausted and expiring, she sank back upon her bed. They wiped away the tears from her eyes, and the foam from her pale and purple lips.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE END.

"Our heart is a little spark which being extinguished, our body shall be turned to ashes, and our spirit vanish as the soft, soft air."

My story is nearly finished now.

It was Winter Sunday—the last Sunday in October.

The thick fogs of the morning had cleared away, and the wind which had pierced them was lulled to rest. The sea was smooth and glassy. It was a fine and mellow autumn afternoon.

The kirk bells were tolling ; the houses of men were empty, while the house of God was being filled. The cattle and sheep were browsing peacefully on the hills. The birds of the sea were flying slowly home.

And on a sofa by the half-opened window, a poor soul was lying waiting for the last voice from Heaven, and for the last messenger from God.

Her features were more tranquil than they had been during the last few days, as if she no longer suffered, and her eyes were clear and limpid. But the veins of her neck and forehead were black and distended, and beat with strong pulsations. Her lips quivered as if she had the palsy, and her heart still emitted its loud and singular murmur.

Edward was kneeling by her, and was pressing her hand, which he could not warm, and which sent forth its rays of cold all through his frame.

A little behind him, stood Rudolph and the mother, thin and pale through their long nights of watching. As they looked upon the fainting creature before them, their heart's blood was dissolved into water, and was streaming through their eyes.

They were listening for the last words.

She spoke in a dull feeble whisper, which was often interrupted by a hoarse cough, and by gaspings for breath.

And before she spoke, she felt a hot tear fall upon her hand.

"Do not cry for me, dear, I am going to be made so happy when I die. The angels told me so last night. It is Winter Sunday to-day Edward. It will soon be very cold and dark here, but not

cold and dark for me . . . . The days are very short now . . . . The sun always sets soon on Winter Sunday—it is almost dark now, Edward—it was quite light just now.”

Her voice grew more faint and faint as she spoke. She sank back exhausted. And there she laid, already a corpse, though a little life still remained.

Presently they saw her turn her head as if she had heard something, and they saw a strange fire gleam within her eyes. Her whole face lighted up in a moment. She sprang up in bed and cried :

“ O, Edward, I hear the sea quite close to my bed—and the ringing of the bells in Heaven—and the voices of the angels. It is dark, it is dark ! I am frightened—do not go away—Edward—Edward—”

She fell back still breathing his name with her lips, though the powers of her voice were gone.

When Edward felt that hand tremble, and become ice, when he saw those eyes fixed, and that face turned into stone, he uttered a cry of terrible anguish, and flung himself upon the poor senseless corpse, which had once held the heart and soul of the woman he had loved !

## Epilogue.

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### I.

THE hairs on my head had begun to grow grey and my eyes dim, and the memories of the past had begun to fade, and the chill of time and experience had long since fallen upon the thoughts and feelings of my younger days.

And as I was seated in my study, thinking over trifles to myself, as old men do, and cogitating where my morning's walk and my morning reflections should be taken, a rap sounded at the door, and the servant entered with the post-bag.

Post-time in the country is the epoch of the day. For at post-time, we recluses are permitted to hear for a short time the voices of the great outer world.

At the sight of the first letter which I took into my hands, I was filled with inexpressible emotions.

The envelope was blue in colour, prodigious in size, and self-adhesive in manufacture.

However, that which had startled me was neither the size, the colour, nor even the construction of the seal, which in those days was an innovation; the handwriting was unknown to me, but when I had turned it upside down, I perceived that the post-mark was—*Oxford*.

There had been a time when an Oxford letter would have occasioned me an excitement of a different nature.

But all my Oxford bills, thought I, must be paid off by this time—ay, and half my old creditors gone to their country-houses, or the church-yard.

This thought called up many others, which had been making themselves cobwebs for years and years in the rusty corners of my brain.

I let the letter drop on the floor, and instead of picking it up, I leant my head against the back of my chair, and gave myself up to the thousand fancies which thronged upon me from the darkness of the Bygone.

First, I thought that I was standing in the green quadrangle of Liberty Hall, encircled by the high-turreted buildings, which were lighted up with their windows, as is heaven with its stars. And round me, close to me stood all the companions of

my youth, noisy and joyous as ever, and laughing and jeering at the weather-beaten, trouble-tried old man, who stood so meekly in their midst.

Then I was crossing the blue Atlantic to the music of the waters and the winds, and then I found myself reclining on cushions, fanned by the slaves who crowded to my side.

I burst out of this day-dream, laughing at my own folly. "Nonsense," said I to myself, "I live in Berkshire; I am not more than twenty-three miles from Oxford, and am a man of status in the county. Depend upon it, some enterprising tradesman has picked me out as the mark for one of his wide-spreading circulars."

