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Anne Thackeray Ritchie
Complete Works



Series Twelve

The Complete Works of
ANNE THACKERAY RITCHIE

(1837-1919)



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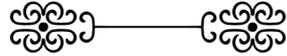
The Complete Works of
ANNE THACKERAY RITCHIE



By Delphi Classics, 2021

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Complete Works of Anne Thackeray Ritchie



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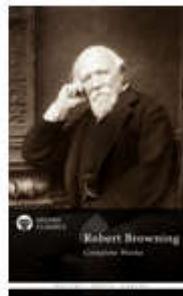
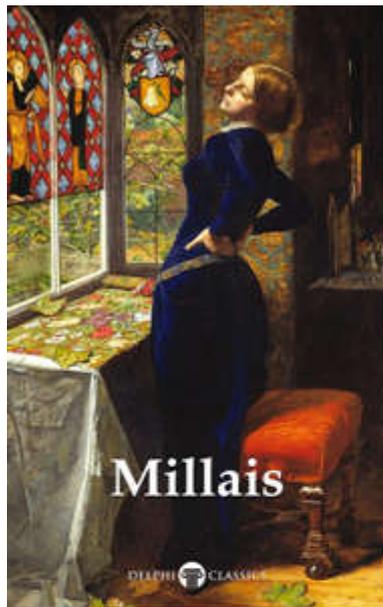
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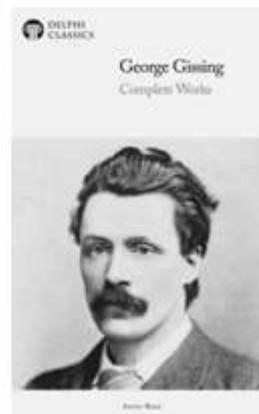
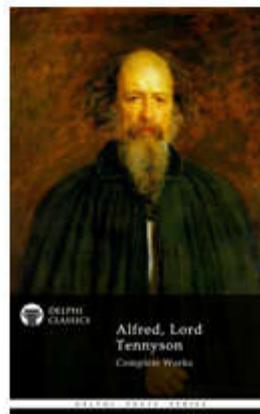
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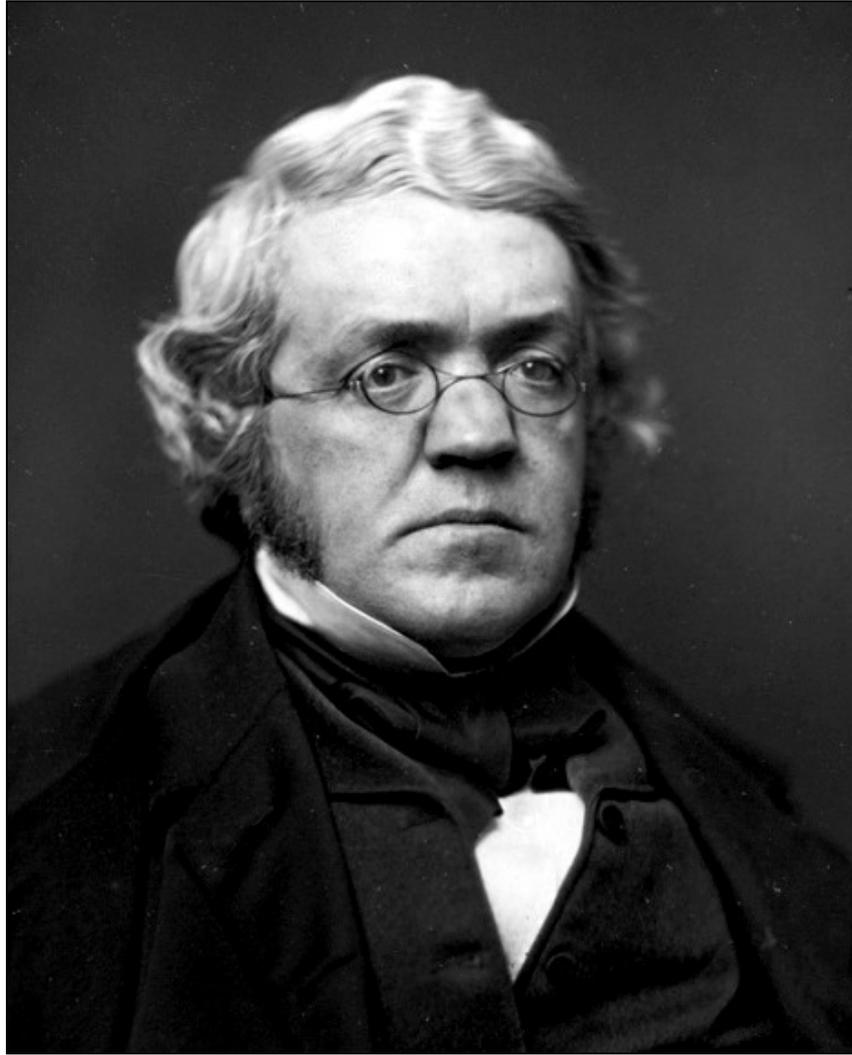
The Novels



Albion Street, Hyde Park, London — Anne Thackeray Ritchie's birthplace. To secure more remunerative work, her father returned to England from France in the spring of 1837. His parents offered him a home with them and in March he and his wife Isabella moved in at 18 Albion Street. It was there that on 9 June 1837 their first child, Anne Isabella, was born.



The birthplace, 18 Albion Street



An 1855 daguerreotype of William Makepeace Thackeray by Jesse Harrison Whitehurst

The Story of Elizabeth (1863)



Anne Isabella Thackeray was born in London, the eldest daughter of the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray and his wife Isabella Gethin Shawe. Anne, whose father called her ‘Anny’, spent her childhood with her grandparents in France (later to be recounted many times in her writings) and England, where she and her sister were accompanied by the future poet Anne Evans. Her literary formation started when she was still a teenager and her father dictated her large portions of his works. At the age of twenty-three she published her first article, “Little Scholars”, in the *Cornhill Magazine*, which was edited by her father.

Two years later she finished work on her first novel, *The Story of Elizabeth* (1863), which she had started almost eight years before. One day, when her father’s publisher George Smith was visiting the Thackeray household, where he often called on editorial business, he was secretly stopped by Anny, as she thrust a parcel into his hand and whispered: “Do you mind looking at that?” It was the finished manuscript and Smith was delighted with the work. When he later asked Thackeray to check the proofs of his daughter’s text, the great author reportedly said, “No, I could not. I read some of them and then broke down so thoroughly I could not face the rest.” He was pleased with Smith’s favourable opinion and he admired his daughter’s style, but he quietly confided to his mother, Anne Becher (1792–1864), that he could never bring himself to read it.

The novel was printed serially in the *Cornhill Magazine*, where many of Thackeray’s own works had appeared, from September 1862 to January 1863. In spite of its immediate success, it is distinctly a youthful work, revealing a lack of planning with unrealised potential. Critics have highlighted several strengths of the novel, including its analysis of feelings, powerful descriptive passages and occasional flashes of insight into character. Ritchie’s style has been described by some as *impressionistic*, presenting a mood, or a single moment, or a passing feeling with a single and informed focus.

The narrative takes place in Paris and was largely inspired by the author’s conflict with the Calvinist circles that frequented her grandmother’s circle. In many ways an autobiographical tale, the scene is set in the very street where her grandparents lived in Paris — the rue d’Angouleme, leading off the Champs-Élysées. The protagonist is a young and passionate girl, entirely untrained by her mean and jealous mother, who is almost young enough to be her sister. Both Elizabeth and her mother, Mrs. Gilmour, are incapable of self control and both are intent on pleasure. The mother resents Elizabeth’s new love for Sir John Dampier, who had previously been attached to Mrs. Gilmour. A widow without objective in life, the mother falls under the influence of the Protestant Pasteur Tourneur, whom she weds, leading to the beginning of Elizabeth’s real troubles. In time this results in open rebellion against both mother and stepfather, and his even more unpleasant widowed sister Madame Jacob. Elizabeth’s difficulties are exacerbated by the foolish attentions of Tourneur’s son, Anthony, who pursues her with clumsy attentions. Her only joy comes from her friendship with the Dampier family. In time, Elizabeth’s clandestine relationship with Dampier leads her into total rebellion and disaster.

The novel’s contemporary success is referred to by Rhoda Broughton (1840-1920), a Welsh novelist and short story writer, whose early novels earned her a reputation for sensationalism. Broughton was impressed by Ritchie’s achievement and later wrote

of her “astonished delight when *The Story of Elizabeth* burst in its wonderful novelty and spring-like quality on my consciousness, written, as I was told, by a girl hardly older than myself.” Anny recorded after the serial publication that ‘*Elizabeth* continues to be a success... My good fortune, I don’t know why, makes me feel ashamed.” Her father wrote after her immediate success: “she is very modest, thank God, whilst everybody is praising her.”



Ritchie, 1870

THE
CORNHILL
MAGAZINE.

VOL. VI.

JULY TO DECEMBER, 1862.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.
—
1862.

The magazine in which the novel was serialised

The Story of Elizabeth.

PART I.

THIS is the story of a foolish woman, who, through her own folly, learnt wisdom at last; whose troubles—they were not very great, they might have made the happiness of some less eager spirit—were more than she knew how to bear. The lesson of life was a hard lesson to her. She would not learn, she revolted against the wholesome doctrine. And while she was crying out that she would not learn, and turning away and railing and complaining against her fate; days, hours, fate, went on their course. And they passed unmoved; and it was she who gave way, she who was altered, she who was touched and torn by her own complaints and regrets.

Elizabeth had great soft eyes and pretty yellow hair, and a sweet fitting smile, which came out like sunlight over her face, and lit up yours and mine, and any other it might chance to fall upon. She used to smile at herself in the glass, as many a girl has done before her; she used to dance about the room, and think, "Come life, come life, mine is going to be a happy one. Here I am a-waiting, and I was made handsome to be admired, and to be loved, and to be hated by a few, and worshipped by a few, and envied by all. I am handsomer than Letitia a thousand times. I am glad I have no money as she has, and that I shall be loved for myself, for my *beaux yeux*. One person turns pale when they look at him. Tra la la, tra la la!" and she danced along the room singing. There was no carpet, only a smooth polished floor. Three tall windows looked out into a busy Paris street paved with stones, over which carriages, and cabs, and hand-trucks were jolting. There was a clock, and artificial flowers in china vases on the chimney, a red velvet sofa, a sort of *étagère* with ornaments, and a great double-door wide open, through which you could see a dining-room, also bare, polished, with a round table and an oil-cloth cover, and a white china stove, and some waxwork fruit on the sideboard, and a maid in a white cap at work in the window.

Presently there came a ring at the bell. Elizabeth stopped short in her dance, and the maid rose, put down her work, and went to open the door; and then a voice, which made Elizabeth smile and look handsomer than ever, asked if Mrs. and Miss Gilmour were at home?

Elizabeth stood listening, with her fair head a little bent, while the maid said, "*No, sare,*" and then Miss Gilmour flushed up quite angrily in the inner room, and would have run out. She hesitated only for a minute, and then it was too late; the door was shut, and Clementine sat down again to her work.

How the novel first appeared in its serial publication. In the same number of the magazine, her father's novel 'The Adventures of Philip' appeared, as well as George Eliot's 'Romola' and Anthony Trollope's 'The Small House at Allington'.

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"ARE COOKS LIKE LADIES?"

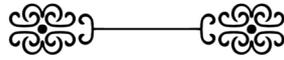
p. 129.

An early frontispiece for the novel

TO
J. M. C.

CHAPTER I.

* * * *



IF SINGING BREATH, or echoing chord,
To every hidden pang were given,
What endless melodies were poured
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven!

THIS is the story of a foolish woman, who, through her own folly, learnt wisdom at last; whose troubles — they were not very great, they might have made the happiness of some less eager spirit — were more than she knew how to bear. The lesson of life was a hard lesson to her. She would not learn, she revolted against the wholesome doctrine. And while she was crying out that she would not learn, and turning away and railing and complaining against her fate; days, hours, fate, went on their course. And they passed unmoved; and it was she who gave way, she who was altered, she who was touched and torn by her own complaints and regrets.

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“Clementine, how dare you say I was not at home?” cried Elizabeth, suddenly standing before her.

“Madame desired me to let no one in in her absence,” said Clementine, primly. “I only obeyed my orders. There is the gentleman’s card.”

“Sir John Dampier” was on the card, and then, in pencil, “I hope you will be at home in Chester Street next week. Can I be your *avant-courier* in any way? I cross to-night.”

Elizabeth smiled again, shrugged her shoulders, and said to herself, "Next week; I can afford to wait better than he can, perhaps. Poor man! After all, *il y en a bien d'autres*;" and she went to the window, and, by leaning out, she just caught a glimpse of the Madeleine and of Sir John Dampier walking away; and then presently she saw her mother on the opposite side of the street, passing the stall of the old apple-woman, turning in under the archway of the house.

Elizabeth's mother was like her daughter, only she had black eyes and black hair, and where her daughter was wayward and yielding, the elder woman was wayward and determined. They did not care much for one another, these two. They had not lived together all their lives, or learnt to love one another, as a matter of course; they were too much alike, too much of an age: Elizabeth was eighteen, and her mother thirty-six. If Elizabeth looked twenty, the mother looked thirty, and she was as vain, as foolish, as fond of admiration as her daughter. Mrs. Gilmour did not own it to herself, but she had been used to it all her life — to be first, to be much made of; and here was a little girl who had sprung up somehow, and learnt of herself to be charming — more charming than she had ever been in her best days; and now that they had slid away, those best days, the elder woman had a dull, unconscious discontent in her heart. People whom she had known, and who had admired her but a year or two ago, seemed to neglect her now and to pass her by, in order to pay a certain homage to her daughter's youth and brilliance: John Dampier, among others, whom she had known as a boy, when she was a young woman. Good mothers, tenderhearted women, brighten again and grow young over their children's happiness and success. Caroline Gilmour suddenly became old, somehow, when she first witnessed her daughter's triumphs, and she felt that the wrinkles were growing under her wistful eyes, and that the colour was fading from her cheeks, and she gasped a little sigh and thought, "Ah! how I suffer! What is it? what can have come to me?" As time passed on, the widow's brows grew darker, her lips set ominously. One day she suddenly declared that she was weary of London and London ways, and that she should go abroad; and Elizabeth, who liked everything that was change, that was more life and more experience — she had not taken into account that there was any other than the experience of pleasure in store for her — Elizabeth clapped her hands and cried, "Yes, yes, mamma; I am *quite* tired of London and all this excitement. Let us go to Paris for the winter, and lead a quiet life."

"Paris is just the place to go to for quiet," said Mrs. Gilmour, who was smoothing her shining locks in the glass, and looking intently into her own dark gloomful eyes.

"The Dampiers are going to Paris," Elizabeth went on; "Lady Dampier and Sir John, and old Miss Dampier and Lætitia. He was saying how he wished you would go. We could have such fun! *Do* go, dear, pretty mamma!"

As Elizabeth spoke, Mrs. Gilmour's dark eyes brightened, and suddenly her hard face melted; and, still looking at herself in the glass, she said, "We will go if you wish it, Elly. I thought you had had enough of balls."

But the end of the Paris winter came, and even then Elly had not had enough: not enough admiration, not enough happiness, not enough new dresses, not enough of herself, not enough time to suffice her eager, longing desires, not enough delights to fill up the swift flying days. I cannot tell you — she could not have told you herself — what she wanted, what perfection of happiness, what wonderful thing. She danced, she wore beautiful dresses, she flirted, she chattered nonsense and sentiment, she listened to music; her pretty little head was in a whirl. John Dampier followed her from place to place; and so, indeed, did one or two others. Though she was in love with them all, I believe she would have married this Dampier if he had asked her, but

he never did. He saw that she did not really care for him; opportunity did not befriend him. His mother was against it; and then, her mother was there, looking at him with her dark, reproachful eyes — those eyes which had once fascinated and then repelled him, and that he mistrusted so and almost hated now. And this is the secret of my story; but for this it would never have been written. He hated, and she did not hate, poor woman! It would have been better, a thousand times, for herself and for her daughter, had she done so. Ah me! what cruel perversion was it, that the best of all good gifts should have turned to trouble, to jealousy and wicked rancour; that this sacred power of faithful devotion, by which she might have saved herself and ennobled a mean and earthly spirit, should have turned to a curse instead of a blessing!

There was a placid, pretty niece of Lady Dampier, called Laetitia, who had been long destined for Sir John. Laetitia and Elizabeth had been at school together for a good many dreary years, and were very old friends. Elizabeth all her life used to triumph over her friend, and to bewilder her with her careless, gleeful ways, and yet win her over to her own side, for she was irresistible, and she knew it. Perhaps it was because she knew it so well that she was so confident and so charming. Lætitia, although she was sincerely fond of her cousin, used to wonder that her aunt could be against such a wife for her son.

“She is a sort of princess,” the girl used to say; “and John *ought* to have a beautiful wife for the credit of the family.”

“Your fifty thousand pounds would go a great deal further to promote the credit of the family, my dear,” said old Miss Dampier, who was a flat, plain-spoken, kindly old lady. “I like the girl, though my sister-in-law does not; and I hope that some day she will find a very good husband. I confess that I had rather it were not John.”

And so one day John was informed by his mother, who was getting alarmed, that she was going home, and that she could not think of crossing without him. And Dampier, who was careful, as men are mostly, and wanted to think about his decision, and who was anxious to do the very best for himself in every respect — as is the way with just, and good, and respectable gentlemen — was not at all loth to obey her summons.

Here was Lætitia, who was very fond of him — there was no doubt of that — with a house in the country and money at her bankers’; there was a wayward, charming, beautiful girl, who didn’t care for him very much, who had little or no money, but whom he certainly cared for. He talked it all over dispassionately with his aunt — so dispassionately that the old woman got angry.

“You are a model young man, John. It quite affects me, and makes me forget my years to see the admirable way in which you young people conduct yourselves. You have got such well-regulated hearts, it’s quite a marvel. You are quite right; Tishy has got 50,000l., which will all go into your pocket, and respectable connections, who will come to your wedding, and Elly Gilmour has not a penny except what her mother will leave her — a mother with a bad temper, and who is sure to marry again; and though the girl is the prettiest young creature I ever set eyes on, and though you care for her as you never cared for any other woman before, men don’t marry wives for such absurd reasons as that. You are quite right to have nothing to do with her; and I respect you for your noble self-denial.” And the old lady began to knit away at a great long red comforter she had always on hand for her other nephew the clergyman.

“But, my dear aunt Jean, what is it you want me to do?” cried John.

“Drop one, knit two together,” said the old lady, cliquetting her needles.

She really wanted John to marry his cousin, but she was a spinster still and sentimental; and she could not help being sorry for pretty Elizabeth; and now she was afraid that she had said too much, for her nephew frowned, put his hands in his pockets, and walked out of the room.

He walked downstairs, and out of the door into the Rue Royale, the street where they were lodging; then he strolled across the Place de la Concorde, and in at the gates of the Tuileries, where the soldiers were pacing, and so along the broad path, to where he heard a sound of music, and saw a glitter of people. Tum te tum, bom, bom, bom, went the military music; twittering busy little birds were chirping up in the branches; buds were bursting; colours glimmering; tinted sunshine flooding the garden, and the music, and the people; old gentlemen were reading newspapers on the benches; children were playing at hide-and-seek behind the statues; nurses gossiping, and nodding their white caps, and dandling their white babies; and there on chairs, listening to the music, the mammas were sitting in grand bonnets and parasols, working, and gossiping too, and ladies and gentlemen went walking up and down before them. All the windows of the Tuileries were ablaze with the sun; the terraces were beginning to gleam with crocuses and spring flowers.

As John Dampier was walking along, scarcely noting all this, he heard his name softly called, and turning round he saw two ladies sitting under a budding horse-chestnut tree. One of them he thought looked like a fresh spring flower herself smiling pleasantly, all dressed in crisp light grey, with a white bonnet, and a quantity of bright yellow crocus hair. She held out a little grey hand and said, "Won't you come and talk to us? Mamma and I are tired of listening to music. We want to hear somebody talk."

And then mamma, who was Mrs. Gilmour, held out a straw-coloured hand, and said, "Do you think sensible people have nothing better to do than to listen to your chatter, Elly? Here is your particular friend, M. de Vaux, coming to us. You can talk to him."

Elizabeth looked up quickly at her mother, then glanced at Dampier, then greeted M. de Vaux as pleasantly almost as she had greeted him.

"I am afraid I cannot stay now," said Sir John to Elizabeth. "I have several things to do. Do you know that we are going away immediately?"

Mrs. Gilmour's black eyes seemed to flash into his face as he spoke. He felt them, though he was looking at Elizabeth, and he could not help turning away with an impatient movement of dislike.

"Going away! Oh, how sorry I am," said Elly. "But, mamma, I forgot — you said we were going home, too, in a few days; so I don't mind so much. You will come and say good-by, won't you?" Elizabeth went on, while M. de Vaux, who had been waiting to be spoken to, turned away rather provoked, and made some remark to Mrs. Gilmour. And then Elizabeth seeing her opportunity, and looking up, frank, fair, and smiling, said quickly, "To-morrow at *three*, mind — and give my love to Laetitia," she went on, much more deliberately, "and my best love to Miss Dampier! and oh, dear! why does one ever have to say good-by to one's friends? Are you sure you are all really going?"

"Alas!" said Dampier, looking down at the kind young face with strange emotion and tenderness, and holding out his hand. He had not meant it as good-by yet, but so Elly and her mother understood it.

"Good-by, Sir John; we shall meet again in London," said Mrs. Gilmour.

"Good-by," said Elly, wistfully raising her sweet eyes.

As he walked away, he carried with him a bright picture of the woman he loved, looking at him kindly, happy, surrounded with sunshine and budding green leaves,

smiling and holding out her hand; and so he saw her in his dreams sometimes; and so she would appear to him now and then in the course of his life; so he sometimes sees her now, in spring-time, generally when the trees are coming out, and some little chirp of a sparrow or some little glistening green bud conjures up all these old bygone days again.

Mrs. Gilmour did not sleep very sound all that night. While Elizabeth lay dreaming in her dark room, her mother, with wild-falling black hair, and wrapped in a long red dressing-gown, was wandering restlessly up and down, or flinging herself on the bed or the sofa, and trying at her bedside desperately to sleep, or falling on her knees with clasped outstretched hands. Was she asking for her own happiness at the expense of poor Elly's? I don't like to think so — it seems so cruel, so wicked, so unnatural. But remember, here was a passionate selfish woman, who for long years had had one dream, one idea; who knew that she loved this man twenty times — twenty years — more than did Elizabeth, who was but a little child when this mad fancy began.

"She does not care for him a bit," the poor wretch said to herself over and over again. "He likes her, and he would marry her if — if I chose to give him the chance. She will be as happy with anybody else. I could not hear this — it would kill me. I never suffered such horrible torture in all my life. He hates me. It is hopeless; and I — I do not know whether I hate him or I love him most. How dare she tell him to come to-morrow, when she knew I would be out. She shall not see him. We will neither of us see him again; never — oh! never. But I shall suffer, and she will forget. Oh! if I could forget!" And then she would fall down on her knees again; and because she prayed, she blinded herself to her own wrong-doings, and thought that heaven was on her side.

And so the night went on. John Dampier was haunted with strange dreams, and saw Caroline Gilmour more than once coming and going in a red gown and talking to him, though he could not understand what she was saying; sometimes she was in his house at Guildford; sometimes in Paris; sometimes sitting with Elly up in a chestnut-tree, and chattering like a monkey; sometimes gliding down interminable rooms and opening door after door. He disliked her worse than ever when he woke in the morning. Is this strange? It would have seemed to me stranger had it not been so. We are not blocks of wax and putty with glass eyes, like the people at Madame Tussaud's; we have souls, and we feel and we guess at more than we see round about us, and we influence one another for good or for evil from the moment we come into the world. Let us be humbly thankful if the day comes for us to leave it before we have done any great harm to those who live their lives alongside with ours. And so the next morning Caroline asked her daughter if she would come with her to M. le Pasteur Tournour's at two. "I am sure you would be the better for listening to a good man's exhortation," said Mrs. Gilmour.

"I don't want to go, mamma. I hate exhortations," said Elizabeth, pettishly; "and you know how ill it made me last Tuesday. How can you like it — such dreary, sleepy talk? It gave me the most dreadful headache."

"Poor child," said Mrs. Gilmour, "perhaps the day may come when you will find out that a headache is not the most terrible calamity. But you understand that if you do not choose to come with me, you must stay at home. I will not have you going about by yourself, or with any chance friends — it is not respectable."

Elly shrugged her shoulders, but resigned herself with wonderful good grace. Mrs. Gilmour prepared herself for her expedition: she put on a black silk gown, a plain bonnet, a black cloak. I cannot exactly tell you what change came over her. It was not

the lady of the Tuileries the day before; it was not the woman in the red dressing-gown. It was a respectable, quiet personage enough, who went off primly with her prayer-book in her hand, and who desired Clementine on no account to let anybody in until her return.

“Miss Elizabeth is so little to be trusted,” so she explained quite unnecessarily to the maid, “that I cannot allow her to receive visits when I am from home.”

And Clementine, who was a stiff, ill-humoured woman, pinched her lips and said, “Bien, madame.”

And so when Elizabeth’s best chance for happiness came to the door, Clementine closed it again with great alacrity, and shut out the good fortune, and sent it away. I am sure that if Dampier had come in that day and seen Elly once more, he could not have helped speaking to her and making her and making himself happy in so doing. I am sure that Elly, with all her vanities and faults, would have made him a good wife, and brightened his dismal old house; but I am not sure that happiness is the best portion after all, and that there is not something better to be found in life than mere worldly prosperity.

Dampier walked away, almost relieved, and yet disappointed too. “Well, they will be back in town in ten days,” he thought, “and we will see then. But why the deuce did the girl tell me three o’clock, and then not be at home to see me?” And as ill-luck would have it, at this moment, up came Mrs. Gilmour. “I have just been to see you, to say good-by,” said Dampier. “I was very sorry to miss you and your daughter.”

“I have been attending a meeting at the house of my friend the Pasteur Tourneur,” said Mrs. Gilmour; “but Elizabeth was at home — would not she see you?” She blushed up very red as she spoke, and so did John Dampier; her face glowed with shame, and his with vexation.

“No; she would not see me,” cried he. “Goodby, Mrs. Gilmour.”

“Good-by,” she said, and looked up with her black eyes; but he was staring vacantly beyond her, busy with his own reflections, and then she felt it was good-by for ever.

He turned down a wide street, and she crossed mechanically and came along the other side of the road, as I have said; past the stall of the old apple-woman; advancing demurely, turning in under the archway of the house.

She had no time for remorse. “He does not care for me,” was all she could think; “he scorns me — he has behaved as no gentleman would behave.” (Poor John! — in justice to him I must say that this was quite an assumption on her part.) And at the same time John Dampier, at the other end of the street, was walking away in a huff, and saying to himself that “Elly is a little heartless flirt; she cares for no one but herself. I will have no more to do with her. Lætitia would not have served me so.”

Elly met her mother at the door. “Mamma, how *could* you be so horrid and disagreeable? — *why* did you tell Clementine to let no one in?” She shook back her curly locks, and stamped her little foot, as she spoke, in her childish anger.

“You should not give people appointments when I am out of the way,” said Mrs. Gilmour, primly. “Why did you not come with me? Dear M. Tourneur’s exposition was quite beautiful.”

“I hate Monsieur Tourneur!” cried Elizabeth; “and I should not do such things if you were kind, mamma, and liked me to amuse myself and to be happy; but you sit there, prim and frowning, and thinking everything wrong that is harmless; and you spoil all my pleasure; and it is a shame — and a shame — and you will make me hate you too;” and she ran into her own room, banged the door, and locked it.

I suppose it was by way of compensation to Elly that Mrs. Gilmour sat down and wrote a little note, asking Monsieur de Vaux to tea that evening to meet M. le Pasteur Tournour and his son.

Elizabeth sat sulking in her room all the afternoon, the door shut; the hum of a busy city came in at her open window; then the glass panes blazed with light, and she remembered how the windows of the Tuileries had shone at that time the day before, and she thought how kind and how handsome Dampier looked, as he came walking along, and how he was worth ten Messieurs de Vaux and twenty foolish boys like Anthony Tournour. The dusky shadows came creeping round the room, dimming a pretty picture.

It was a commonplace little *tableau de genre* enough — that of a girl sitting at a window, with clasped hands, dreaming dreams more or less silly, with the light falling on her hair, and on the folds of her dress, and on the blazing petals of the flowers on the balcony outside, and then overhead a quivering green summer sky. But it is a little picture that nature is never tired of reproducing; and, besides nature, every year, in the Royal Academy, I see half-a-dozen such representations.

In a quiet, unconscious sort of way, Elly made up her mind, this summer afternoon — made up her mind, knowing not that perhaps it was too late, that the future she was accepting, half glad, half reluctant, was, maybe, already hers no more, to take or to leave. Only a little stream, apparently easy to cross, lay, as yet, between her and the figure she seemed to see advancing towards her. She did not know that every day this little stream would widen and widen, until in time it would be a great ocean lying between them. Ah! take care, my poor Elizabeth, that you don't tumble into the waters, and go sinking down, down, down, while the waves close over your curly yellow locks.

"Will you come to dinner, mademoiselle?" said Clementine, rapping at the door with the finger of fate which had shut out Sir John Dampier only a few hours ago.

"Go away!" cries Elizabeth.

"Elizabeth! dinner is ready," says her mother, from outside, with unusual gentleness.

"I don't want any dinner," says Elly; and then feels very sorry and very hungry the minute she has spoken. The door was locked, but she had forgotten the window, and Mrs. Gilmour, in a minute, came along the balcony, with her silk dress rustling against the iron bars.

"You silly girl! come and eat," said her mother, still strangely kind and forbearing. "The Vicomte de Vaux is coming to tea, and Monsieur Tournour and Anthony; you must come and have your dinner, and then let Clementine dress you; you will catch cold if you sit here any longer;" and she took the girl's hand gently and led her away.

For the first time in her life, Elizabeth almost felt as if she really loved her mother; and, touched by her kindness, and with a sudden impulse, and melting, and blushing, and all ashamed of herself, she said, almost before she knew what she had spoken, "Mamma, I am very silly, and I've behaved very badly, but I did so want to see him again."

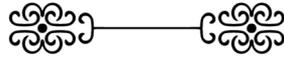
Mrs. Gilmour just dropped the girl's hand. "Nonsense, Elizabeth; your head is full of silly school-girl notions. I wish I had had you brought up at home instead of at Mrs. Straightboard's."

"I wish you had, mamma," said Elly, speaking coldly and quietly; "Laetitia and I were both very miserable there." And then she sat down at the round table to break bread with her mother, hurt, wounded, and angry. Her face looked hard and stern, like Mrs. Gilmour's; her bread choked her; she drank a glass of water, and it tasted bitter,

somehow. Was Caroline more happy? did she eat with better appetite? She ate more, she looked much as usual, she talked a good deal. Clementine was secretly thinking what a good-for-nothing, ill-tempered girl mademoiselle was; what a good woman, what a good mother was madame. Clementine revenged some of madame's wrongs upon Elizabeth, by pulling her hair after dinner, as she was plaiting and pinning it up. Elly lost her temper, and violently pushed Clementine away, and gave her warning to leave.

Clementine, furious, and knowing that some of the company had already arrived, rushed into the drawing-room with her wrongs. "Mademoiselle m'a poussée, madame; mademoiselle m'a dit des injures; mademoiselle m'a congédiée—" But in the middle of her harangue, the door flew open, and Elizabeth, looking like an empress, bright cheeks flushed, eyes sparkling, hair crisply curling, and all dressed in shining pink silk, stood before them.

CHAPTER II.



BUT FOR HIS funeral train which the bridegroom sees in the distance,
Would he so joyfully, think you, fall in with the marriage procession?
But for that final discharge, would he dare to enlist in that service?
But for that certain release, ever sign to that perilous contract?

I DON'T think they had ever seen anybody like her before, those two MM. Tourneurs, who had just arrived; they both rose, a little man and a tall one, father and son; and besides these gentlemen, there was an old lady in a poke bonnet sitting there too, who opened her shrewd eyes and held out her hand. Clementine was crushed, eclipsed, forgotten. Elizabeth advanced, tall, slim, stately, with wide-spread petticoats; but she began to blush very much when she saw Miss Dampier. For a few minutes there was a little confusion of greeting, and voices, and chairs moved about, and then —

“I came to say good-by to you,” said the old lady, “in case we should not meet again. I am going to Scotland in a month or two — perhaps I may be gone by the time you get back to town.”

“Oh, no, no! I hope not,” said Elizabeth. She was very much excited, the tears almost came into her eyes.

“We shall most likely follow you in a week or ten days,” said Mrs. Gilmour, with a sort of laugh; “there is no necessity for any sentimental leave-taking.”

“Does that woman mean what she says?” thought the old lady, looking at her; and then turning to Elizabeth again she continued: “There is no knowing what may happen to any one of us, my dear. There is no harm in saying good-by, is there? Have you any message for Laetitia or Catherine?”

“Give Laetitia my very best love,” said Elly, grateful for the old lady’s kindness; “and — and I was very, very sorry that I could not see Sir John when he came to-day so good-naturedly.”

“He must come and see you in London,” said Miss Dampier, very kindly still. (She was thinking, “She does care for him, poor child.”)

“Oh, yes! in London,” repeated Mrs. Gilmour; so that Elly looked quite pleased, and Miss Dampier again said to herself, “She is decidedly not coming to London. What can she mean? Can there be anything with that Frenchman, De Vaux? Impossible!” And then she got up, and said aloud, “Well, good-by. I have all my old gowns to pack up, and my knitting, Elly. Write to me, child, sometimes!”

“Oh, yes, yes!” cried Elizabeth, flinging her arms round the old lady’s neck, kissing her, and whispering, “Good-by, dear, dear Miss Dampier.”

At the door of the apartment, Clementine was waiting, hoping for a possible five-franc piece. “Bon soir, madame,” said she.

“Oh, indeed,” said Miss Dampier, staring at her, and she passed out with a sort of sniff, and then she walked home quietly through the dark back-streets, only, as she went along, she said to herself every now and then, she hardly knew why, “Poor Elly — poor child!”

Meanwhile, M. Tourneur was taking Elizabeth gently to task. Elizabeth was pouting her red lips and sulking, and looking at him defiantly from under her drooped eyelids; and all the time Anthony Tourneur sat admiring her, with his eyes wide open,

and his great mouth open too. He was a big young man, with immense hands and feet, without any manners to speak of, and with thick hair growing violently upon end. There was a certain distinction about his father which he had not inherited. Young Frenchmen of this class are often singularly rough and unpolished in their early youth; they tone down with time, however, as they see more of men and of women. Anthony had never known much of either till now; for his young companions at the Protestant college were rough cubs like himself; and as for women, his mother was dead (she had been an Englishwoman, and died when he was ten years old), and old Françoise, the cuisinière, at home, was almost the only woman he knew. His father was more used to the world and its ways: he fancied he scorned them all, and yet the pomps and vanities and the pride of life had a horrible attraction for this quiet pasteur. He was humble and ambitious: he was tender-hearted, and hard-headed, and narrowminded. Though stern to himself, he was weak to others, and yet feebly resolute when he met with opposition. He was not a great man; his qualities neutralized one another, but he had a great reputation. The Oratoire was crowded on the days when he was expected to preach, his classes were thronged, his pamphlets went through three or four editions. Popularity delighted him. His manner had a great charm, his voice was sweet, his words well chosen; his head was a fine melancholy head, his dark eyes flashed when he was excited. Women especially admired and respected Stephen Tourneur.