And yet I own to you, that had I found it only a tradesman's circular, I should have been disappointed.

I was not disappointed.

You can imagine my feelings; I who had been secluded from the world, even from the remembrance of it for so long a time, when I read this letter.

"Magdalen College.

"My dear old friend,

"This is quite a romantic fancy of mine, is it

not ! I am trying to revive a flame of friendship, whose very ashes are cold and scattered.

"It is true that we were bosom-friends once ; we told each other all our little secrets ; we cooked together all our little schemes ; and we arranged our own futures with a coolness refreshing to look back upon.

"But time changes all things. I find that you have been living by yourself for years, and a bachelor. Perhaps you have grown crabbed, cynical, misanthropic, and as cross and unhappy as (according to young ladies) old bachelors generally are. Perhaps you think that college intimacies do very well for their three or four years of college folly, but that the Isis and Cherwell, and the Railway Canal are the rubicons over which they should never be allowed to pass.

"Thus it certainly is with most friendships here. The two part, feel very sad for a week, a month, or a year, and then think no more about the matter. Thus it was with us. You went from Liberty Hall to India, I from Magdalen College to a secluded curacy.

"A few days ago, I took up a provincial paper, and saw your name in a list of the magistrates present at the Reading bench.

"And yesterday I was standing at our anti-



chapel after morning prayers, when a portly old man, with a fabulous corporation, and a head almost as big as a house, came up to me, puffing and blowing, and wiping the perspiration by rivers from his forehead. It seemed that he and his missus, and two friends of his wanted very bad to go over the chapel, and didn't know rightly how to set about it

"I volunteered my services, which were accepted with the loudest gratitude, and I did guide-book to Magdalen, as I had done a hundred times before, and shall be proud to do a hundred times again. It is a glorious college, my boy, a glorious college.

"Before my orations began, the old farmer introduced me to the rest of my party.

"Fust,' said he, 'comes Mrs. Hobbes, my missus, she bein' the best. She's gin me a fine litter of children, and if I was to have my time over agin, why, I'd pick out the werry same missus as I has got now—try that old 'ooman.

"'Nixt, reverent sir, I introdooses you to my friend Miller Betteridge, who's made a large fortin out o' we poor varmers—ho ! ho ! miller !! And ater him, I recommends to your notish Squoire Walsh, who is known all over hereabouts for the werry pretty style in which he works them hounds of hisn.'

“From this singular group I picked up some more intelligence about you, which made me determine to write to you.

“I accoutre myself with two sheets of foolscap, and a huge envelope; I gird to my hand a quill pen of sharp point and tapering feather.

“With this weapon I hope so to prod you, that you will be compelled to crawl out from the shelter of your shell.

“The King of Arragon said that there were only four things in the world worth living for: old wine to drink; old wood to burn; old books to read; and old friends to converse with.

“And here, I, a true college king, am seated with a bottle of the famed Magdalen port at my side, an oak-wood fire at my toes, Cave’s *Lives of the Fathers* at my elbow, and an old friend to converse with upon paper.

“I wish to make my letter acceptable to you, and I am sure that I cannot make it more so than by relating to you the finales of all our old companions. I say *ours*, for while we were at Oxford, Magdalen was Liberty Hall to you, and Liberty Hall was Magdalen to me; your associations were mine, and mine were yours.

“Almost immediately after you sailed for Calcutta, Dandy Maidlow, as we used to call him, fell

dangerously ill. It was very nearly all U. P. at one time, but he turned the corner, and diddled the skeleton with the hour-glass for a little while. He was going on favorably enough, when unfortunately a young lady to whom he was engaged took it into her head to come and see him. Directly he heard this, he sent to Spiers to come and shampoo his head. Everyone remonstrated with him, and no one would answer for the consequences. The nurse wept, the doctor swore, but Maidlow remained stern and resolute. ‘My hair,’ said he, ‘hasn’t been touched for weeks ; I would rather die than permit the girl whom I love to see me in this filthy state.’

“The young lady arrived. She was charmed with her lover, for she had never seen him look so handsome. The pallor of his face only assisted the brightness of his eyes ; and his hair, black as a raven’s wing, and curly as a child’s, fell gracefully round his snow-white forehead. He was in very good spirits too, and often exclaimed how happy it made him to think that he should soon be able to get out of doors, and enjoy the flowers and the sun-shine. But he caught a violent cold, and died in two days.

“Cadman’s career, as an undergraduate, was very brief. His mother brought herself to the verge of starvation, in order to settle the demands of his

wine-merchant and his tailor. Attracted by the advertisements of a Loan Company, he borrowed money which he found himself unable to return. They sued, and ruin stared him in the face.