Mrs. Gilmour was like another person when she was in his presence. Look at her to-night, with her smooth black hair, and her grey silk gown, and her white hands busied pouring out his tea. See how she is appealing to him, deferentially listening to his talk. I cannot write his talk down here. Certain allusions can have no place in a little story like this one, and yet they were allusions so frequently in his thoughts and in his mouth that it was almost unconsciously that he used them. He and his brethren like him have learned to look at this life from a loftier point of view than Elly Gilmour and worldlings like her, who feel that to-day they are in the world and of it, not of their own will, indeed — though they are glad that they are here — but waiting a farther dispensation. Tourneur, and those like him, look at this life only in comparison with the next, as though they had already passed beyond, and had but little concern with the things of to-day. They speak chiefly of sacred subjects; they have put aside our common talk, and thought, and career. They have put them away, and yet they are men and women after all. And Stephen Tourneur, among the rest, was a soft-hearted man. To-night, as indeed often before, he was full of sympathy for the poor mother who had so often spoken of her grief and care for her daughter, of her loneliness. He understood her need; her want of an adviser, of a friend whom she could reverence and defer to. How meekly she listened to his words, with what kindling interest she heard him speak of what was in his heart always, with what gentleness she attended to his wants. How womanly she was, how much more pleasant than any of the English, Scotch, Irish old maids who were in the habit of coming to consult him in their various needs and troubles. He had never known her so tender, so gentle, as to-night. Even Elly, sulking, and beating the tattoo with her satin shoes, thought that her mother's manner was very strange. How could any one of the people sitting round that little tea-table guess at the passion of hopelessness, of rage, of despair, of envy, that was gnawing at the elder woman's heart? at the mad, desperate determination she was making? And yet every now and then she said odd, imploring things — she seemed to be crying wildly for sympathy — she spoke of other people's troubles with a startling earnestness.

De Vaux, who arrived about nine o'clock, and asked for a *soupeon de the*, and put in six lumps of sugar, and so managed to swallow the mixture, went away at ten, without one idea of the tragedy with which he had been spending his evening — a tragical farce, a comedy — I know not what to call it.

Elly was full of her own fancies; Monsieur Tourneur was making up his mind; Anthony's whole head was rustling with pink silk, or dizzy with those downcast, bright, bewildering blue eyes of Elly's, and he sat stupidly counting the little bows on her skirt, or watching the glitter of the rings on her finger, and wishing that she would not look so cross when he spoke to her. She had brightened up considerably while De Vaux was there; but now, in truth, her mind was travelling away, and she was picturing to herself the Dampiers at their tea-table — Tishy, pale and listless, over her feeble cups; Lady Dampier, with her fair hair and her hook nose, lying on the sofa; and John in the arm-chair by the fire, cutting dry jokes at his aunt. Elly's spirits had travelled away like a ghost, and it was only her body that was left sitting in the little gaudy drawing-room; and, though she did not know it, there was another ghost flitting alongside with hers. Strangely enough, the people of whom she was thinking were assembled together very much as she imagined them to be. Did they guess at the two pale phantoms that were hovering about them? Somehow or other, Miss Dampier, over her knitting, was still muttering, "Poor child!" to the click of her needles; and John Dampier was haunted by the woman in red, and by a certain look in Elly's eyes, which he had seen yesterday when he found her under the tree.

Meanwhile, at the other side of Paris, the other little company was assembled round the fire; and Mrs. Gilmour, with her two hands folded tightly together, was looking at M. Tourneur with her great soft eyes, and saying, "The woman was never yet born who could stand alone, who did not look for some earthly counsellor and friend to point out the road to better things — to help her along the narrow thorny way. Wounded, and bruised, and weary, it is hard, hard for us to follow our lonely path." She spoke with a pathetic passion, so that Elizabeth could not think what had come to her. Mrs. Gilmour was generally quite capable of standing, and going, and coming, without any assistance whatever. In her father's time, Elly could remember that there was not the slightest need for his interference in any of their arrangements. But the mother was evidently in earnest to-night, and the daughter quite bewildered. Later in the evening, after Monsieur de Vaux was gone, Mrs. Gilmour got up from her chair and flung open the window of the balcony. All the stars of heaven shone splendidly over the city. A great, silent, wonderful night had gathered round about them unawares; a great calm had come after the noise and business of the careful day. Caroline Gilmour stepped out with a gasping sigh, and stood looking upwards; they could see her grey figure dimly against the darkness. Monsieur Tourneur remained sitting by the fire, with his eyes cast down and his hands folded. Presently he too rose and walked slowly across the room, and stepped out upon the balcony; and Elizabeth and Anthony remained behind, staring vacantly at one another. Elizabeth was yawning and wondering when they would go.

"You are sleepy, miss," said young Tourneur, in his French-English.

Elly yawned in a very unmistakable language, and showed all her even white teeth: "I always get sleepy when I have been cross, Mr. Anthony. I have been cross ever since three o'clock to-day, and now it is long past ten, and time for us all to go to bed: don't you think so?"

"I am waiting for my father," said the young man. "He watches late at night, but we are all sent off at ten."

"'We!' — you and old Françoise?"

“I and the young Christians who live in our house, and study with my father and read under his direction. There are five, all from the south, who are, like me, preparing to be ministers of the gospel.”

Another great wide yawn from Elly.

“Do you think your father will stop much longer — if so, I shall go to bed. Oh, dear me!” and with a sigh she let her head fall back upon the soft cushioned chair, and then, somehow, her eyes shut very softly, and her hands fell loosely, and a little quiet dream came, something of a garden and peace, and green trees, and Miss Dampier knitting in the sunshine. Click, click, click, she heard the needles, but it was only the clock ticking on the mantel-piece. Anthony was almost afraid to breathe, for fear he should wake her. It seemed to him very strange to be sitting by this smouldering fire, with the stars burning outside, while through the open window the voices of the two people talking on the balcony came to him in a low murmuring sound. And there opposite him Elly, asleep, breathing so softly and looking so wonderfully pretty in her slumbers. Do you not know the peculiar peaceful feeling which comes to any one sitting alone by a sleeping person? I cannot tell which of the two was for a few minutes the most tranquil and happy.

Elly was still dreaming her quiet, peaceful dreams, still sitting with Miss Dampier in her garden, under a chestnut-tree, with Dampier coming towards them, when suddenly some voice whispered “Elizabeth” in her ear, and she awoke with a start of chill surprise. It was not Anthony who had called her, it was only fancy; but as she woke he said, —

“Ah! I was just going to wake you.”

What had come to him. He seemed to have awakened too — to have come to himself suddenly. One word which had reached him — he had very big sharp ears — one word distinctly uttered amid the confused murmur on the balcony, brought another word of old Françoise’s to his mind. And then in a minute — he could not tell how it was — it was all clear to him. Already he was beginning to learn the ways of the world. Elly saw him blush up, saw his eyes light with intelligence, and his ears grow very red; and then he sat up straight in his chair, and looked at her in a quick, uncertain sort of way.

“You would not allow it,” said he, suddenly, staring at her fixedly with his great flashing eyes. “I never thought of such a thing till this minute. Who ever would?”

“Thought of what? What are you talking about?” said Elly, startled.

“Ah! that is it.” And then he turned his head impatiently: “How stupid you must have been. What can have put such a thing into his head and hers. Ah, it is so strange, I don’t know what to think or to say;” and he sank back in his chair. But, somehow or other, the idea which had occurred to him was not nearly so disagreeable as he would have expected it to be. The notion of some other companionship besides that of the five young men from the south, instead of shocking him, filled him with a vague, delightful excitement. “Ah! then she would come and live with us in that pink dress,” he thought. And meanwhile Elizabeth turned very pale, and she too began dimly to see what he was thinking of, only she could not be quite sure. “Is it that I am to marry him?” she thought; “they cannot be plotting that.”

“What is it, M. Anthony?” said she, very fierce. “Is it — they do not think that I would ever — ever dream or think of marrying you?” She was quite pale now, and *her* eyes were glowing.

Anthony shook his head again. “I know that,” said he; “it is not you or me.”

“What do you dare to imply?” she cried, more and more fiercely. “You can’t mean — you would never endure, never suffer that — that—” The words failed on her lips.

“I should like to have you for a sister, Miss Elizabeth,” said he, looking down; “it is so triste at home.”

Elly half started from her chair, put up her white hands, scarce knowing what she did, and then suddenly cried out, “Mother! mother!” in a loud, shrill, thrilling voice, which brought Mrs. Gilmour back into the room. And Monsieur Tourneur came too. Not one of them spoke for a minute. Elizabeth’s horror-stricken face frightened the pasteur, who felt as if he was in a dream, who had let himself drift along with the feeling of the moment, who did not know even now if he had done right or wrong, if he had been carried away by mere earthly impulse and regard for his own happiness, or if he had been led and directed to a worthy helpmeet, to a Christian companion, to one who had the means and the power to help him in his labours. Ah, surely, surely he had done well, he thought, for himself, and for those who depended on him. It was not without a certain dignity at last, and nobleness of manner, that he took Mrs. Gilmour’s hand, and said, —

“You called your mother just now, Elizabeth; here she is. Dear woman, she has consented to be my best earthly friend and companion, to share my hard labours; to share a life poor and arduous, and full of care, and despised perhaps by the world; but rich in eternal hope, blessed by prayer, and consecrated by a Christian’s faith.” He was a little man, but he seemed to grow tall as he spoke. His eyes kindled, his face lightened with enthusiasm. Elizabeth could not help seeing this, even while she stood shivering with indignation and sick at heart. As for Anthony, he got up, and came to his father and took both his hands, and then suddenly flung his arms round his neck. Elizabeth found words at last:

“You can suffer this?” she said to Anthony. “You have no feelings, then, of decency, of fitness of memory for the dead. You, mamma, can degrade yourself by a second marriage? Oh! for shame, for shame!” and she burst into passionate tears, and flung herself down on a chair. Monsieur Tourneur was not used to be thwarted, to be reproved; he got very pale, he pushed Anthony gently aside, and went up to her. “Elizabeth,” said he, “is this the conduct of a devoted daughter; are these the words of good will and of peace, with which your mother should be greeted by her children? I had hoped that you would look upon me as a friend. If you could see my heart, you would know how ready I am; how gladly I would love you as my own child,” and he held out his hand. Elly Gilmour dashed it away.

“Go,” she said; “you have made me wretched; *I* hate your life and your ways, and your sermons, and we shall all be miserable, every one of us; I know well enough it is for her money you marry her. Oh, go away out of my sight.” Tourneur had felt doubts. Elizabeth’s taunts and opposition reassured him and strengthened him in his purpose. This is only human nature, as well as pasteur nature in particular. If everything had gone smoothly, very likely he would have found out a snare of the devil in it, and broken it off, not caring what grief and suffering he caused to himself in so doing. Now that the girl’s words brought a flush into his pale face and made him to wince with pain, he felt justified, nay, impelled to go on — to be firm. And now he stood up like a gentleman, and spoke:

“And if I want your mother’s money, is it hers, is it mine, was it given to me or to her to spend for our own use? Was it not lent, will not an account be demanded hereafter? Unhappy child! where have you found already such sordid thoughts, such unworthy suspicions? Where is your Christian charity?”

“I never made any pretence of having any,” cried Elizabeth, stamping her foot and tossing her fair mane. “You talk and talk about it and about the will of heaven, and

suit yourselves, and break my heart, and look up quite scandalized, and forgive me for my wickedness. But I had rather be as wicked as I am than as good as you.”

“Allons, taisez-vous, Mademoiselle Elizabeth!” said Anthony, who had taken his part; “or my father will not marry your mother, and then you will be in the wrong, and have made everybody unhappy. It is very, very sad and melancholy in our house; be kind and come and make us happy. If I am not angry, why should you mind? but see here, I will not give my consent unless you do, and I know my father will do nothing against my wishes and yours.”

Poor Elizabeth looked up, and then she saw that her mother was crying too; Caroline had had a hard day’s work. No wonder she was fairly harassed and worn out. Elizabeth herself began to be as bewildered, as puzzled, as the rest. She put her hand wearily to her head. She did not feel angry any more, but very tired and sad. “How can I say I think it right when I think it wrong? It is not me you want to marry, M. Tourneur; mamma is old enough to decide. What need you care for what a silly girl like me says and thinks? Good-night, mamma; I am tired and must go to bed. Good-night, Monsieur Tourneur. Good-night, M. Anthony. Oh, dear!” sighed Elizabeth, as she went out of the room with her head hanging, and with pale cheeks and dim eyes. You could hardly have believed it was the triumphant young beauty of an hour ago. But it had always been so with this impetuous, sensitive Elizabeth; she suffered, as she enjoyed, more keenly than anybody else I ever knew; she put her whole heart into her life without any reserve, and then, when failure and disappointment came, she had no more heart left to endure with.

I am sure it was with a humble spirit that Tourneur that night, before he left, implored a benediction on himself and on those who were about to belong to him. He went away at eleven o’clock with Anthony, walking home through the dark, long streets to his house, which was near one of the gates of the city. And Caroline sat till the candles went out, till the fire had smouldered away, till the chill night breezes swept round the room, and then went stupefied to bed, saying to herself, “NOW he will learn that others do not despise me, and I — I will lead a good life.”

CHAPTER III.



Le temps emporte sur son aile
Et le printemps et l'hirondelle,
Et la vie et les jours perdus;
Tout s'en va comme la fumée, —

L'espérance et la renommée,
Et moi qui TOUS ai tant aimée,
Et toi qui ne t'en souviens plus!

A LOW, one-storied house standing opposite a hospital, built on a hilly street, with a great white porte-cochère closed and barred, and then a garden wall: nine or ten windows only a foot from the ground, all blinded and shuttered in a row; a brass plate on the door, with Stephen Tourneur engraved thereon, and grass and chickweed growing between the stones and against the white walls of the house. Passing under the archway, you come into a grass-grown courtyard; through an iron grating you see a little desolate garden with wallflowers and stocks, and tall yellow weeds all flowering together, and fruit-trees running wild against the wall. On one side there are some empty stables, with chickens pecketting in the sun. The house is built in two long low wings; it has a dreary moated-grange sort of look; and see, standing at one of the upper windows, is not that Elizabeth looking out? An old woman in a blue gown and a white coif is pumping water at the pump, some miserable canaries are piping shrilly out of green cages, the old woman clacks away with her sabots echoing over the stones, the canaries cease their piping, and then nobody else comes. There are two or three tall poplar-trees growing along the wall, which shiver plaintively; a few clouds drift by, and a very distant faint sound of military music comes borne on the wind. "Ah, how dull it is to be here! Ah, how I hate it, how I hate them all!" Elizabeth is saying to herself: "There is some music, all the Champs Elysées are crowded with people, the soldiers are marching along with glistening bayonets and flags flying. Not one of them thinks that in a dismal house not very far away there is anybody so unhappy as I am. This day year — it breaks my heart to think of it — I was nineteen; to-day I am twenty, and I feel a hundred. Oh, what a sin and shame it is to condemn me to this hateful life. Oh, what wicked people these good people are. Oh, how dull, oh, how stupid, oh, how prosy, oh, how I wish I was dead, and they were dead, and it was all over!"

How many weary yawns, I wonder, had poor Elizabeth yawned since that first night when M. Tourneur came to tea? With what distaste she set herself to live her new life I cannot attempt to tell you. It bored her, and wearied and displeased her, and she made no secret of her displeasure, you may be certain. But what annoyed her most of all, what seemed to her so inconceivable that she could never understand or credit it, was the extraordinary change which had come over her mother. Mme. Tourneur was like Mrs. Gilmour in many things, but so different in others that Elly could hardly believe her to be the same woman. The secret of it all was a love of power and admiration, purchased no matter at what sacrifice, which had always been the hidden motive of Caroline's life. Now she found that by dressing in black, by looking stiff, by attending endless charitable meetings, prayer-meetings, religious meetings, by influencing M. Tourneur, who was himself a man in authority, she could eat of the

food her soul longed for. "There was a man once who did not care for me, he despised me," she used to think sometimes; "he liked that silly child of mine better; he shall hear of me one day."

Lady Dampier was a very strong partisan of the French Protestant Church. Mme. Tourneur used to hope that she would come to Paris again and carry home with her the fame of her virtues, and her influence, and her conversion; and in the meanwhile the weary round of poor Elly's daily existence went on. To-day, for two lonesome hours, she stood leaning at that window with the refrain of the distant music echoing in her ears long after it had died away. It was like the remembrance of the past pleasures of her short life. Such a longing for sympathy, for congenial spirits, for the pleasures she loved so dearly, came over her, that the great hot tears welled into her eyes, and the bitterest tears are those which do not fall. The gate bell rang at last, and Clementine walked across the yard to unbolt, to unbar, and to let in Monsieur Tourneur, with books under his arm, and a big stick. Then the bell rang again, and Madame Tourneur followed, dressed in prim scant clothes, accompanied by another person even primmer and scantier than herself; this was a widowed step-sister of M. Tourneur's, who, unluckily, had no home of her own, so the good man received her and her children into his. Lastly, Elizabeth, from her window, saw Anthony arrive with four of the young Protestants, all swinging their legs and arms. (The fifth was detained at home with a bad swelled face.) All the others were now coming back to dinner, after attending a class at the Pasteur Boulot's. They clattered past the door of Elly's room — a bare little chamber, with one white curtain she had nailed up herself, and a straight bed and a chair. A clock struck five. A melancholy bell presently sounded through the house, and a strong smell of cabbage came in at the open window. Elly looked in the glass; her rough hair was all standing on end curling, her hands were streaked with chalk and brick from the window, her washed-out blue cotton gown was creased and tumbled. What did it matter? she shook her head, as she had a way of doing, and went downstairs as she was. On the way she met two untidy-looking little girls, and then clatter, clatter, along the uncarpeted passage, came the great big nailed boots of the pupils; and then at the dining-room door there was Clementine in a yellow gown — much smarter and trimmer than Elizabeth's blue cotton — carrying a great long loaf of sour bread.

Madame Tourneur was already at her post, standing at the head of the table, ladling out the cabbage soup with the pieces of bread floating in every plate. M. Tourneur was eating his dinner quickly; he had to examine a class for confirmation at six, and there was a prayer meeting at seven. The other prim lady sat opposite to him with her portion before her. There was a small table-cloth, streaked with blue, and not over clean; hunches of bread by every plate, and iron knives and forks. Each person said grace to himself as he came and took his place. Only Elizabeth flung herself down in a chair, looked at the soup, made a face, and sent it away untasted.

"Elizabeth, ma fille, vous ne mangez pas," said M. Tourneur, kindly.

"I can't swallow it!" said Elizabeth.

"When there are so many poor people starving in the streets, you do not, I suppose, expect us to sympathize with such pampered fancies?" said the prim lady.

Although the sisters-in-law were apparently very good friends, there was a sort of race of virtue always being run between them, and just now Elly's shortcomings were a thorn in her mother's side, so skilfully were they wielded by Mrs. Jacob. Lou-Lou and Tou-Tou, otherwise Louise and Thérèse, *her* daughters, were such good, stupid, obedient, uninteresting little girls, that there was really not a word to say against them

in retort; and all that Elly's mother could do, was to be even more severe, more uncompromising than Madame Jacob herself. And now she said, —

"Nonsense, Elizabeth; you must really eat your dinner. Clementine, bring back Miss Elizabeth's plate."

M. Tourneur looked up — he thought the soup very good himself, but he could not bear to see anybody distressed. "Go and fetch the bouillie quickly, Clementine. Why should Elizabeth take what she does not like? Bose," said he to his sister, "do you remember how our poor mother used to make us breakfast off — *porridge* I think she called it — and what a bad taste it had, and how we used to cry?"

"We never ungratefully objected to good soup," said Bose. "I make a point of never giving in to Lou-Lou and Tou-Tou when they have their fancies. I care more for the welfare of their souls than for pampering their bodies."

"And I only care for my body," Elly cried. "Mamma, I like porridge, will you have some for me?"

"Ah! hush! hush! Elizabeth. You do not think what you say, my poor child," said Tourneur.

"What is mere eating and drinking, what is food, what is raiment, but dust and rottenness? You only care for your body! — for that mass of corruption. Ah, do not say such things, even in jest. Remember, that for every idle word—"

"And is there to be no account for spiteful words?" interrupted Elizabeth, looking at Mrs. Jacob.

Monsieur Tourneur put down the glass of wine he was raising to his lips, and with sad, reproachful glances, looked at the unruly stepdaughter. Madame Jacob, shaking with indignation, cast her eyes up and opened her mouth, and Elizabeth began to pout her red lips. One minute and the storm would have burst, when Anthony upset a jug of water at his elbow, and the stream trickled down and down the table-cloth. These troubled waters restored peace for the moment. Poor Tourneur was able to finish his meal, in a puddle truly, but also in silence. Mrs. Jacob, who had received a large portion of the water in her lap, retired to change her dress, the young Christians sniggered over their plates, and Anthony went on eating his dinner.

I don't offer any excuse for Elizabeth. She was worried, and vexed, and tried beyond her powers of endurance, and she grew more wayward, more provoking every day. It is very easy to be good-natured, good-tempered, thankful and happy, when you are in the country you love, among your own people, living your own life. But if you are suddenly transplanted, made to live some one else's life, expected to see with another man's eyes, to forget your own identity almost, all that happens is, that you do not do as you were expected. Sometimes it is a sheer impossibility. What is that rare proverb about the shoe? Cinderella slipped it on in an instant; but you know her poor sisters cut off their toes and heels, and could not screw their feet in, though they tried ever so. Well, they did their best; but Elly did not try at all, and that is why she was to blame. She was a spoiled child, both by good and ill fortune. Sometimes, when she sat sulking, her mother used to look wondering at her with her black eyes, without saying a word. Did it ever occur to her that this was her work, that Elizabeth might have been happy now, honoured, prosperous, well loved, but for a little lie which had been told — but for a little barrier which had been thrown, one summer's day, between her and John Dampier? Caroline had long ceased to feel remorse — she used to say to herself that it would be much better for Elizabeth to marry Anthony, she would make anybody else miserable with her wayward temper. Anthony was so obtuse, that Elizabeth's fancies would not try him in the least. Mrs Gilmour chose to term obtuseness a certain chivalrous devotion which the young man felt for her daughter.

She thought him dull and slow, and so he was; but at the same time there were gleams of shrewdness which came quite unexpectedly, you knew not whence; there was a certain reticence and good sense of which people had no idea. Anthony knew much more about her and about his father than they knew about him. Every day he was learning to read the world. Elly had taught him a great deal, and he in return was her friend always.

Elly went out into the courtyard after dinner, and Anthony followed her — one little cousin had hold of each of his hands. If the little girls had not been little French Protestant girls, Elizabeth would have been very fond of them, for she loved children; but when they ran up to her, she motioned them away impatiently, and Anthony told them to go and run round the garden. Elizabeth was sitting on a tub which had been overturned, and resting her pretty dishevelled head wearily against the wall. Anthony looked at her for a minute.

“Why do you never wear nice dresses now,” said he at last, “but this ugly old one always?”

“Is it not all vanity and corruption?” said Elizabeth, with a sneer; “how can you ask such a question? Everything that is pretty is vanity. Your aunt and my mother only like ugly things. They would like to put out my eyes because they don’t squint; to cut off my hair because it is pretty.”

“Your hair! It is not at all pretty like that,” said Anthony; “it is all rough, like mine.” Elizabeth laughed and blushed very sweetly. “What is the use, who cares?”

“There are a good many people coming tonight,” said Anthony. “It is our turn to receive the prayer-meeting. Why should you not smooth your curls and change your dress?”

“And do you remember what happened once, when I did dress, and make myself look nice?” said Elizabeth, flashing up, and then beginning to laugh.

Anthony looked grave and puzzled; for Elizabeth had caused quite a scandal in the community on that occasion. No wonder the old ladies in their old dowdy bonnets, the young ones in their ill-made woollen dresses, the preacher preaching against the vanities of the world, had all been shocked and outraged, when after the sermon had begun, the door opened, and Elizabeth appeared in the celebrated pink silk dress, with flowers in her hair, white lace falling from her shoulders, a bouquet, a gold fan, and glittering bracelets. Mme. Jacob’s head nearly shook off with horror. The word was with the Pasteur Boulot, who did not conceal his opinion, and whose strictures introduced into the sermon were enough to make a less hardened sinner quake in her shoes. Many of the great leaders of the Protestant world in Paris had been present on that occasion. Some would not speak to her, some did speak very plainly. Elizabeth took it all as a sort of triumph, bent her head, smiled, fanned herself, and when ordered out of the room at last by her mother, left it with a splendid curtsy to the Rev. M. Boulot, and thanked him for his beautiful and improving discourse. And then, when she was upstairs in her own room again, where she had been decking herself for the last hour — the tallow candle was still spluttering on the table — her clothes all lying about the room — she locked the door, tore off her ornaments, her shining dress, and flung herself down on the floor, crying and sobbing as if her heart would break. “Oh, I want to go! I want to go! Oh, take me away!” she prayed and sobbed. “Oh, what harm is there in a pink gown more than a black one! Oh, why does not John Dampier come and fetch me? Oh, what dolts, what idiots, those people are! What a heart-broken girl I am! Poor Elly, poor Elly, poor, poor girl!” said she, pitying herself, and stroking her tear-stained cheeks. And so she went on, until she had nearly worn herself out, poor child. She really was almost heart-broken. This uncongenial

atmosphere seemed to freeze and chill her best impulses. I cannot help being sorry for her, and sympathizing with her against that rigid community down below, and yet, after all, there was scarcely one of the people whom she so scorned who was not a better Christian than poor Elizabeth, more self-denying, more scrupulous, more patient in effort, more diligent, — not one of them that did not lead a more useful life than hers. It was in vain that her mother had offered her classes in the schools, humble neighbours to visit, sick people to tend. “Leave me alone,” the girl would say. “You know how I hate all that cant!” Mme. Tournour herself spent her whole days doing good, patronizing the poor, lecturing the wicked, dosing the sick, superintending countless charitable communities. Her name was on all the committees, her decisions were deferred to, her wishes consulted. She did not once regret the step she had taken; she was a clever, ambitious, active-minded woman; she found herself busy, virtuous, and respected; what more could she desire? Her daughter’s unhappiness did not give her any very great concern. “It would go off in time,” she said. But days went by, and Elly was only more hopeless, more heart-broken; black lines came under the blue eyes; from being a stout hearty girl, she grew thin and languid. Seeing her day by day, they none of them noticed that she was looking ill, except Anthony, who often imagined a change would do her good; only how was this to be managed? He could only think of one way. He was thinking of it, as he followed her out into the courtyard to-day. The sun was low in the west, the long shadows of the trees flickered across the stones. Say what he would, the blue gown, the wall, the yellow hair, made up a pretty little piece of colouring. With all her faults, Anthony loved Elly better than any other human being, and would have given his life to make her happy.

“I cannot bear to see you so unhappy,” said he, in French, speaking very simply, in his usual voice. “Elizabeth, why don’t you do as your mother has done, and marry a French pasteur, who has loved you ever since the day he first saw you? You should do as you liked, and leave this house, where you are so miserable, and get away from aunt Bose, who is so ill-natured. I would not propose such a scheme if I saw a chance for something better; but anything would be an improvement on the life you are leading here. It is wicked and profitless, and you are killing yourself and wasting your best days. You are not taking up your cross with joy and with courage, dear Elizabeth. Perhaps by starting afresh—”

His voice felled him, but his eyes spoke and finished the sentence.

This was Anthony’s scheme. Elly opened her round eyes, and looked at him all amazed and wondering. A year ago it would have been very different, and so she thought as she scanned him. A year ago she would have scorned the poor fellow, laughed at him, tossed her head, and turned away. But was this the Elly of a year ago? This unhappy, broken-spirited girl, with dimmed beauty, dulled spirits, in all her ways so softened, saddened, silenced. It was almost another person than the Elizabeth Gilmour of former times, who spoke, and said, still looking at him steadfastly, “Thank you, Anthony; I will think about it, and tell you to-morrow what — what I think.”

Anthony blushed, and faltered a few unintelligible words, and turned away abruptly, as he saw Madame Jacob coming towards them. As for Elly, she stood quite still, and perfectly cool, and rather bewildered, only somewhat surprised at herself. “Can this be me?” she was thinking. “Can that kind fellow be the boy I used to laugh at so often? Shall I take him at his word? Why not — ?”

But Madame Jacob’s long nose came and put an end to her wonderings. This lady did not at all approve of gossiping; she stepped up with an inquiring sniff, turned round to look after Anthony, and then said, rather viciously, “Our Christian brothers and sisters will assemble shortly for their pious Wednesday meetings. It is not by

exchanging idle words with my nephew that you will best prepare your mind for the exercises of this evening. Retire into your own room, and see if it is possible to compose yourself to a fitter frame of mind. Tou-Tou, Lou-Lou, my children, what are you about?"

"I am gathering pretty flowers, mamma," shouted Lou-Lou.

"I am picking up stones for my little basket," said Tou-Tou, coming to the railing.

"I will allow four minutes," said their mother, looking at her watch. "Then you will come to me, both of you, in my room, and apply yourselves to something more profitable than filling your little baskets. Elizabeth, do you mean to obey me?"

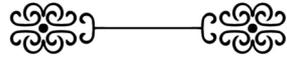
Very much to Madame Jacob's surprise, Elizabeth walked quietly before her into the house without saying one word. The truth was, she was preoccupied with other things, and forgot to be rebellious. She was not even rebellious in her heart when she was upstairs sitting by the bedside, and puzzling her brains over Anthony's scheme. It seemed a relief certainly to turn from the horrible monotony of her daily life, and to think of his kindness. He was very rough, very uncouth, very young; but he was shrewd, and kind, and faithful, more tolerant than his father, — perhaps because he felt less keenly; — not sensitive, like him, but more patient, dull over things which are learnt by books, but quick at learning other not less useful things which belong to the experience of daily life. When Elly came down into the réfectoire where they were all assembled, her mother was surprised to see that she had dressed herself, not in the objectionable pink silk, but in a soft grey stuff gown, all her yellow hair was smooth and shining, and a little locket hung round her neck tied with a blue ribbon. The little bit of colour seemed reflected somehow in her eyes. They looked blue to-night, as they used to look once when she was happy. Madame Tourneur was quite delighted, and came up and kissed her, and said, "Elly, this is how I like to see you."

Madame Jacob tossed her head, and gave a rough pull at the ends of the ribbon. "*This* was quite unnecessary," said she.

"Ah!" cried Elly, "you have hurt me."

"Is not that the locket Miss Dampier gave you?" said Madame Tourneur. "You had best put such things away in your drawer another time. But it is time for you to take your place."

CHAPTER IV.



UNHAPPIER ARE THEY to whom a higher instinct has been given, who struggle to be persons, not machines; to whom the universe is not a warehouse, or at best a fancy bazaar, but a mystic temple and hall of doom.

A NUMBER of straw chairs were ranged along the room, with a row of seats behind, for the pasteurs who were to address the meeting.

The people began to arrive very punctually: One or two grand-looking French ladies in cashmeres, a good many limp ones, a stray man or two, two English clergymen in white neckcloths, and five or six Englishwomen in old bonnets. A little whispering and chattering went on among the young French girls, who arrived guarded by their mothers. The way in which French mothers look after their daughters, tie their bonnet-strings, pin their collars, carry their books and shawls, &c., and sit beside them, and always answer for them if they are spoken to, is very curious. Now and then, however, they relax a little, and allow a little whispering with young companions. There was a low murmur and a slight bustle as four pasteurs of unequal heights walked in and placed themselves in the reserved seats. M. Stephen Tourneur followed and took his place. With what kind steadfast glances he greeted his audience! Even Elizabeth could not resist the charm of his manner, and she admired and respected him, much as she disliked the exercise of the evening.

His face lit up with Christian fervour, his eyes shone and gleamed with kindness, his voice, when he began to speak, thrilled with earnestness and sincerity. There was at times a wonderful power about the frail little man, the power which is won in many a desperate secret struggle, the power which comes from a whole life of deep feeling and honest endeavour. No wonder that Stephen Tourneur, who had so often wrestled with the angel and overcome his own passionate spirit, should have influence over others less strong, less impetuous than his own. Elly could not but admire him and love him, many of his followers worshipped him with the most affecting devotion; Anthony, his son, loved him too, and would have died for him in a quiet way, but he did not blindly believe in his father.

But listen! What a host of eloquent words, of tender thoughts come alive from his lips to-night. What reverent faith, what charity, what fervour! The people's eyes were fixed upon his kind, eloquent face, and their hearts all beat in sympathy with his own.

One or two of the Englishwomen began to cry. One French lady was swaying herself backwards and forwards in rapt attention; the two clergymen sat wondering in their white neckcloths. What would they give to preach such sermons? And the voice went on uttering, entreating, encouraging, rising and sinking, ringing with passionate cadence. It ceased at last, and the only sounds in the room were a few sighs, and the suppressed sobs of one or two women. Elizabeth sighed among others, and sat very still with her hands clasped in her lap. For the first time in her life she was wondering whether she had not perhaps been in the wrong hitherto, and Tourneur, and Madame Jacob, and all the rest in the right — and whether happiness was not the last thing to search for, and those things of which he had spoken, the first and best and only necessities. Alas! what strange chance was it that at that moment she raised her head and looked up with her great blue eyes, and saw a strange familiar face under one of the dowdy English bonnets — a face, thin, pinched, with a hooked nose, and sandy

hair — that sent a little thrill to her heart, and made her cry out to herself eagerly, as a rush of old memories and hopes came over her, that happiness was sent into the world for a gracious purpose, and that love meant goodness and happiness too sometimes. And, yes — no — yes — that was Lady Dampier! and was John in Paris, perhaps? and Miss Dampier? and were the dear, dear old days come back? —

After a few minutes the congregation began to sing a hymn, the English ladies joining in audibly with their queer accents. The melody swayed on, horribly out of tune and out of time, in a wild sort of minor key. Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou sang, one on each side of their mother, exceedingly loud and shrill, and one of the clergymen attempted a second, after which the discordance reached its climax. Elly had laughed on one or two occasions, and indeed I do not wonder. To-day she scarcely heard the sound of the voices. Her heart was beating with hope, delight, wonder; her head was in a whirl, her whole frame trembling with excitement, that increased every instant. Would M. Boulot's sermon never come to an end? Monsieur Bontemps' exposition, Monsieur de Marveille's reports, go on for ever and ever?

But at last it was over: a little rustling, a little pause, and all the voices beginning to murmur, and the chairs scraping; people rising, a little group forming round each favourite pasteur, hands outstretched, thanks uttered, people coming and going. With one bound Elly found herself standing by Lady Dampier, holding both her hands, almost crying with delight. The apathetic English lady was quite puzzled by the girl's exaggerated expressions. She cared very little for Elly Gilmour herself; she liked her very well, but she could not understand her extraordinary warmth of greeting. However, she was carried away by her feelings to the extent of saying, "You must come and see us to-morrow. We are only passing through Paris on our way to Schlangenbad for Lætitia; she has been sadly out of health and spirits lately, poor dear. We are at the Hôtel du Louvre. You must come and lunch with us. Ah! here is your mother How d'ye do, dear Madam Tourneur? What a privilege it has been! What a treat Mossu Tourneur has given us to-night. I have been quite delighted, I assure you," said her ladyship, bent on being gracious.

Mme. Tourneur made the most courteous of salutations. "I am glad you came, since it was so," said she.

"I want you to let Elly come and see me," continued Lady Dampier; "she must come to lunch; I should be so glad if you would accompany her. I would offer to take her to the play, but I suppose you do not approve of such things any more."

"My life is so taken up with other more serious duties," said Mme. Tourneur, with a faint superior smile, "that I have little time for mere worldly amusements. I cannot say that I desire them for my daughter."