“The evening before his little business was coming off, he sat moping over a small fire reading the law court trials in the ‘Sunday Times,’ in order to gain some inkling about the way in which they would set to work against him with the big-wigs. And there he found a case precisely like his own, in which the defendant had triumphed by showing that the Company had made use of the wrong stamp upon their bill, which instrument became consequently waste paper. With one feeble gleam of hope in his heart, Cadman examined his own document, and could scarcely believe his eyes, when he found that his benefactors had made the very same mistake. Next day he won his case, and also informed the Judge that it was the first time he had been in a court of justice in his life. His Lordship assured him that he had made a most promising debut.

“But Cadman would not stop here. He supposed that he could turn fluking into a system, and very soon involved himself into a similar transaction, whence he only succeeded in emerging into the Insolvent Debtor’s, and afterwards into Simmons’

livery stables, where you may see him to this day, indulging in the same style of clothes, conversation, and companions which he had adopted in his academic days.

“Boyce and all our boating contemporaries are dead.

“You remember how we used to tell that sot, Lushington, that he would have either to give up brandy or the ghost, and how all of us prophesied his early delirium tremens and demise? However he still lives, if a man with a bottle nose, glassy eyes, and corky brain, and the grog blossoms efflorescent on his cheeks, can be said to live.

“And now for his antithesis—Proser. This unfortunate man so exhausted the meagre remnants of his brain, by hard night work and strong night tea, that when the crisis came and he stood for the schools, he failed. He went in, sure of his first, and was plucked, Sir, plucked.

“This man had destroyed all his mental faculties, by labouring as no slave ever laboured with the lash-whip held over him, and what for? That he might descend to posterity in the University Calendar for the year of grace, 18—, with *classis primus* after his name.

“He staked all in this glorious enterprise, and losing all, no wonder that he went mad. Some-

body died and left him a fortune immediately afterwards; but the money came too late. For thirty years, Sir, he lived in some apartments which he rented in Victoria Flats, Belgrave Road, at the top of the house, out of which during these thirty years he never once stirred. He slept all day. At the hour of sun-set, reckoning by the calendar, at the hour of sun-set, neither a moment before or a moment after, his sole domestic, a man-servant, would bring over a pigeon-pie from an adjacent cook-shop. Proser would sit down before it, and would carefully eat all the crust, returning the pigeons untouched within the dish. The proprietor of the cook-shop, on becoming acquainted with this, sent a veal and ham pie one evening instead of the pigeons, and lost his customer. After this repast, Proser would repair to a glass tower which he had had built upon the roof of the house, and would spend the whole night in solitude in watching, and in the yellow robe-de-chambre which during these thirty years he had never suffered for a moment to quit his person.

“His will shows plainly enough that he was idiotic to the last. As a proof that he died in peace with all men, he left half his fortune to the faithless proprietor of the original pigeon-pie establishment; the other half to his servant, with

the exception of a legacy of £60 to Guy's Hospital, on condition that his body was there dissected, and lectured upon; and £10 to the Imperial Gas Company if they would permit his bones to be consumed in their retorts.

"I had occasion once to go down to Hoddesdon, a small town in Hertfordshire, to make inquiries about a school there, on behalf of one of our tutors, who had a youngster just large enough to be flogged. The head-master was out, but the servant directed me to the school-room. I crossed a large gravel play-ground, artificially relieved with gymnastic poles, and bounded by a wall of such an inordinate height, that I could have sworn there was fruit behind.

"As I stopped before the door and put my fingers on the latch, I caught the sound of hard dry stripes delivered with precision and force, as the accompaniment testified. There is something delicious in the sight of a fellow-creature's tortures; and, besides, it would act as a lively means of recalling some of the most vivid of my school-boy scenes to my mind. I opened the door, and strode quickly in. The usher had his back towards me, and I could only see that his coat was of the rustiest, even greenest black, and that his trowsers wanted letting out at the ancles. However, in his

hand was a bright new cane, (possibly the property of the head-master.)

"He lifted it as I entered, and exclaimed, as he brought it down upon a prominent part of the writhing body,

" ' Ah ! you may shuffle, my boy, but I will cut—'

"I fancied that I had once known that voice ; and you can guess my astonishment, when, on his turning round, I descried the features of the once fashionable Pooley.

"He recognized me with that coolness which is inherent to his nature. He dismissed the culprit, slashing him as he ran ; requested my opinion on this last effort of manual dexterity, and telling the boys that he was only going over to the house to fetch the birch, left them to their own devices, and conducted me to the sandy parlour of a small tavern adjacent.

"As I had conjectured, his sporting tastes had ruined him. He was too much of a gentleman for the trade : a gambler should be a thorough blackguard if he wishes to succeed in his profession.