"Oh, of course," said Lady Dampier. "I myself — but it is only *en passant*, as we are all going on to Schlangenbad in two days. It is really quite delightful to find you settled here so nicely. What a privilege it must be to be so constantly in Mossu Tourneur's society!"

Madame Tourneur gave a bland assenting smile, and turned to speak to several people who were standing near. "Monsieur de Marveille, are you going? Thanks, I will be at the committee on Thursday without fail. Monsieur Boulot, you must remain a few minutes; I want to consult you about that case in which la Comtesse de Glaris takes so deep an interest. Lady Macduff has also written to me to ask my husband's interest for her. Ah, Lady Sophia! how glad I am you have returned; is Lady Matilda better?"

“Well, I’ll wish you good-by, Madame Tourneur,” said Lady Dampier, rather impressed, and not much caring to stand by quite unnoticed while all these greetings were going on. “You will let Elly come to-morrow?”

“Certainly,” said Mme. Tourneur. “You will understand how it is that I do not call. My days are much occupied. I have little time for mere visits of pleasure and ceremony. Monsieur Bontemps, one word—”

“Elly, which is the way out?” said Lady Dampier, abruptly, less and less pleased, but more and more impressed.

“I will show you,” said Elly, who had been standing by all this time, and she led the way bare-headed into the court, over which the stars were shining tranquilly. The trees looked dark and rustled mysteriously along the wall, but all heaven was alight. Elly looked up for an instant, and then turned to her companion and asked her, with a voice that faltered a little, if they were all together in Paris?

“No; Miss Dampier is in Scotland still,” said my lady.

It was not Miss Dampier’s name of which Elizabeth Gilmour was longing to hear, she did not dare ask any more; but it seemed as if a great weight had suddenly fallen upon her heart, as she thought that perhaps, after all, he was not come; she should not hear of him; see him, who knows, perhaps never again?

Elly tried to unbar the great front door to let out her friend; but she could not do it, and called to old Françoise, who was passing across to the kitchen, to come and help her. And suddenly the bolt, which had stuck in some manner, gave way, the gate opened wide, and as it opened Elly saw that there was somebody standing just outside under the lamp-post. The foolish child did not guess who it was, but said “Good-night,” with a sigh, and held out her soft hand to Lady Dampier. And then, all of a sudden the great load went away, and in its place came a sort of undreamt-of peace, happiness, and gratitude. All the stars seemed suddenly to blaze more brightly; all the summer’s night to shine more wonderfully; all trouble, all anxiousness to melt away; and John Dampier turned round and said, —

“Is that you, Elizabeth?”

“And you?” cried Elly, springing forward, with both her hands outstretched. “Ah! I did not think who was outside the door.”

“How did you come here, John?” said my lady, very much flustered.

“I came to fetch you,” said her son. “I wanted a walk, and Letty told me where you were gone.” Lady Dampier did not pay much attention to his explanations; she was watching Elly with a dissatisfied face; and glancing round too, the young man saw that Elly was standing quite still under the archway, with her hands folded, and with a look of dazzled delight in her blue eyes that there was no mistaking.

“You don’t forget your old friends, Elly?” said he.

“I! never, never,” cried Elizabeth.

“And I, too, do not forget,” said he, very kindly, and held out his hand once more, and took hers, and did not let it go. “I will come and see you, and bring Laetitia,” he added, as his mother looked up rather severely. “Good-night, dear Elly? I am glad you are unchanged.”

People, however slow they may be naturally, are generally quick in discovering admiration, or affection, or respectful devotion to themselves. Lady Dampier only suspected, her son was quite sure of poor Elly’s feelings, as he said goodnight under the archway. Indeed he knew a great deal more about them than did Elizabeth herself. All she knew was that the great load was gone; and she danced across the stones of the yard, clapping her hands in her old happy way. The windows of the salle were lighted up. She could see the people within coming and going, but she did not notice

Anthony, who was standing in one of them. He, for his part, was watching the little dim figure dancing and flitting about in the starlight. Had he, then, anything to do with her happiness? Was he indeed so blessed? His heart was overflowing with humble gratitude, with kindness, with wonder. He was happy at the moment, and was right to be grateful. She was happy, too — as thoroughly happy now, and carried away by her pleasure, as she had been crushed and broken by her troubles. “Ah! to think that the day has come at last, after watching all this long, long, cruel time! I always knew it would come. Everybody gets what they wish for sooner or later. I don’t think anybody was ever so miserable as I have been all this year, but at last — at last—” No one saw the bright, happy look that came into her face, for she was standing in the dark outside the door of the house. She wanted to dream, she did not want to talk to anybody; she wanted to tell herself over and over again how happy she was; how she had seen him again; how he had looked; how kindly he had spoken to her. Ah! yes, he had cared for her all the time; and now he had come to fetch her away. She did not think much of poor Anthony; if she did, it was to say to herself that somehow it would all come right, and everybody would be as well contented as she was. The door of the house opened while she still stood looking up at the stars. This time it was not John Dampier, but the Pasteur Tourneur, who came from behind it. He put out his hand and took hold of hers.

“You there, Elizabeth! Come in, my child; you will be cold.” And he drew her into the hall, where the Pasteurs Boulot and De Marveille were pulling on their cloaks and hats, and bidding everybody good-night.

The whole night Elizabeth lay starting and waking — so happy that she could not bear to go to sleep, to cease to exist for one instant. Often it had been the other way, and she had been thankful to lay her weary head on her pillow, and close her aching eyes, and forget her troubles. But all this night she lay wondering what the coming day was to bring forth. She had better have gone to sleep. The coming day brought forth nothing at all, except, indeed, a little note from Lætitia, written on a half-sheet of paper, which was put into her hand about eleven o’clock, just as she was sitting down to the *déjeuner à la fourchette*.

*“Hôtel du Rhin, Place Vendôme,
“Wednesday Evening.*

“MY DEAR ELIZABETH,

“I AM so disappointed to think that I shall not perhaps see you after all. Some friends of ours have just arrived, who are going on to Schlangenbad to-morrow, and aunt Catherine thinks it will be better to set off a little sooner than we had intended, so as to travel with them. I wish you might be able to come and breakfast with us about nine to-morrow; but I am afraid this is asking almost too much, though I should greatly enjoy seeing you again. Goodby. If we do not meet now, I trust that on our return in a couple of months we may be more fortunate, and see much of each other. We start at ten, and shall reach Strasbourg about eight.

“Ever, dear Elizabeth,

“Affectionately yours,

“LÆTITIA MALCOLM.”

“What has happened?” said Madame Tourneur, quite frightened, for she saw the girl’s face change and her eyes suddenly filling with tears.

“Nothing has happened,” said Elizabeth. “I was only disappointed to think I should not see them again.” And she put out her hand and gave her mother the note.

“But why care so much for people who do not care for you?” said her mother. “Lady Dampier is one of the coldest women I ever knew; and as for Laetitia, if she loved you in the least, would she write you such a note as this?”

“Mamma! it is a very kind note,” said Elizabeth. “I know she loves me.”

“Do you think she cried over it, as you did?” said her mother. ““ So disappointed —’ more fortunate on our return through Paris?””

“Do not let us judge our neighbours so hastily, my wife,” said M. Tourneur. “Let Elizabeth love her friend. What can she do better?” Caroline looked up with an odd expression, shrugged her shoulders, and did not answer.

Until breakfast was over, Elly kept up pretty well; but when M. Tourneur rose and went away into his writing-room, when Anthony and the young men filed off by an opposite door, and Mme. Tourneur disappeared to look to her household duties — then, when the room was quiet again, and only Madame Jacob remained sewing in a window, and Lou-Lou and Tou-Tou whispering over their lessons, suddenly the canary burst out into a shrill piping jubilant song, and the sunshine poured in, and Elly’s heart began to sink. And then suddenly the horrible reality seemed realized to her...

They were gone — those who had come, as she thought, to rescue her. Could it be true — could it be really true? She had stood lonely on the arid shore waving her signals of distress, and they who should have seen them, never heeded, but went sailing away to happier lands, disappearing in the horizon, and leaving her to her fate. That fate which — it was more than she could bear. It seemed more terrible than ever to her today.... Ah! silly girl, was her life as hard as the lives of thousands struggling along with her in the world, tossed and broken against the rocks, while she, at least, was safely landed on the beach? She had no heart to think of others. She sat sickening with disappointment, and once more her eyes filled up with stinging tears.

“Lou-Lou, Tou-Tou, come up to your lessons,” said Mrs. Jacob. “I do not wish you to see such a wicked example of discontent.” The little girls went off on tip-toe; and when these people were gone, Elizabeth was left quite alone.

“I daresay I am very wicked,” she was saying to herself. “I was made wicked. But this is more than I can bear — to live all day with the people I hate, and then when I do love with my whole heart, to be treated with such cruel indifference — such coldness. He *ought* to know, he must know that he has broken my heart. Why does he look so kindly, and then forget so heartlessly?”

She hid her face in her hands, and bent her head over the wooden table. She did not care who knew her to be unhappy — what pain her unhappiness might give. The person who was likely to be most wounded by her poignant grief came into the room at the end of half-an-hour, and found her sitting still in the same attitude, with her head hanging, and her tears dribbling on the deal table. This was enough answer for poor Anthony.

“Elizabeth,” he faltered, “I see you cannot make up your mind.”

“Ah! no, no, Anthony, not yet,” said Elizabeth; “but you are the only person in the world who cares for me; and indeed, indeed, I am grateful.”

And then the poor little head sank down again overwhelmed with its load of grief.

“Tell me, Elizabeth, is there anything in the world I can do to make you more happy?” said Anthony. “My prayers, my best wishes are yours. Is there nothing else?”

“Only not to notice me,” said Elly; “only to leave me alone.”

And so Anthony, seeing that he could do nothing, went away very sad at heart. He had been so happy and confident the night before, and now he began to fear that what he longed for was never to be his. Poor boy, he buried his trouble in his own heart, and did not say one word of it to father, or mother, or young companions.

Five or six weeks went by, and Elly heard no more of the Dampiers. Every day she looked more ill, more haggard; her temper did not mend, her spirits did not improve. In June the five young men went home to their families. M. and Madame Tournour went down to Fontainebleau for a week. Anthony set off for the South of France to visit an uncle. He was to be ordained in the autumn, and was anxious to pay this visit before his time should be quite taken up by his duties. Clementine asked for a holiday, and went off to her friends at Passy; and Elly remained at home. It was her own fault: Monsieur Tournour had begged her to come with them; her mother had scolded and remonstrated, all in vain. The wayward girl declared that she wanted no change, no company, that she was best where she was. Only for a week? she would stay, and there was an end of it. I think the secret was, that she could not bear to quit Paris, and waited and waited, hoping against hope.

"I am afraid you will quarrel with Madame Jacob," said her mother, as she was setting off.

"I shall not speak to her," said Elly; and for two days she was as good as her word. But on the third day, this salutary silence was broken. Madame Jacob, coming in with her bonnet on, informed Elizabeth that she was going out for the afternoon.

"I confess it is not without great apprehensions, lest you should get into mischief," says the lady.

"And pray," says Elly, "am I more likely to get into mischief than you are? *I am going out.*"

"You will do nothing of the sort," says Madame Jacob.

"I will do exactly as I choose," says Elizabeth.

In a few minutes, a battle royal was raging; Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou look on, all eyes and ears; old Françoise comes up from the kitchen, and puts her head in at the door.

Madame Jacob was desiring her, on no account, to let Elizabeth out that afternoon, when Lou-Lou said, "There, that was the street-door shutting and Tou-Tou said, "She is gone." And so it was.

The wilful Elizabeth had brushed past old Françoise, rushed up to her own room, pulled out a shawl, tied on her bonnet, defiantly, run downstairs and across the yard, and, in a minute, was walking rapidly away without once looking behind her. Down the hill, past the hospital — they were carrying a wounded man in at the door as she passed, and she just caught a glimpse of his pale face, and turned shrinking away. Then she got into the Faubourg St. Honoré, with its shops and its cab-stands, and busy people coming and going; and then she turned up the Rue d'Angoulême. In the Champs Elysées the afternoon sun was streaming; there was a crowd, and, as it happened, soldiers were marching along to the sound of martial music. She saw an empty bench, and sat down for a minute to regain breath and equanimity. The music put her in mind of the day when she had listened at her window — of the day when her heart was so heavy and then so light — of the day when Anthony had told her his scheme, when John Dampier had waited at the door: the day, the only one — she was not likely to forget it — when she had been so happy, just for a little. And now — ? The bitter remembrance came rushing over her; and she jumped up, and walked faster and faster, trying to escape from it.

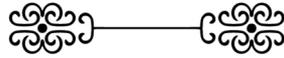
She got into the Tuileries, and on into the Rue de Rivoli, but she thought that people looked at her strangely, and she turned homewards at last. It was lonely,

wandering about this busy city by herself. As she passed by the columns of St. Philip's Church, somebody came out, and the curtain swung back, and Elly, looking up, saw a dim, quiet interior, full of silent rays of light falling from the yellow windows and chequering the marble. She stopped, and went in with a sudden impulse. One old woman was kneeling on the threshold, and Elly felt as if she, too, wanted to fall upon her knees. What tranquil gloom, and silence, and repose! Her own church was only open at certain hours. Did it always happen that precisely at eleven o'clock on Sunday mornings she was in the exact frame of mind in which she most longed for spiritual communion and consolation? To be tightly wedged in between two other devotees, plied with *chaufferettes* by the pew-opener, forced to follow the extempore supplications of the preacher — did all this suffice to her wants? Here was silence, coolness, a faint, half-forgotten smell of incense, there were long, empty rows of chairs, one or two people kneeling at the little altars, five or six little pious candles burning in compliment to the various saints and deities to whom they were dedicated. The rays of the little candles glimmered in the darkness, and the foot-falls fell quietly along the aisle. I, for my part, do not blame this poor foolish heart, if it offered up a humble supplication here in the shrine of the stranger. Poor Elly was not very eloquent; she only prayed to be made a good girl and to be happy. — But, after all, eloquence and long words do not mean any more.

She walked home, looking up at the sunset lines which were streaking the sky freshly and delicately; she thought she saw Madame Jacob's red nose up in a little pink cloud, and began to speculate how she would be received. And she had nearly reached her own door, and was toiling wearily up the last hilly piece of road, when she heard some quick steps behind; somebody passed, turned round, said, "Why, Elly! I was going to see you."

In an instant, Elly's blue eyes were all alight, and her ready hand outstretched to John Dampier — for it was he.

CHAPTER V.



IN LOOKING BACKWARD, they may find that several things which were not the charm have more reality to this groping memory than the charm itself which embalmed them.

HE had time to think, as he greeted her, how worn she looked, how shabbily she was dressed. And yet what a charming, talking, brightening face it was. When Elly smiled, her bonnet and dress became quite new and becoming, somehow. In two minutes he thought her handsomer than ever. They walked on, side by side, up the hilly street. She, trying to hide her agitation, asked him about Lætitia, about his mother, and dear Miss Dampier.

"I think she does care for me still," said Elly; "but you have all left off."

"My dear child," said he, "how can you think anything so foolish?"

"I have nothing else to do," said Elly, plaintively; "all day long I think about those happy times which are gone. I thought you had forgotten me when you did not come."

Dampier laughed a little uneasily. "I have had to take them to their watering-place," said he; "I could not help it. But tell me about yourself. Are you not comfortable?" he asked.

"I am rather unhappy," said Elizabeth. "I am not good, like they are, and oh! I get so tired;" and then she went on and told him what miserable days she spent, and how she hated them, and she longed for a little pleasure, and ease, and happiness.

He was very much touched, and very, very sorry. "You don't look well," he said. "You should have some amusement — some change. I would take you anywhere you liked. Why not come now, for a drive? See, here is a little open carriage passing. Surely, with an old friend like me, there can be no harm." And he signed to the driver to stop.

Elizabeth was quite frightened at the idea, and said, "Oh, no, no! indeed." Whereas, Dampier only said, "Oh, yes! indeed, you must. Why, I knew you when you were a baby — and your father and your grandmother — and I am a respectable middle-aged man, and it will do you good, and it will soon be a great deal too dark for any of your pasteurs to recognize you and report. We have been out riding together before now, — why not come for a little drive in the Bois? Why not?"

So said Elly to herself, doubtfully; and she got in, still hesitating, and in a minute they were rolling away swiftly out at the gates of Paris, out towards the sunset — so it seemed to Elizabeth — and she forgot all her fears. The heavens glowed overhead; her heart beat with intensest enjoyment.

Presently, the twilight came falling with a green glow, with stars, with evening perfumes, with lights twinkling from the carriages reflected on the lakes as they rolled past.

And so at last she was happy, sometimes silent from delight, sometimes talking in her simple, foolish way, and telling him all about herself, her regrets, her troubles — about Anthony. She could not help it — indeed, she could not. Dampier, for his part, cried out at the notion of her marrying Anthony, made fun of him, laughed at him, pitied him. The poor fellow, now that she compared him to John Dampier, did indeed seem dull, and strangely uncouth, and commonplace.

"Marry that cub," said Sir John; "you mustn't do it, my dear. You would be like the princess in the fairy tale, who went off with the bear. It's downright wicked to

think of such a thing. Elizabeth, *promise* me you won't. Does he ever climb up and down a pole? is he fond of buns? is he tame? If your father were alive, would he suffer such a thing? Promise me, Elly, that you will never become Mrs. Bruin."

"Yes; I promise," said Elly, with a sigh.