"He had tried everything in turn. Clerk in the Admiralty ; here he was led into bill-businesses by his honest fellow-clerks, white-washed, and dis-



missed ; billiard-marker ; auctioneer ; a hundred minor dodges ; and, finally, sunk to the lowest pitch of social impoverishment, he became—a poor usher.

“He told me that he had been caning all the fourth class because the next day was the Derby, and he wanted exercise to distract his mind. ‘I am now thirty years old,’ said he. ‘I went to Epsom when I was eight, and lost all my toys upon the favourite. For twenty-two years, John, I have never missed the Derby once ; I have been poor enough lately, God knows, but I have always managed, by hook or by crook, to go to the Derby. But I’m done this time ; I can make a little money go a long way, but I can’t make an usher’s salary go into the Midland Counties. And I can’t even walk there ; look at my boots. It’s hard lines, John ; it’s hard lines. I never felt what trouble really was till now.’

“I sent for some beer. Pooley put in a parenthesis, choked with tears, about the tap he wanted it to be drawn from. After he had finished the beer, I *lent* him what little I could spare, and with an invitation to Magdalen for his Midsummer holidays, bolted for the train.

“With that money he went down to Epsom, took the long odds versus an outsider, and made a

good thing by it. With the money he had won, he bought some billiard rooms in the Strand, and sent me a beautiful silver tankard and half a dozen surplices, and an invitation to come and play billiards whenever I liked, for nothing. He never bets, nor permits his markers to bet at his tables. He keeps out the black-legs, and talks to everybody who comes into his rooms about 'the days when I was at Oxford.'

"His business is great; you may hear the balls clinking upstairs all day and all night. All the young men on the town praise Pooley of the Strand; and all buy his cigars.

"My next reminiscence leads me still farther back. Not very long after I went into orders, I 'hacked' out to a small village near Thame, to do duty there.

"As I was attempting to smooth down the dogs' ears in the parish Bible, preparatory to the commencement of the first lesson, I heard a gasp just in front of me, and, looking up, perceived our old friend, Plumper, in a big pew all by himself.

"After the service, he came up, shook hands, and asked me to the family dinner at two o'clock. I complied.

"'You are married?' said I.

"'Yes,' he answered; 'I have got a very nice

little wife, a *very* nice little wife. She is very strict and good, John;' he added 'particularly on Sundays; but you won't mind that, now you have put on the white tie, I dare say.'

"I looked at Plumper again. He was certainly thinner than he had been when I saw him last.

"We stopped at the door of a fine substantial red-bricked house, rang the bell, and found our ways to the parlour, where I was introduced to Mrs. Plumper. From what my friend had said, I anticipated an elderly lady of vinegar aspect, and a mustard tongue; but I found myself in the presence of a pretty young woman, with a simple good face, just the sort you would pick out for your Madonna, if you were a Raphael. And such sweet eyes she had, my boy. I thought to myself, 'if there ever was a truly religious, pretty woman in the world, Plumper is the happy man.'

"Afterwards, there came in an old maid, (I forget her name,) whom I did not like quite so well, judging by appearances, that is to say.

"We made a very nice little tableau. Plumper filling the largest chair in the room, a white tortoiseshell slumbering on the rug, the yellow tabby sitting bolt upright in a cane chair, and Mrs. P., who had seated herself in a most unaffected manner by your humble servant, on the

sofa, conversing with him on the validity of the Apocrypha, interspersed with remarks about the weather, a topic which serious people are wont to discuss in their lighter moments, partly, I presume, because it leads their thoughts to heaven. She had one of the sweetest voices I ever heard in my life.

“She placed her husband at the head of the table, and her ancient friend at the bottom, and sat opposite me.

“Between the meat and the pudding, I felt a sharp angular knee pressed against mine. There is something wonderfully electric in the touch of a woman’s knee, and I felt as if all the port wine I had ever drank in my life was going through me like wild-fire and collecting in my face, which I saw reflected on the surface of the silver dish-cover as purple as the Tyrian vestments.

“It must have been an accident, thought I, as I looked at the angelic face in front of me. But at that moment she looked up; her face changed for one little moment, and an expression of indescribable lasciviousness passed over it like a flame. The leg business recommenced, arch twinkles sparkled from her eyes, and I—hang it—I thought I had never seen such a charming rogue.

“I went away directly after dinner; but before

I had gone many yards, I was overtaken by the tabby, who held out a tiny three-cornered, rose-coloured missive. I declined it like a hero, explaining to the old lady that I was under higher orders than those of gallantry, and that if one once began these practices, there was no knowing where it would stop.

“She acknowledged the justice of my remarks, and instead of going away stood there staring at me. I asked her what the matter was, and she said ‘nothing particular, only that my white tie reminded her of somebody she had known a long time ago.’ And as she went away, I saw her flourishing a cotton pocket-handkerchief (white, with red spots), and applying it to her nose and eyes. What funny creatures women are !