"But he is so kind. Nobody is as—" And then she stopped, and thought, "Yes; here was some one who was a great deal kinder." Talking to Dampier was so easy, so pleasant, that she scarcely recognized her own words and sentences: it was like music in tune after music out of tune: it was like running on smooth rails after rolling along a stony road: it was like breathing fresh air after a heated stifling atmosphere. Somehow, he met her half-way; she need not explain, recapitulate, stumble for words, as she was forced to do with those practical, impracticable people at home. He understood what she wanted to say before she had half finished her sentence; he laughed at her fine little jokes; he encouraged, he cheered, he delighted her. If she had cared for him before, it was now a mad adoration which she felt for this man. He suited her; she felt now that he was part of her life — the better, nobler, wiser part; and if he was the other half of her life, surely, somehow, she must be as necessary to him as he was to her. Why had he come to see her else? Why had he cared for her, and brought her here? Why was his voice so gentle, his manner so kind and sympathetic? He had cared for her once, she knew he had; and he cared for her still, she knew he did. If the whole world were to deceive her and fail her, she would still trust him. And her instinct was not wrong: he was sincerely and heartily her friend. The carriage put them down a few doors from M. Tournour's house, and then Elly went boldly up to the door and rang at the bell.

"I shall come at four o'clock to-morrow, and take you for a drive," said John; "you look like another woman already."

"It is no use asking Madame Jacob," said Elly; "she would lock me up into my room. I will come somehow. How shall I thank you?"

"By looking well and happy again. I shall be so glad to have cured you."

"And it is so pleasant to meet with such a kind doctor," said Elly, looking up and smiling.

"Good-by, Elly," repeated Sir John, quite affected by her gentle looks.

Old Françoise opened the door. Elly turned a little pale.

"Ah, ha! vous voilà," says the old woman; "méchante fille, you are going to get a pretty scolding. Where have you been?"

"Ah, Françoise!" said Elly, "I have been so happy. I met Sir John Dampier: he is an old, old friend. He took me for a drive in the Bois. Is Madame Jacob very, very angry?"

"Well, you are in luck," says the old woman, who could never resist Elizabeth's pretty pleading ways; "she came home an hour ago and fetched the children, and went out to dine in town, and I told her you were in your room."

"Ah, you dear kind old woman!" said Elly, flinging her arms round her neck, and giving her a kiss.

"There, there!" said the unblushing Françoise; "I will put your couvert in the salle."

"Ah! I am very glad. I am so hungry, Françoise," said Elly, pulling off her bonnet, and shaking her loose hair as she followed the old woman across the courtyard.

So Elizabeth sat down to dine off dry bread and cold mutton. But though she said she was hungry, she was too happy to eat much. The tallow candle flickered on the table. She thought of the candles in St. Philip's Church; then she went over every word, every minute which she had spent since she was kneeling there. Old Françoise

came in with a little cake she had made her, and found Elizabeth sitting, smiling, with her elbows on the table. "Allons, allons!" thought the old cook. "Here, eat, mamzelle," said she; "faut plus sortir sans permission — hein?"

"Thank you, Françoise. How nice! how kind of you!" said Elizabeth, in her bad French — she never would learn to talk properly; and then she ate her cake by the light of the candle, and this little dim tallow wick seemed to cast light and brilliance over the whole world, over her whole life, which seemed to her as if it would go on for ever and ever. Now and then a torturing doubt, a misgiving, came over her, but these she put quickly aside.

Madame Jacob was pouring out the coffee when Elly came down to breakfast next morning, conscious and ashamed, and almost disposed to confess. "I am surprised," said Madame Jacob, "that you have the impudence to sit down at table with me;" and she said it in such an acid tone that all Elly's sweetness, and ashamedness, and penitence turned to bitterness.

"I find it very disagreeable," says Elly; "but I try and resign myself."

"I shall write to my brother about you," continued Madame Jacob.

"Indeed!" says Elizabeth. "Here is a letter which he has written to me. What fun if it should be about you!" It was like Tourneur's handwriting, but it did not come from him. Elly opened it carelessly enough, but Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou exchanged looks of intelligence. Their mother had examined the little missive, and made her comments upon it: —

*"Avignon, Rue de la Clochette,
"Chez le Pasteur Ch. Tourneur.*

"MY DEAR ELLY,

"I THINK of you so much and so constantly that I cannot help wishing to make you think of me, if only for one minute, while you read these few words. I have been telling my uncle about you; it is he who asks me why I do not write. But there are some things which are not to be spoken or to be written — it is only by one's life that one can try to tell them; and you, alas! do not care to hear the story of my life. I wonder will the day ever come when you will listen to it?

"I have been most kindly received by all my old friends down in these parts. Yesterday I attended the service in the Temple, and heard a most soulstirring and eloquent oration from the mouth of M. le Pasteur David. I receive cheering accounts on every side. A new temple has been opened at Beziers, thanks to the munificence of one of our coréligionnaires. The temple was solemnly opened on the Monday of the Pentecost. The discourse of dedication was pronounced by M. le Pasteur Borrel, of Nismes. Seven pasteurs *en robe* attended the ceremony. They tell me that the interdiction which had weighed for some years upon the temple at Fouqueure (Charente) has been taken off, and that the faithful were able to reopen their temple on the first Sunday in June. Need I say what vivid actions of grace were uttered on this happy occasion. A Protestant school has also been established at Montauban, which seems to be well attended. I am now going to visit two of my uncle's *confrères*, MM. Bertoul and Joseph Aubré. Of M. Bertoul I have heard much good.

"Why do I tell you all this? Do you care for what I care? Could you ever bring yourself to lead the life which I propose to lead? Time only will show, dear Elizabeth. It will also show to you the faithfulness and depth of my affection.

"A. T."

Elly put the letter down with a sigh, and went on drinking her coffee and eating her bread. Madame Jacob hemmed and tried to ask her a question or two on the subject, but Elly would not answer. Elly sometimes wondered at Anthony's fancy for her, knowing how little suited she was to the way of life she was leading; she was surprised that his rigid notions should allow him to entertain such an idea for an instant. But the truth was that Anthony was head over ears in love with her, and thought her perfection at the bottom of his heart.

Poor Anthony! This is what he got in return for his letter: —

“MY DEAR ANTHONY, “IT cannot be — never — never. But I do care for you, and I mean to always. For you are my brother in a sort of way.

“I am your affectionate, grateful ELLY.

“P. S. — Your father and my mother are away at Fontainebleau. Madame Jacob is here, and more disagreeable than anything you can imagine.”

And so it was settled; and Elly never once asked herself if she had been foolish or wise; but, after thinking compassionately about Anthony for a minute or two, she began to think about Dampier, and said to herself that she had followed his advice, and he must know best; and Dampier himself, comfortably breakfasting in the coffee-room of the hotel, was thinking of her, and, as he thought, put away all unpleasant doubts or suggestions. “Poor little thing! dear little thing!” he was saying to himself. “I will not leave her to the tender mercies of those fanatics. She will die — I see it in her eyes — if she stays there! My mother or aunt Jean must come to her help; we must not desert her. Poor, poor little Elly, with her wistful face! Why did not she make me marry her a year ago? I was very near it.”

He was faithful next day to his appointment, and Elly arrived breathless. “Madame Jacob had locked her up in her room,” she said, only she got out of window and clambered down by the vine, and here she was. “But it is the last time,” she added. “Ah! let us make haste; is not that Françoise?” He helped her in, and in a minute they were driving away along the Faubourg. Elly let down the veil. John saw that her hand was trembling, and asked if she was afraid?

“I am afraid, because I know I am doing wrong,” said Elly; “only I think I should have died for want of fresh air in that hateful prison, if I had not come.”

“You used to like your little apartment near the Madeleine better,” said Dampier; “that was not a prison.”

“I grow sick with regret when I think of those days,” Elly said. “Do you know that day you spoke to us in the Tuileries was the last happy day of my life, except —— —”

“Except?” said Dampier.

“Except yesterday,” said Elly. “It is so delightful to do something wrong again.”

“Why should you think that this is doing wrong?” said Dampier. “You know me, and can trust me — can't you, Elly?”

“Have I shown much mistrust?” said Elly, laughing; and then she added more seriously, “I have been writing to Anthony this morning — I have done as you told me. So you see whether I trust you or not.”

“You have refused him?” said Dampier.

“Yes; are you satisfied?” said Elly, looking with her bright blue-eyed glance.

“He was unworthy of you,” cried Dampier, secretly rather dismayed to find his advice so quickly acted upon. What had he done? would not that marriage, after all,

have been the very best thing for Elly perhaps? He was glad and sorry, but I think he would rather have been more sorry and less glad, and have heard that Elly had found a solution to all her troubles. He thought it necessary to be sentimental; it was the least he could do, after what she had done for him.

“Why wouldn’t you let me in when I came to see you one day long ago, just before I left Paris?” he asked, suddenly. “Do you know what I wanted to say to you?”

Elly blushed up under her veil. “Mamma had desired Clementine to let no one in. Did you not know I would have seen you if I could?”

“I knew nothing of the sort,” said Dampier, rather sadly. “I wish — I wish — I had known it.” He forgot that, after all, that was not the real reason of his going away without speaking. He chose to imagine that this was the reason — that he would have married Elly but for this. He forgot his own careful scruples and hesitations; his doubts and indecision; and now to-day he forgot everything, except that he was very sorry for Elly, and glad to give her a little pleasure. He did not trouble himself as to what people would say of her — of a girl who was going about with a man who was neither her brother nor her husband. Nobody would know her. The only people to fear were the people at home, who should never hear anything about it. He would give her and give himself a little happiness, if he could; and he said to himself that he was doing a good action in so doing; he would write to his aunt about her, he would be her friend and her doctor, and if he could bring a little colour in those wasted cheeks and happiness into those sad eyes, it would be wicked and cruel not to do so.

And so, like a quack doctor, as he was, he administered his drug, which soothed and dulled her pain for the moment, only to increase and hasten the progress of the cruel malady which was destroying her. They drove along past the Madeleine, along the broad glittering Boulevards, with their crowds, their wares, people thronging the pavements, horses and carriages travelling alongside with them; the world, the flesh, and the devil, jostling and pressing past.

“There is a theatre,” cried Elly, as they came to a sudden stop. “I wonder, shall I ever go again? What fun it used to be.”

“Will you come to-night?” asked Dampier, smiling. “I will take care of you.”

Elly, who had found her good spirits again, laughed and clasped her hands. “How I should like it. Oh! how I wish it was possible, but it would be quite, quite impossible.”

“Have you come to think such vanities wrong?” said Dampier.

“Not wrong. Where is the harm? Only unattainable. Imagine Madame Jacob; think of the dragons, who would tear me to pieces if they found me out — of Anthony — of my stepfather.”

“You need not show them the play-bill,” said Dampier, laughing. “You will be quite sure of not meeting any of the pasteurs there. Could not you open one of those barred windows and jump out. I would come with a ladder of ropes, if you will let me.”

“I should not want a ladder of ropes,” said Elly; “the windows are quite close to the ground. What fun it would be! but it is quite, quite impossible, of course.”

Dampier said no more. He told the driver to turn back, and to stop at the Louvre; and he made her get out, and took her upstairs into the great golden hall with the tall windows, through which you can see the Seine as it rashes under the bridges, and the light as it falls on the ancient stately quays and houses, on the cathedral, on the towers of Paris. It was like enchantment to Elly; all about the atmosphere was golden, was bewitched. She was eagerly drinking her cup of happiness to the dregs, she was in a sort of glamour. She hardly could believe that this was herself.

They went and sat down on the great round sofa in the first room, opposite the "Marriage of Cana," with "St. Michael killing the Dragon" on one side, and the green pale wicked woman staring at them from behind: the pale woman with the unfathomable face. Elly kept turning round every now and then, fascinated by her cold eyes. Dampier was a connoisseur, and fond of pictures, and he told Elizabeth all about those which he liked best; told her about the painters — about their histories. She was very ignorant, and scarcely knew the commonest stories. How she listened, how she treasured up his words, how she remembered, in after days, every tone as he spoke, every look in his kind eyes! He talked when he should have been silent, looked kind when he should have turned his eyes away. What cruel kindness! what fatal friendship! He imagined she liked him; he knew it, indeed: but he fancied that she liked him and loved him in the same quiet way in which he loved her — hopelessly, regretfully, resignedly. As he walked by her side along these wonderful galleries, now and then it occurred to him that, perhaps, after all, it was scarcely wise; but he put the thought quickly away, as I have said already, and blinded himself, and said, surely it was right. They were standing before a kneeling abbess in white flannel, painted by good old Philip of Champagne, and laughing at her droll looks and her long nose, when Sir John, happening to turn round, saw his old acquaintance De Vaux coming directly towards them, with his eye-glasses stuck over his nose, and his nose in the air. He came up quite close, stared at the abbess, and walked on without apparently seeing or recognizing them. Elly had not turned her head, but Dampier drew a long breath when he was gone. Elly wondered to see him looking so grave when she turned round with a smile and made some little joke. "I think we ought to go, Elly," said he. "Come; this place will soon be shut."

They drove home through the busy street, once more, through the golden sunset. They stopped at the corner by the hospital, and Elly said "Good-by," and jumped out. As Elly was reluctantly turning to go away, Dampier felt that he *must* see her once more; that he *couldn't* part from her now. "Elly," he said, "I shall be here at six o'clock on Friday. This is Tuesday, isn't it? and we must go to the play just once together. Won't you come? Do, please, come?"

"Shall I come? I will think about it all to-morrow," said Elly, "and make up my mind." And then Dampier watched the slim little figure disappear under the door-way.

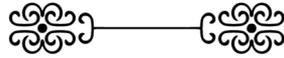
Fortune was befriending Elly to-day. Old Françoise had left the great door open, and now she slipped in and ran up to her own room, where she found the key in the lock. She came down quite demurely to dinner when Lou-Lou came to summon her to the frugal repast.

All dinner-time she thought about her scheme, and hesitated, and determined, and hesitated, and wished wistfully, and then suddenly said to herself that she would be happy her own way, come what might. "We will eat, drink, and be merry," said Elly to herself, with a little wry face at the cabbage, "for to-morrow we die."

And so the silly girl almost enjoyed the notion of running wild in this reckless way. Her whole life, which had been so dull and wearisome before, glittered with strange happiness and bewildering hope. She moved about the house like a person in a dream. She was very silent, but that of late had been her habit. Madame Jacob looked surprised sometimes at her gentleness, but thought it was all right, and did not trouble herself about much else besides Tou-Tou's and Lou-Lou's hymns and lessons. She had no suspicion. She thought that Elizabeth's first escapade had been a mere girlish freak; of the second she knew nothing; of the third not one dim imagination entered her head. She noticed that Elly did not eat, but she looked well and came dancing into the room, and she (Mme. Jacob) supposed it was all right. Was it all right? The whole

summer nights Elly used to lie awake with wide-open eyes, or spring from her bed, and stand for long hours leaning from her window, staring at the stars and telling them all her story. The life she was leading was one of morbid excitement and feverish dreams.

CHAPTER VI.



WHAT ARE WE sent on earth for? Say to toil,
Nor seek to leave the tending of the vines,
For all the heat of day till it declines,
And death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.

MADAME JACOB had a friend at Asnières, an old maiden lady, Tou-Tou's godmother, who was well to do in the world, with her 200l. a year, it was said, and who lived in a little Chinese pagoda by the railway. Now and then this old lady used to write and invite Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou and their mother to come and see her, and you may be sure her invitations were never disregarded.

Mme. Jacob did look at Elizabeth rather doubtfully when she found on Wednesday morning the usual ill-spelt, ill-written little letter. But, after all, Tou-Tou's prospects were not to be endangered for the sake of looking after a young woman like Elizabeth, were she ten times more wayward and ill-behaved, and so the little girls were desired to make up their paquets. It was a great event in Mme. Jacob's eyes; the house echoed with her directions; Françoise went out to request assistance, and came back with a friend, who helped her down with the box. The little girls stood at the door to stop the omnibus, which was to take them to the station. They were off at last. The house door closed upon them with a satisfactory bang, and Elly breathed freely and ran through the deserted rooms, clapping and waving her hands, and dancing her steps, and feeling at last that she was free. And so the morning hours went by. Old Françoise was not sorry either to see everybody go. She was sitting in the kitchen in the afternoon peeling onions and potatoes, when Elly came wandering in in her restless way, with her blue eyes shining and her curly hair pushed back.

What a tranquil little kitchen it was, with a glimpse of the courtyard outside, and the cocks and the hens, and the poplar-trees waving in the sunshine, and the old woman sitting in her white cap busy at her homely work. Elly did not think how tranquil it was, but said to herself as she looked at Françoise, how old she was, and what a strange fate hers, that she should be there quietly peeling onions at the end of her life. What a horrible fate, thought Elizabeth, to be sitting by one's grave, as it were, paring vegetables and cooking broth to the last day of one's existence. Poor Françoise! And then she said out loud, "Françoise, tell me, are cooks like ladies; do they get to hate their lives sometimes? Are you not tired to death of cooking *pot-au-feu*?"

"I am thankful to have *pot-au-feu* to cook," said Françoise. "Mademoiselle, I should like to see you *éplucher* vegetables sometimes, as I do, instead of running about all day. It would be much better for you."

"Écoutez, Françoise," said Elly, imploringly; "when I am old like you, I will sit still by the fire; now that I am young I want to run about. I am the only young person in this house. They are all old here, and like dead people, for they only think of heaven."

"That is because they are on the road," said Françoise. "Ah! they are good folks — they are."

"I see no merit in being good," Elizabeth said, crossly, sitting down on the table and dabbling her fingers in a bowl of water, which stood there; "they are good

because they like it. It amuses them, it is their way of thinking — they like to be better than their neighbours.”

“*Fi donc*, Elizabeth!” said Françoise. “You do not amuse them; but they are good to you. Is it Anthony’s way of thinking when he bears with all your caprices? When my master comes home quite worn out and exhausted, and trudges off again without so much as waiting for his soup, if he hears he is wanted by some poor person or other, does he go because it pleases him, or because he is serving the Lord in this world, as he hopes to serve him in the next?”

Elly was a little ashamed, and said, looking down, “Have you always lived here with him, Françoise?”

“Not I,” said Françoise; “ten years, that is all. But that is long enough to tell a good man from a bad one. Good people live for others, and don’t care about themselves. I hope when I have known you ten years, that you too will be a good woman, mademoiselle.”

“Like Madame Jacob?” said Elly.