“My reminiscences are nearly over now, but not until I have reminded you of my cousin Edward, whom we all loved so much. You know, perhaps, that he is now Sir Edward Saxon ; that his father and mother are both dead ; that he lives not at Blakey’s, but at Repton Court, near Charlbury ; and that he spends life in wandering about his gardens or his woods.

“He was gay enough in his day, too ; and I imagine that some great misfortune must have fallen upon him to change him from a man to a

mummy. There are plenty of reports about ; and while all agree in attributing this change to a love-disappointment, all differ in the particulars. Some say that his betrothed jilted him, others that she eloped altogether ; some affirm that she died on the marriage-eve, and others go so far as to assert that he had been married and had been deceived.

“ Rudolph Raugh, who alone shared this secret, sailed out again for India some years ago, where, I understand, he satirizes England with more bitterness than he ever inveighed against the East. In fact, I was shown a letter of his in which he speaks of England, as a country where the fine weather is fog, the fog rain, and the rain a Deucalion ; where the sun is no brighter than a moon, and the moon no brighter than a lump of marble. The English peasants, he continues, make hay in their great-coats ; because they have no sun ; and allow themselves to be starved by their masters, and poisoned by their shop-keepers, because they have no courage. The English middle classes boast of their morality and despise all other nations, yet if you were to place what they call virtue into one scale, and vice with two-pence in the other, they would forget their morality and pocket the money like a shot. The aristocrats are perhaps the least despicable of all, for they are more openly vicious than the

hypocritical commercials beneath them. They enjoy each other's wives and daughters, live like a set of jolly rakes, and, at all events, do go to the devil with something like *éclat*.

"I could have forgiven him these exaggerations, for I am not over and above patriotic myself. But when the ruffian went on to say, 'that to his mind the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge should be either erased from the face of the earth, or converted into institutions for the benefit of young men who might wish to render themselves proficient in those tongues and sciences which would be of use to them after leaving college,' it was all I could do to prevent myself tearing the vile letter into shreds. *What!* turn all our noble libraries and halls into a set of menageries for foreign and scientific *savants!* Yes, and cut down all the elms, and drain all the meadows, and white-wash all the fronts, and smash all the stained windows, and modernize the pig market, I suppose.

"It might do a little good to the next generation perhaps, *but consider the associations.*

"Ah, well! I do not think we need fear these transformations much. And now I have said all that I have to say about your old college companions, except myself.

“ If you ask me about myself, I will tell you that I am happy. They have made me a chaplain of Magdalen College. I live here. I have all that I wish, and more than I deserve.

“ When I rise in the morning, I see the sun shining upon the green sod, and I feel its warmth through my windows, which look out towards the East. I smell the flowers from the beds beneath the window, and the shrubs which are climbing the wall. While I am at breakfast, the beautiful deer crowd towards me, and look at me with their large mild eyes. I open the window, and they eat morsels of bread from my hand.

“ All day long, I wander through the college walks, which are shaded by noble trees, and cooled by the stream which bubbles past. Then I sit down upon a bench, and, as I read, the birds come and sing to me.

“ At vesper-time, I enter the chapel, and, as I read the holy prayers of the church, I listen to my own voice, which murmurs down to the bottom of the aisle, and comes echoing back to me again. And when the organ beams forth its solemn notes, and the clear voices of the young choristers rise from before me, what emotions thrill through me, as I sit dreaming and gazing with eyes half-closed at the golden saints in the painted windows.



"In winter, too, I have my enjoyments—the dinner in the noble hall, where I sit at the High Table, where so many great men have sat before me—the after-dinner circle before the common-room fire, with good old port-wine, and roasted walnuts, and merry friends—last, and best, the snug, cosy pleasures by my own fireside, with the book or the friend I love most.

"Come, old friend, rainy April will soon be over. Let us go Maying together in the Christ-church meadows. We will make cowslip bells and dandelion bracelets, as we did when we were children ; and we will soon learn to forget that the world has grown older since we saw each other last.

"And even if you are too proud to come and accept a hearty welcome and a warm pair of hands, at least give a thought now and then to

"Your old acquaintance,

"GILBERT SAXON."

## II.

I went to Oxford ; it was the Long Vacation ; and the city was quiet. At one time I should have called it dull. Well, we change.

I found Gilbert Saxon, portly, but active and rosy ; and, as I looked at him, I acknowledged to myself that I saw, for the first time in my life, a *happy man*.

A great man is one who hopes and aspires, and who strives and struggles. His motto is *excelsior* ; he must ever have mountains before him. But in this world, out of ten hopes, nine are disappointments ; and the enjoyment of the one hope gratified, is swallowed up by the mortification of the nine hopes which will ever remain ungratified.