Françoise shrugged her shoulders rather doubtfully, and Elly sat quite still watching her. Was it not strange to be sitting there in this quiet everyday kitchen, with a great unknown world throbbing in her heart. “How little Françoise guesses,” thought Elly; “Françoise, who is only thinking of her marmite and her potatoes.” Elly did not know it, but Françoise had a very shrewd suspicion of what was going on in the poor little passionate heart. “The girl is not suited here,” thought the old woman. “If she has found some one, so much the better; Clementine has told me something about it. If madame were to drive him off again, that would be a pity. But I saw them quite plainly that day I went to Martin, the chemist’s, driving away in that little carriage, and I saw him that night when he was waiting for his mother.”

So old Françoise peels potatoes, and Elly sits wondering and saying over to herself, “Good people live for others.” Who had she ever lived for but for herself? Ah! there was one person whom she would live and die for now. Ah! at last she would be good. “And about the play?” thought Elly; “shall I go — shall I send him word that I will not? There is no harm in a play; why should I not please him and accept his kindness? it is not the first time that we have been there together. I know that plays are not wrong, whatever these stupid people say. Ah! surely if happiness is sent to me, it would be wicked to turn away, instead of being always — always grateful all my life.” And so, though she told herself that it could not be wrong to go, she forgot to tell herself that it was wrong to go with him; her scruples died away one by one; once or twice she thought of being brave and staying away, and sending a message by old Françoise, but she only thought of it.

All day long, on Friday, she wandered about the empty house, coming and going, like a girl bewitched. She went into the garden; she picked flowers and pulled them to pieces, trying to spell out her fate; she tried to make a wreath of vine-leaves, but got tired, and flung it away. Old Françoise, from her kitchen window, watched her standing at the grating and pulling at the vine; but the old woman’s spectacles were somewhat dim, and she did not see Elly’s two bright feverish eyes and her burning cheeks from the kitchen window. As the evening drew near, Elly’s cheeks became pale, and her courage nearly failed her, but she had been three days at home. Monsieur and Madame Tourneur were expected the next morning; she had not seen Dampier for a long, long time — so it seemed to her. Yes, she would go; she did not care. Wrong? Right? It was neither wrong nor right, — it was simply impossible to keep away. She could not think of one reason in the world why she should stop. She felt a thousand in her heart urging, ordering, compelling her to go. She went up to her

own room after dinner, and began to dress, to plait, and to smooth her pretty curly hair. She put on a white dress, a black lace shawl, and then she found that she had no gloves. Some of her ancient belongings she kept in a drawer, but they were not replaced as they wore out. And Elly possessed diamond rings and bracelets in abundance; but neither gloves, nor money to buy them. What did it matter? She did not think about it twice; she put on her shabby bonnet and ran downstairs. She was just going out, when she remembered that Françoise would wonder what had become of her, and so she went to the kitchen-door, opened it a little way, and said, "Good-night, Françoise! don't disturb me to-night, I want to get up early tomorrow."

Françoise, who had invited a friend to spend the evening, said, "Bon soir, mamzelle!" rather crossly, — she did not like her kitchen invaded at all times and hours, — and then Elly was free to go.

She did not get out by the window, there was no need for that, but she unfastened it, and unbarred the shutter on the inside, so that, though everything looked much as usual on the outside, she had only to push, and it would fly open.

As she got to the door, her heart began to beat, and she stopped for an instant to think. Inside, here, where she was standing, was dulness, weariness, security, death; outside, wonderful happiness, dangerous happiness, and life — so it seemed to her. Inside were cocks and hens, and sermons, weary exhortations, old Françoise peeling her onions. Outside, John Dampier waiting, the life she was created for, fresh air, congenial spirits, light and brightness, — and heaven there as well as here, thought Elly, clasping her hands; heaven spreading across the housetops as well as over this narrow courtyard. "What shall I do? Oh! shall I be forgiven? Oh! it will be forgiven me, surely, surely!" the girl sighed, and, with trembling hands, she undid the latch and went out into the dusky street.

The little carriage, as Françoise called it, was waiting, a short way down, at the corner of the hospital and Dampier came to meet her, looking very tall and straight through the twilight. She wondered at his grave, anxious face; but, in truth, he too was exceedingly nervous, though he would not let her know it: He was beginning to be afraid for her, and had resolved that he would not take her out again; it might, after all, be unpleasant for them both; he had seen De Vaux, and found out to his annoyance, that he had recognized them in the Louvre the day before, and had passed them by on purpose. There was no knowing what trouble he might not get poor Elly into. And, besides, his aunt Jean was on her way to Paris. She had been keeping house for Will Dampier, she wrote, and she was coming. Will was on his way to Switzerland, and she should cross with him.

That very day John had received a letter from her, in answer to the one he had written about Elly. He had written it three days ago; but he was not the same man he had been three days ago. He was puzzled, and restless, and thoroughly wretched, that was the truth, and he was not used to be unhappy, and he did not like it. Elly's face haunted him day and night; he thought of her continually; he tried, in vain, to forget her, to put her out of his mind. Well, on the whole, he was glad that his aunt was coming, and very glad that his mother and Lætitia were still away, and unconscious of what he was thinking about.

"So you did not lose courage?" he said, as they were driving off. "How did you escape Madame Jacob?"

"I have been all alone," said Elly, "these two days. How I found courage to come I cannot tell you. I don't quite believe that it is I myself who am here. It seems impossible. I don't feel like myself. I have not for some days past. All I know is, that I

am certain those horrible long days have come to an end." John Dampier was frightened — he hardly knew why — when he heard her say this.

"I hope so, most sincerely," said he. "But, after all, Elly, we men and women are rarely contented; and there are plenty of days, more or less tiresome, in store for me and for you, I hope. We must pluck up our courage and go through with them. You are such a sensitive, weak-minded little girl that you will go on breaking your heart a dozen times a day to the end of your life."

Dampier looked very grave as he spoke, though it was too dark for her to see him. He was angry and provoked with himself, and an insane impulse came over him to knock his head violently against the sides of the cab. Insane, do I say? It would have been the very best thing he could have done. But they drove on all the same: Elly in rapture. She was not a bit afraid now. Her spirits were so high and so daring that they would carry her through anything; and when she was with Dampier she was content to be happy, and not to trouble herself with vague apprehensions. And she was happy now: her eyes danced with delight, her heart beat with expectation, she seemed to have become a child again, she was not like a woman any more.

"Have you not a veil?" said Dampier, as they stopped before the theatre. There was a great light, a crowd of people passing and repassing; other carriages driving up.

"No," said Elly. "What does it matter? Who will know me?"

"Well, make haste. Here, take my arm," said Sir John, hurriedly; and he hastily sprang down and helped her out.

"Look at the new moon," said Elly, looking up smiling.

"Never mind the new moon. Come, Elly," said Dampier. And so they passed on into the theatre.

Dampier was dreading recognition. He had a feeling that they would be sure to come against some one. Elly feared no one. When the play began she sat entranced, thrilling with interest, carried away. *Faust* was the piece which they were representing; and as each scene was played before her, as one change after another came over the piece, she was lost more and more in wonder.

If she looked up for an instant it was to see John Dampier's familiar face opposite; and then outside the box, with its little curtain, great glittering theatre-lights, crystals reflecting the glitter, gilding, and silken drapery; everywhere hundreds of people, silent, and breathless too, with interest, with excitement. The music plays, the scene shifts and changes, melting into fresh combinations. Here is Faust. Listen to him as he laments his wasted life. Of what use is wisdom? What does he care for knowledge? A lonely man without one heart to love, one creature to cherish him. Has he not wilfully wasted the best years of his life? he cries, in a passion of rage and indignation — wasted them in the pursuit of arid science, of fruitless learning? Will these tend him in his old age, soothe his last hours, be to him wife, and children, and household, and holy home ties? Will these stand by his bedside, and close his weary, aching eyes, and follow him to his grave in the churchyard?

Faust's sad complaint went straight to the heart of his hearers. The church bell was ringing up the street. Fathers, mothers, and children, were wending their way obedient to its call. And the poor desolate old man burst into passionate and hopeless lamentation.

It was all so real to Elly that she almost began to cry herself. She was so carried away by the play, by this history of Faust and of Margaret, that it was in vain Dampier begged her to be careful, to sit back in the shade of the curtain, and not to lean forward too eagerly. She would draw back for a minute or two, and then by degrees advance her pretty, breathless head, turning to him every now and then. It was like a

dream to her. Like a face in a dream, too, did she presently recognize the face of De Vaux, her former admirer, opposite, in one of the boxes. But Margaret was coming into the chapel with her young companions, and Elly was too much interested to think of what he would think of her. Just at that moment it was Margaret who seemed to her to be the important person in the world.

De Vaux was of a different opinion: he looked towards them once or twice, and at the end of the second act, Dampier saw him get up and leave his seat. Sir John was provoked and annoyed beyond measure. He did not want him, De Vaux least of all people in the world. Every moment he felt as he had never felt before how wrong it was to have brought Elly, whom he was so fond of, into such a situation. For a moment he was undecided, and then he rose, biting his lips, and opened the door of the box, hoping to intercept him; but there was his Mephistopheles, as ill-luck would have it, standing at the door ready to come in.

“I thought I could not be mistaken,” De Vaux began, with a smirk, bowing, and looking significantly from one to the other. “Did you see me in the gallery of the Louvre the other day?”

Elly blushed up very red, and Dampier muttered an oath as he caught sight of the other man’s face. He was smiling very disagreeably. John glanced a second time, hesitated, and then said, suddenly and abruptly, “No, you are not mistaken. This is Miss Gilmour, my *fiancée*, M. de Vaux. I dare say you are surprised that I should have brought her to the play. It is the custom in our country.” He did not dare look at Elly as he spoke. Had he known what else to say he would have said it.

De Vaux was quite satisfied, and instantly assumed a serious and important manner. The English miss was to him the most extraordinary being in creation, and he would believe anything you liked to tell him of her. He was prepared to sit down in the vacant chair by Elizabeth, and make himself agreeable to her.

The English miss was scarcely aware of his existence. Faust, Margaret, had been the whole world to her a minute ago. Where was she now?...where were they?... Was she the actress? and were they the spectators looking on?...Was that the Truth which he had spoken? Did he mean it? Was there such wonderful, wonderful happiness in store for a poor little wretch like herself? Ah! could it be — could it be true? Her whole soul shone in her trembling eyes, as she looked up for one instant, and upturned her flashing, speaking, beaming face. Dampier was very pale, and was looking vacantly at the stage. Margaret was weeping, for her troubles had begun. Mephistopheles was laughing, and De Vaux chatting on in an agreeable manner, with his hat between his knees. After some time, he discovered that they were not paying attention to one single word he was saying; upon which he rose in an *empressé* manner, wished them good-by politely, and went away, very well pleased with his own good breeding. And then, when he was gone, when the door was shut, when they were alone together, there was a silence, and Elly leant her head against the side of the box; she was trembling so that she could not sit up. And Dampier, looking white and grey in the face somehow, said, in an odd, harsh voice, “Elly, you must not mind what I was obliged to say just now. You see, my dear child, that it doesn’t do. I ought never to have brought you, and I could think of no better way to get out of my scrape than to tell him that lie.”

“It was — it was a lie?” repeated Elly, slowly raising herself upright.

“What could I do?” Sir John continued, very nervously and exceedingly agitated. “Elly, my dear little girl, I could not let him think you were out upon an unauthorized escapade. We all know how it is, but he does not. You must, you do forgive me — only say you do.”

“And it is not true?” said Elly, once more, in a bewildered, piteous way.

“I — I belong to Laetitia. It was settled before we came abroad,” faltered Dampier; and he just looked at her once, and then he turned away. And the light was gone out of her face; all the sparkle, the glitter, the amazement of happiness. Just as this shining theatre, now full of life, of light, of excitement, would be in a few hours black, ghastly, and void. John Dampier did not dare to look at her again — he hesitated, he was picking and choosing the words which should be least cruel, least insulting; and while he was still choking and fumbling, he heard a noise outside, a whispering, as the door flew open. Elly looked up and gave a little low plaintive cry, and two darkling, frowning men in black coats came into the box.

They were the Pasteurs Boulot and Tourneur.

Who cares to witness, who cares to read, who cares to describe scenes such as these? Reproach, condemnation, righteous wrath, and indignation, and then one crushed, bewildered, almost desperate little heart.

She was hurried out into the night air. She had time to say good-by, not one other word. He had not stretched out a hand to save her. The play was going on, all the people were sitting in their places, one or two looked up as she passed by the open doors. Then they came out into the street; the stars were all gone, the night was black with clouds, and a heavy rain was pouring down upon the earth. The drops fell wet upon her bare, uncovered head. “Go under shelter,” said the Pasteur Boulot; but she paid no heed, and in a minute a cab came up, the two men clasped each other’s hands in the peculiar silent way to which they were used. Boulot walked away. And Elly found herself alone, inside the damp vehicle, driving over the stones. Her stepfather had got upon the box: he was in a fury of indignation, so that he could not trust himself to be with her.

His indignation was not what she most feared. Another torturing doubt filled her whole heart. Her agony of hopelessness was almost unendurable: she was chilled through and through, but she did not heed it — and faint, and sick, and wearied, but too unhappy to care. Unhappy is hardly the word — bewilderment, a sort of crushed dull misery, would better describe her state. She felt little remorse: she had done wrong, but not very wrong, she thought. She sat motionless in the corner of the jolting cab, with the rain beating in at the open window, as they travelled through the black night and the splashing streets.

By what unlucky chance had M. Boulot been returning home along the Boulevards about halfpast seven, at the very moment when Elly, jumping from the carriage, stopped to look up at the little new moon? He, poor man, could hardly believe his eyes. He did not believe them, and went home wondering, and puzzling, and asking himself if that audacious girl could be so utterly lost as to set her foot in that horrible den of iniquity. Ah! it was impossible; it was some one strangely like her. She could not be so lost — so perverted. But the chances were still against Elly; for when he reached the modest little apartment where he lived, his maid-servant told him that M. Tourneur had been there some time, and was waiting to see him. And there in the study, reading by the light of the green lamp, sat Tourneur, with his low-crowned hat lying on the table. He had come up on some business connected with an appointment he wanted to obtain for Anthony. His wife was to follow him next day, he said, and then he and Boulot fell to talking over their affairs and Anthony’s prospects and chances.

“Poor Anthony, he has been sorely tried and proved of late,” said his father. “Elizabeth will never make him happy.”

“Never — never — never!” cried Boulot. “Elizabeth! — she! — the last person in the world a pastor ought to think of as a wife!”

“If she were more like her mother,” sighed Tourneur.

“Ah! that would be different,” said Boulot; “but the girl causes me deep anxiety, my friend.

Hers is, I fear, an unconverted spirit. Her heart is of this world; she requires much earnest teaching. Did you take her to Fontainebleau with you?”

“She would not come,” said Tourneur; “she is at home with my sister, Madame Jacob; or rather by herself, for my sister went away a day or two ago.”

“Tourneur, you do not do wisely to leave that girl alone; she is not to be trusted,” said the other, suddenly remembering all his former doubts. And so, when Tourneur asked what he meant, he told him what he had seen. The mere suspicion was a blow for our simple-minded pasteur. He loved Elly; with all her waywardness, there was a look in her eyes which nobody could resist. In his heart of hearts he liked her better for a daughter-in-law than any one of the decorous young women who were in the habit of coming to be catechized by him. But to think that she had deceived him, to think that she had forgotten herself so far, forgotten his teaching, his wishes, his firm convictions, sinned so outrageously! Ah, it was too much; it was impossible, it was unpardonable. He fired up, and in an agitated voice said that it could not be; that he knew her to be incapable of such horrible conduct, and then seizing his hat, he rushed downstairs and called a carriage which happened to be passing by.

“Where are you going?” asked Boulot, who had followed him, somewhat alarmed.

“I am going home, to see that she is there. Safe in her room, and sheltered under her parents’ roof, I humbly pray. Far away from the snares, and dangers, and temptations of the world.”

Alas! poor Elly was not at home, peacefully resting or reading by the lamplight. Françoise, to be sure, told them she was in bed, and Tourneur went hopefully to her door and knocked —

“Elly,” he cried, “mon enfant! êtes-vous là, ma fille? Répondez, Elizabeth!” and he shook the door in his agitation.

Old Françoise was standing by, holding the candle, Boulot was leaning against the wall. But there came no answer. The silence struck chill. Tourneur’s face was very pale, his lips were drawn, and his eyes gleamed as he raised his head. He went away for a minute and came back with a little tool; it did not take long to force back the lock — the door flew open, and there was the empty room all in disorder! In silence truly, but emptiness is not peace always, silence is not tranquillity; a horrible dread and terror came over poor Tourneur; Françoise’s hand, holding the light, began to tremble guiltily. Boulot was dreadfully shocked —

“My poor friend! my poor friend!” he began.

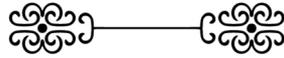
Tourneur put his hand to his head —

“How has this come to pass — am I to blame?” said he. “Oh! unhappy girl, what has she done? — how has she brought this disgrace upon us?” and he fell on his knees by the bedside, and buried his head in the clothes — kneeling there praying for Elly where she had so often knelt and poured out all her sad heart —

Elly, at that minute — sitting in the little box, wondering, delighted, thrilling with interest, with pleasure — did not guess what a strange scene was taking place in her own room at home; she did not once think of what trouble, what grief, she was causing to others, and to herself, poor child, most of all. Only a few minutes more — all the music would cease abruptly for her; all the lights go out; all the sweetness turn to gall and to bitterness. Nearer and nearer comes the sad hour, the cruel awakening;

dream on still for a few happy minutes, poor Elly! — nearer and nearer come these two angry silent men, in their black, sombre clothes — nearer and nearer the cruel spoken word which will chill, crush, and destroy. Elizabeth's dreams lasted a little longer, and then she awoke at last.

CHAPTER VII.



NOT A FLOWER, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, oh! where Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there.