A great man in this world can never be happy. His day is to come in a land where, according to tradition, the soul has room to soar without hitting against the ceiling, and falling back upon the ground.

Gilbert Saxon had one hope and one wish—to be made a salaried inhabitant of Magdalen College. This wish had been fulfilled, and he had now attained that pinnacle of felicity to which only the small and the stupid are ever permitted to be raised.

He welcomed me, as men welcome a dead man returned to life ; he showed me all his pet spots, and led me everywhere like a child. In the evening, he read me his poem on Pointed Architecture,

which he still spoke of publishing. I also showed him a manuscript which I had written in my youth ; the paper was torn and yellow, and the ink brown, as the skin of the writer had become shrivelled as paper—his blood faint as ink.

I remained with him for several weeks, and tore myself from him with reluctance. I now understood how delightful was the seclusion of a hermit of Magdalen.

### III.

I travelled to Repton Court, which, as the chaplain informed me, is the finest specimen of Elizabethan architecture in England.

I was shown into a fine library, and there, lost in searching among the shelves, I did not hear the low tread of the foot-steps which approached me.

A hand was placed upon my shoulder. I turned round, and gazed lingeringly into Edward Saxon's face.

I had not seen him for so many years.

His hair was white as snow ; yet he could not have been very old. His face was strangely

mild and pensive, and the tones of his voice preserved all the rich melody of their youth.

He asked me a few questions about our old comrades, but abstractedly, as if caring little for an answer; and, as I was in the middle of a long relation, I caught his eye wandering. It was evident that he was anxious for me to go.

I rose; he did not attempt to detain me with common-places, but gave me the stirrup-cup of hospitality by conversing with me affably to the threshold.

But the clouds, which for some hours had been gathering over our heads, now discharged a furious storm of lightning and rain. To depart was impossible.

We returned to the library, and there we spoke of books, and compared to each other the favourite passages of our young and our aged days.

In the evening we discoursed upon mankind, and compared our thoughts and our experiences.

The storm had ceased; the thunder rolled faintly in the distance. I stood with Edward beneath the porch of his mansion; and pointed to the strips of clear white sky above the trees.

"Thus," said he, again placing his hand upon my shoulder, but now more kindly than before,

“thus though the day be wild and stormy, the evening of our lives will be warm and peaceful. Stay with me a little while; and let us spend the last short hours of our sun-light together.”

#### IV.

I was awoke by a song which was carolled forth from the chamber next to mine.

I started. It was the voice of Lucy Leddiard.

And yet that was impossible—for the voice was young, almost childish.

While I was dressing, the song still continued. I opened the door of my room, and passed out.

In the passage, stood a girl with long black hair which fell down to her waist, and a pair of wild roving eyes. Her neck and bosom were bare, for she was but half dressed; and yet not bare, for she had covered them with flowers, with which her hands were also filled.

She stopped in her song when she saw me, and gazed at me. Then, instead of shrinking away, as I had expected, she bounded towards me holding out both her tiny hands, while her flowers dropped unheeded to the ground.

“Ah! mischievous little elf,” cried a voice

from behind us, "is this the way in which you plunder my garden?"

"These are the flowers of God," she said, picking them up by handfuls from the floor, "not the flowers of man. I have taken them from the meadow-bank, and the brook side. They are my flowers—all mine, for God gives them to me."

And again she burst forth into the song, half gay, half plaintive, which had woken me from my morning sleep. It was not only the voice of Lucy Leddiard, it was the song which she herself had been wont to sing.

"Come," said Edward, "breakfast is waiting. Let us leave this little knave to her flowers, and her songs."

## V.

In a very few days, Phœbe, for such she told me was her name, and I were upon terms of great intimacy. At the hour of dusk, when Edward always left us for a while, she would come and confide to me a variety of secrets, and confess one or two flagrant sins.

And once she raised her eyes, glistening with

tears, towards mine, and asked me who was her mother.

She was a marvellous little Undine of wit and gaiety, with her florid language and wild weird looks, though at times I observed that her face would cloud, and that a bitter smile would cross her lips, as if there was something harsher working within.

One evening I took her upon my knees, and said to her, "Who taught you that song which you are so fond of singing, and with which you wake me every morning?"

"I do not know," she said, thinking, "but it is a very pretty song. O yes, I remember. It was the lady in black taught it me."

"The lady in black?"

"Yes, she used to come twice a year to see me, but she will never see papa, and she will not let me speak about him. And she is very tall, and pale, and stern, and she looks at me and speaks to me very coldly. But one day she kissed me, O, ever so many times, and then she sang this song to me, and told me pretty stories, and cried a great deal when she went away. But she has not been here since, and one of the servants told me she was dead.

"I am sorry that she is dead," said Phœbe, musing, "because I always loved her, I do not know why, though she did not seem to care for me."

Thus I had discovered one secret.

But I did not yet know why, at the hour of sun-set, Edward always left us and retired in-doors.

In wandering over the great house one day, I found myself before a small door of singular construction, which several times had excited my attention and my curiosity. This time the key was in the door. I turned it, and entered.

The light was dim, for the panes of glass in the one window were stained; the air was warm and tinged with perfumes.

Vases of exquisite workmanship contained the stems and leaves of withered flowers, and a fine glass book-case was filled with an assortment of old and plainly bound books. On a reading-slab was a large Bible, open at the Psalms, and over the mantel, these words were inscribed in letters of red:—

"When a tree is alone, it is beaten by the wind, and spoiled of its leaves; and its branches, instead of being erect, hang down, as if they sought the earth."



“When a plant is alone, finding no shelter from the heat of the sun, it languishes, is dried up and dies.”

“When man is alone, the cold wind of misfortune bends him to the earth, and the heat of adversity dries up the sap that nourishes him.”

There were pictures upon the walls, which appeared to have some hidden connection with each other, as so many links in a chain.

The first which caught my eye, represented a small grey town which stood close down by the water's edge; behind it, rose a high blue mountain.

In the next, a boat filled with ladies and gentlemen sailing towards a large sea-cavern, whose black mouth opened ominously towards them.

The third picture attracted my attention more than either of the two preceding ones. The subject—a small dark room, lighted only by one feeble gleam of sunlight; a beautiful young woman naked to the waist, who seemed to interrogate with her timid blue eyes a tall black-bearded man, who, resting one hand against her left side, with the other was clasping her thin white wrist.

The fourth contained the picture of a terrible storm—the huge black clouds piled upon each other, and tinted here and there with a blood-red

line—the sun setting red and angrily—the high green waves, less and less transparent, darker and darker—the foam whiter and larger as the clouds descended—a boat flying towards the rocky shore—its sail torn from the pole, and carried to the skies—three forms crouched within, and one erect, with his wild hair flowing to the wind—and upon the shore a mysterious figure muffled in black, and a bunch of withered flowers in its hand.

One picture yet remained. There was a black curtain before it. I advanced, yet hesitated ; again I approached, again I paused. And as I raised my hand towards the picture, the sun which had been shining brightly through the painted glass was obscured by a cloud, and a harsh but plaintive voice spoke from behind me :—

*“I am dying, I am dying ; my poor bird, I am going to die.”*

I turned round in affright, and perceived upon a lamp, which swung from the ceiling, a large parrot, which again opened his beak and uttered its speech of death.

I left the room, and the curtain before the picture remained undrawn.

## VI.

Once Edward spoke to me of Lucy.

"She still lives," he said, "although she is now dead to her child, as for many years she has been dead to me. But who can blame her?"

"Her life has been a life of bitterness, as mine has been a life of tears. When a girl, she was bound by those chains to which women submit, because they are slaves. This girl attempted to break her bonds, and she has suffered.

"In her married life she was wretched. She had fancied that her husband would forgive, but men do not forgive those faults which they are unable to forget. The dust of the past was ever being raked up before her.

"She hates me, for she reasons thus:—if she had never known me, she would have been spared all this misery. She hates her child, for had it not been born, she would never have experienced insults and disgrace. Poor creature! there are doubtless moments in which she despises herself.

"O, my friend, the chains of an old love that has been false, are covered with the rusts and mildews of remorse. It is a frightful bondage, for it is ended by death alone."

One morning, Edward, clothed from head to foot in dark robes, took me by the hand, and led me to the mysterious chamber, which I have already described.

Nothing had been altered, except that the words above the mantel had been erased, and in their place I read:—

“A true and faithful friend is a living treasure ; a comfort in solitude ; a sanctuary in distress.”

He sat me down beside him on a small sofa and in low murmuring tones unravelled to me the story of his love, which was also the story of his life. His life had been but one long, long love, which had begun in hope, and which had continued in regret.

The shadows of evening had crept into the room. I could no longer see his face ; I could not count the tears which his voice told me were flowing down his cheeks.

“I have had this room built,” said he, “to resemble the room in which Margaret used to sit. The books which fill those shelves, were once hers ; the flowers which are decaying in those vases, once smiled within her hands ; I have painted these pictures too, how, I do not know, for I had never touched a pencil when a boy. I must have painted with my soul, and not with my

fingers. I had a bird of her's, but it died yesterday ; and that Bible remains ever open at the Psalm, which she read to me again and again, while she was dying."

"And is not your grief strong enough," said I, "that you should prolong it thus?"

"Have you never experienced," he answered, "the 'joys of grief' which Ossian has sung of, and which none can explain? I am never happier than when I think of the sweet angel I have lost; I am never happier than when I shed these tears."

"And will you never escape from these regrets," said I, "will not time—"

"My hair," he said, "became white in a few hours. For two years I was nearer death than life, and the doctors, or the nurses, were never from my side. And now, though many years have passed, I find myself dreaming about Margaret all day and all night long. I am impatient to die, my friend, for then I shall see her again. A true heart when once broken is like grass; it can never be again joined."

"They buried her in the kirk-yard," he said, after we had both been silent for a little while. "She had planted a rose tree on the spot where she had always wished to be buried. The storm

which had killed her, had killed her fondling too, but they soon found the place again. The afternoon sun always shone more brightly upon that spot than upon any other.

“Let us wait till the moon rises, and I will show you where my resting-place is to be.”

When the moon had risen, he led me to the church-yard. The church itself dark and sombre—the tombs surrounded by their iron railings—the white grave-stones erecting themselves like ghosts from the bosom of the earth.

We could hear nothing but the humming of the insects of the night, and the croking of the frogs from the high wet grass.

We passed beneath the branches of the great yew-tree. A strange noise, like the stifled laughter of a mad-man, sounded from above our heads, followed by a rustling of the branches.

I started and shuddered. Edward laughed.

It was only a large white owl which we had disturbed from its perch, and which now wheeled round and round in the air in search of its prey.

There was a little nook in the church-yard. Here, by the moon-light, the grass seemed to grow more luxuriantly than elsewhere. There were no graves near.

“I have bought these few feet of ground for my

burial-place," said Edward, regarding it with affection. "I do not wish to lie in state, walled up by bricks and mortar. I wish the flowers to grow, and the sun to shine upon my last earthly garment."

## VII.

His story had affected me so much, that I determined to write it down while it yet remained fresh upon my mind. When I told Edward of this he was pleased; and, as I wrote, he would sing to me. He also played upon a two-stringed guitar, which formed an exquisite accompaniment to the simple northern ballads, which alone he sang.

And when I had finished, I subjoined to the story of his love, the story of his college days; and afterwards, at his request, the story of his indiscretion, without which his life was incomplete and untrue.

Thus a book was made—clumsy, disjointed, and unconsecutive—a book written at two different eras, and in two different styles; here spotted with those vulgarities which youth mistakes for power,

and with those awkward jests which may scarcely be strained to the title of jocularly ; there filled with those rhapsodies which are misunderstood and ridiculed by those who have never felt and can never appreciate them.

But I have a few more lines yet to write.

\* \* \* \*

The mother of Phœbe had come to take away her child. Her husband had died ; she was a widow ; she was alone ; she now remembered that she was a mother.

“ Let her stay with me three days longer,” said her father. “ In three days she shall be yours.”

The mother consented, and in three days promised to return again.

It was a gorgeous afternoon of July. We all three went out together.

“ I will conduct you,” said Edward, with his sad smile, and quoting from some old author, “ I will conduct you to a hill-side, laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects and melodious sounds, that the harp of Orpheus was not half so charming.”

We ascended the hill, and when we had reached its summit I thought that he was pale.



Beneath us the green turf spangled with its blue, white and yellow flowers, sloping gently towards the woods.

We looked down upon a land of leaves ; we were encircled by green forests.

So thick, so impenetrable did these leaves appear, that one would have thought it possible to walk upon their surface, as Peter walked upon the rocking sea.

The summer birds chirped to us from the trees, which gave us shade.

Above us, the blue calm sky, with its fleecy clouds.

“Who could imagine,” said Edward, “that from this beautiful earth crime and misery rise and flourish, and, like noisome weeds, choke and destroy the tender flowers of happiness and virtue?”

Lucy’s child, owing to the wild rhapsodies of her father, and to the seclusion in which she had been reared, spoke only in the language of fairy tales and romances.

“I do not love the earth,” she said, laughing wildly, “it is dull ; the leaves do not move ; the birds do not fly ; and men crawl. I worship the sky with its great clouds, for they are the spirits of the giants ; and I worship the sun, for fairies dance within its beams ; and I worship the stars,

for my books tell me that they are the eyes of God."

After awhile, her ardent looks sank to the ground, and again I observed how her face darkened, and her lips curled, and her breath drew short and quick.

\* \* \* \*

It was evening; the last gleam of the sun had died away, sad and mournful as a farewell.

Phœbe was silent, and was gazing thoughtfully at her father's face.

He was sitting with his hands folded in his lap, and his eyes closed.

The last smile of his soul was fluttering upon his lips.

\* \* \* \*

And the last beams of the summer sun are falling on my pen; and the last drop of ink is dry upon the page; and the last words of a true love-song are sent forth upon the world.

THE END.



{ 314, Strand, W.C.,  
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