IT was on the evening of the Monday after that Miss Dampier arrived in Paris, with her bonnet-box, her knitting, her carpet-bag. She drove to Meurice's, and hired a room, and then she asked the servants there who knew him whether Sir John Dampier was still staying in the house. They said he had left the place some time before, but that he had called twice that day to ask if she had arrived. And then Miss Dampier, who always liked to make herself comfortable and at home, went up to her room, had the window opened, light brought, and ordered some tea. She was sitting at the table in her cap, in her comfortable black gown, with her knitting, her writing-desk, her books, all set out about the room. She was pouring out tea for herself, and looking as much at home as if she had lived there for months, when the door opened, and her nephew walked in. She was delighted to see him.

"My dear Jack, how good of you to come," said the old lady, looking up at him, and holding out her hand. "But you don't look well. You have been sitting up late and racketting. Will you have some tea to refresh you? I will treat you to anything you like."

"Ah, don't make jokes," said Dampier. "I am very unhappy. Look here, I have got into the most horrible scrape; and not myself only." And the room shook, and the tea-table rattled, as he went pacing up and down the room with heavy footsteps. "I want to behave like a gentleman, and I wake up one morning and find myself a scoundrel. Do you see?"

"Tell me about it, my dear," said Miss Dampier, quietly.

And then poor John burst out and told all his story, confounding himself, and stamping, flinging himself about into one chair after another. "I meant no harm," he said. "I wanted to give her a little pleasure, and this is the end. I think I have broken her heart, and those *pasteurs* have murdered her by this time. They won't let me see her; Tourneur almost ordered me out of the house. Aunt Jean, do say something; do have an opinion."

"I wish your cousin was here," said Miss Dampier; "he is the parson of the family, and bound to give us all good advice; let me write to him, Jack. I have a certain reliance on Will's good sense."

"I won't have Will interfering with my affairs," cried the other, testily. "And you — you will not help me, I see?"

"I will go and see Elizabeth," said Miss Dampier, "to-night, if you like. I am very, very sorry for her, and for you too, John. What more can I say? Come again in an hour, and I will tell you what I think."

So Miss Dampier was as good as her word, and set off on her pilgrimage, and drove along the lighted streets, and then past the cab-stand and the hospital to the house with the shuttered windows. Her own heart was very sad as she got out of the

carriage and rang at the bell. But looking up by chance, she just saw a gleam of light which came from one of the upper windows and played upon the wall. She took this as a good omen, and said to herself that all would be well. Do you believe in omens? The light came from a room where Elly was lying asleep, and dreaming gently, — calm, satisfied, happy for once, heedless of the troubles, and turmoils, and anxieties of the waking people all round about her. She looked very pale, her hands were loosely clasped, the light was in the window, flickering; and meanwhile, beneath the window, in the street, Miss Dampier stood waiting under the stars. She did not know that Elly saw her in her dim dreams, and somehow fancied that she was near.

The door opened at last. How black the courtyard looked behind it! “What do you want?” said Clementine, in a hiss. “Who is it?”

“I want to know how Miss Gilmour is?” said Miss Dampier, quite humbly, “and to see Monsieur or Madame Tourneur.”

“Vous êtes Madame Dampierre,” said Clementine. “Madame est occupée. Elle ne reçoit pas.”

“When will she be disengaged,” said the old lady.

“*Ma foi!*” said Clementine, shrugging her shoulders, “that I cannot tell you. She has desired me to say that she does not wish to see anybody.” And the door was shut with a bang. Elly woke up, startled from her sleep; and old Françoise, happening to come into the room, carried the candle away.

Miss Dampier went home very sad and alarmed, she scarcely knew why. She wrote a tender little letter to Elly next day. It was: —

“DEAR CHILD,

“You must let me come and see you. We are very unhappy, John and I, to think that his imprudence has caused you such trouble. He does not know how to beg you to forgive him — you and M. Tourneur and your mother. He should have known better; he has been unpardonably thoughtless, but he is nearly broken-hearted about it. He has been engaged to Lætitia for three or four months, and you knew how long she has loved him. Dearest Elly, you must let me come and see you, and perhaps one day you may be trusted to the care of an old woman, and you will come home with me for a time, and brighten my lonely little house. Your affectionate old friend,

“JEAN DAMPIER.”

But to this there came no answer. Miss Dampier went again and could not get in. She wrote to Madame Tourneur, who sent back the letter unopened. John Dampier walked about pale and haggard, and remorseful.

One evening he and his aunt were dining in the public room of the hotel, and talking over this affair, when the waiter came and told them that a gentleman wanted to speak to Miss Dampier, and the old lady got up and went out of the room. She came back in an instant, looking very agitated. “John!” she said— “oh, John!” and then began to cry. She could not speak for a minute, while he, quite frightened for his part, hastily went to the door. A tall young man was standing there, wrapped in a loose coat, who looked into his face and said —

“Are you Sir John Dampier? My sister Elizabeth would like to see you again. I have come for you.”

“Your sister Elizabeth!” said Dampier, looking surprised.

The other man’s face changed as he spoke again. “I am Anthony Tourneur; I have come to fetch you, because it is her wish, and she is dying, we fear.”

The two men stood looking at one another for one horrible moment, then Dampier slowly turned his face round to the wall. In that one instant, all that cruel weight which had almost crushed poor Elly to death came and fell upon his broad shoulders, better able, in truth, to bear it, than she had ever been.

He looked up at last. "Have I done this?" said he to Tourneur, in a sort of hoarse whisper. "I meant for the best."

"I don't know what you have done," said the other, very sadly. "Life and death are not in your hands or mine. Let us pray that our mistakes may be forgiven us. Are you ready now?"

Elly's visions had come to an end. The hour seemed to be very near when she should awake from the dream of life. Dim figures of her mother, her step-father, of old Françoise, came and stood by her bed-side. But how far-off they appeared; how distant their voices sounded. Old Françoise came into her room the morning after Elly had been brought home, with some message from Tourneur, desiring her to come downstairs and speak to him: he had been lying awake all night, thinking what he should say to her, praying for her, imploring grace, so that he should be allowed to touch the rebellious spirit, to point out all its errors, to bring it to the light. And, meanwhile, Elly, the rebellious spirit, sat by her bedside in a sort of bewildered misery. She scarcely told herself why she was so unhappy. She wondered a little that there was agony so great to be endured; she had never conceived its existence before. Was he gone for ever — was it Laetitia whom he cared for? "You know that I belong to Laetitia," he had said. How could it be? all heaven and earth would cry out against it. Laetitia's — Laetitia who cared so little, who was so pale, and so cold, and so indifferent? How could he speak such cruel words? Oh, shame, shame! that she should be so made to suffer. "A poor little thing like me," said Elly, "lonely and friendless and heartbroken." The pang was so sharp that it seemed to her like physical pain, and she moaned, and winced, and shivered under it — was it she herself or another person that was here in the darkness? She was cold too, and yet burning with thirst; she groped her way to the jug, and poured out a little water, and drank with eager gulps. Then she began to take off her damp clothes; but it tired her, and she forgot to go on; she dropped her cloak upon the floor and flung herself upon the bed, with a passionate outcry. Her mouth was dry and parched, her throat was burning, her hands were burning too. In the darkness she seemed to see his face, and Laetitia's glaring at her, and she turned sick and giddy at the sight; presently, not theirs only, but a hundred others — Tourneur's, Boulot's, Faust's, and Mephistopheles' — crowding upon her and glaring furiously. She fell into a short, uneasy sleep once, and woke up with a moan as the hospital clock struck three. The moon was shining into her room, ineffably grey, chill, and silent, and as she woke, a horror, a terror, came over her — her heart scarcely beat; she seemed to be sinking and dying away. She thought with a thrill that her last hour was come; the terror seemed to bear down upon her, nearer and closer and irresistible — and then she must have fallen back senseless upon her bed. And so when Françoise came with a message in the morning, which was intended to frighten the rebellions spirit into submission, she found it gone, safe, far away from reproach, from angry chiding, and the poor little body lying lifeless, burnt with fierce fever, and racked with dull pain. All that day Elly was scarcely sensible, lying in a sort of stupor. Françoise, with tender hands, undressed her and laid her within the sheets; Tourneur came and stood by the poor child's bedside. He had brought a doctor, who was bending over her.

“It is a sort of nervous fever,” said the doctor, “and I fear that there is some inward inflammation as well; she is very ill. This must have been impending for some time past.”

Tourneur stood, with clasped hands and a heavy heart, watching the changes as they passed over the poor little face. Who was to blame in this? He had not spoken one word to her the night before. Was it grief? was it repentance? Ah me! Elly was dumb now, and could not answer. All his wrath was turned against Dampier; for Elly he only felt the tenderest concern. But he was too unhappy just now to think of his anger. He went for Madame Tourneur, who came back and set to work to nurse her daughter; but she was frightened and agitated, and seemed scarcely to know what she was about. On the morning of the second day, contrary to the doctor’s expectations, Elly recovered her consciousness; on the third day she was better. And when Tourneur came into the room, she said to him, with one of her old pretty, sad smiles, “You are very angry with me, are you not? You think I ought not to have gone to the play with John Dampier?”

“Ah, my child,” said Tourneur, with a long-drawn, shivering sigh, “I am too anxious to be angry.”

“Did he promise to marry you, Elly?” said Madame Tourneur, who was sitting by her bedside. She was looking so eagerly for an answer that she did not see her husband’s look of reproach.

“How could he?” said Elly, simply. “He is going to marry Laetitia.”

“Tell me, my child,” said Tourneur, gently taking her hand, “how often did you go with him?”

“Three times,” Elly answered, faintly. “Once to the Bois, and once to the Louvre, and then that last time,” and she gasped for breath. Tourneur did not answer, but bent down gently, and kissed her forehead.

It was on that very day that Dampier called. Elly seemed somehow to know that he was in the house. She got excited, and began to wander, and to call him by his name. Tourneur heard her, and turned pale, and set his teeth as he went down to speak to Sir John. In the evening the girl was better, and Anthony arrived from the south. And I think it was on the fifth day that Elly told Anthony that she wanted to see Dampier once again.

“You can guess how it has been,” she said, “and I love him still, but not as I did. Anthony, is it not strange? Perhaps one is selfish when one is dying. But I want to see him — just once again. Everything is so changed. I cannot understand why I have been so unhappy all this time. Anthony, I have wasted all my life; I have made nobody happy — not even you.”

“You have made me love you, and that has been my happiness,” said Anthony. “I have been very unhappy too; but I thank heaven for having known you, Elly.”

Elly thought that she had but a little time left. What was there in the solemn nearness of death that had changed her so greatly? She had no terror: she was ready to lie down and go to sleep like a tired child in its mother’s arms. Worldly! we call some folks worldly, and truly they have lived for to-day and cared for to-day; but for them, as for us, the great to-morrow comes, and then they cease to be worldly — is it not so? Who shall say that such and such a life is wasted, is purposeless? that such and such minds are narrow, are mean, are earthly? The day comes, dawning freshly and stilly, like any other day in all the year, when the secret of their life is ended, and the great sanctification of Death is theirs.

Boulot came to see Tourneur, over whom he had great influence, and insisted upon being shown to Elizabeth’s bedside. She put out her hand and said, “How-d’ye-do,

Monsieur Boulot?" very sweetly, but when he had talked to her for some little time, she stopped him and said, "You cannot know how near these things seem, and how much more great, and awful, and real they are, when you are lying here like me, than when you are standing by another person's sick bed. Nobody can speak of them to me as they themselves speak to me." She said it so simply, with so little intention of offence, that Boulot stopped in the midst of his little sermon, and said farewell quite kindly and gently. And then, not long after he was gone, Anthony came back with the Dampiers.

They walked up the wooden stairs with hearts that ached sorely enough. Miss Dampier was calm and composed again; she had stood by many a death-bed — she was expecting to go herself before very long — but John was quite unnerved. Little Elly, whom he had pitied, and looked down upon, and patronized, was she to be to him from this minute a terror, a life-long regret and remorse? — he could hardly summon courage to walk into the room when the door was opened and Anthony silently motioned him to pass through it.

And yet there was nothing very dreadful. A pale, sweet face lying on the little white bed; the gentle eyes, whose look he knew so well, turned expectantly towards him; a cup with some flowers; a little water in a glass by the bedside; an open window; the sun setting behind the poplar-trees.

Old Françoise was sitting in the window, sewing; the birds were twittering outside. John Dampier thought it strange that death should come in this familiar guise — tranquilly, with the sunset, the rustling leaves of the trees, the scent of the geraniums in the court below, the cackle of the hens, the stitching of a needle — he almost envied Elly, lying resting at the end of her journey: Elly, no longer the silly little girl he had laughed at, chided, and played with — she was wise now, in his eyes.

She could not talk much, but what she said was in her own voice and in her old manner, "You kind people, to come and see me," she said, and beckoned to them to approach nearer.

Miss Dampier gave her nephew a warning touch, she saw how agitated he was, and was afraid that he would disturb Elizabeth. But what would he not have done for her? He controlled himself, and spoke quietly, in a low voice —

"I am very grateful to you, dear Elly, for sending for me. I was longing to hear about you. I want to ask you to forgive me for the ill I have done you. I want to tell you just once that I meant no harm, only it was such a pleasure to myself that I persuaded myself it was right. I know you will forgive me. All my life I will bless you." And his head fell as he spoke.

"What have I to forgive?" faltered Elly. "It seems so long ago! — Faust and Margaret, and those pleasant drives. Am I to forgive you because I loved you? That was a sort of madness; but it is gone. I love you still, dear John, but differently. I am not mad now, but in my senses. If I get well, how changed it will be — if I die—"

If she died? Dampier, hating himself all the while, thought, with a chill pang, that here would be a horrible solution to all his perplexities. Perhaps Elly guessed something of what was passing in his mind, for she gave him her hand once more, and faltered, —

"My love to Lætitia," and, as she spoke, she raised her eyes, with the old familiar look in them.

It was more than he could bear; he stooped and kissed her frail, burning fingers, and then, with scorched, quivering lips, turned aside and went softly out of the room. Anthony and Madame Tourneur were standing outside, and as Dampier passed she looked at him piteously, and her lips trembled too, but she did not speak. It seemed to

him somehow — only he was thinking of other things — as if Elly's good and bad angels were waiting there. He himself passed on with a hanging head; what could he say to justify himself? — his sorrow was too real to be measured out into words, his penitence greater almost than the offence had been. Even Tourneur, whom he met in the courtyard, almost forgave him as he glanced at the stricken face that was passing out of his house into the street.

After he was gone, Elly began to wander. Françoise, who had never taken such a bad view of Elly's condition as the others, and who strongly disapproved of all this leave-taking, told Miss Dampier that if they wanted to kill her outright, they need only let in all Paris to stare at her, as they had been doing for the last two days; and Miss Dampier, meekly taking the hint, rose in her turn to go. But Elly, from her bed, knew that she was about to leave her, and cried out piteously, and stretched out her hands, and clutched at her gown.

"Faut rester," whispered Françoise.

"I mean to stay," said Miss Dampier, after a moment's deliberation, sitting down at the bedside and untying her bonnet.

Under her bonnet she wore a little prim cap, with loops of grey ribbon; out of her pocket she pulled her knitting and a pair of mittens. She folded up her mantlet and put it away; she signed to Françoise to leave her in charge. When Tourneur came in he found her installed, and as much at home as if she were there by rights. Elly wished it, she told him, and she would stay were ten pasteurs opposed to it.

Tourneur reluctantly consented at last, much against his will. It seemed to him that her mother ought to be Elly's best nurse, but Madame Tourneur eagerly implored him to let Miss Dampier remain; she seemed strangely scared and helpless, and changed and odd. "Oh, if you will only make her well!" said she to the old Scotchwoman.

"How can I make her well?" Miss Dampier answered. "I will try and keep her quiet, that is the chief thing; and if M. Tourneur will let me, I should like to send for my old friend, Dr. Bertin."

And her persistency overcame Tourneur's bewildered objections; her quiet good sense and determination carried the day. Doctor Bertin came, and the first doctor went off in a huff, and Elly lay tossing on her bed. What a weary rack it was to her, that little white bed. There she lay, scorched and burning — consumed by a fierce fire. There she lay through the long days and the nights, as they followed one by one, waiting to know the end. Not one of them dared think what that end might be. Doctor Bertin himself could not tell how this queer illness might turn; such fevers were sometimes caused by mental disquietude, he said. Of infection there was no fear; he came day after day, and stood pitifully by the bedside. He had seen her once before in her brilliance and health; he had never cared for her as he did now that she was lying prostrate and helpless in their hands.

Madame Jacob had carried off her children at the first alarm of fever; the house was kept darkened and cool and quiet; and patient Miss Dampier sat waiting in the big chair for good or for ill fortune. Sometimes of an evening she would creep downstairs and meet her nephew in the street outside and bring him news.

And besides John, there was poor Anthony wandering about the house, wretched, anxious, and yet resigned. Often, as a boy, he had feared death; the stern tenets to which he belonged made him subject to its terrors, but now it seemed to him so simple a thing to die, that he wondered at his own past fears. Elly thought it a simple thing to die, but of this fever she was weary — of this cruel pain and thirst and misery; she would moan a little, utter a few complaining words, and wander off into delirium again. She had been worse than usual one evening, the fever higher. It was a

bad account that Miss Dampier had to give to the doctor when he came, to the anxious people waiting for news. All night long Elly's kind nurse sat patiently in the big armchair, knitting, as was her way, or sometimes letting the needles fall into her lap, and sitting still with clasped hands and a wistful heart. The clocks of the city struck the dark hours as they passed — were these Elly's last upon earth? Jane Dampier sadly wondered. The stars set behind the poplar-trees, a night breeze came shivering now and then through the open window. The night did not appear so very long; it seemed hastening by, dark and silent, relentless to the wearied nurse; for presently, before she knew it almost, it seemed as if the dawn had begun; and somehow, as she was watching still, she fell asleep for a little. While she slept the shadows began to tremble and fade, and fly hither and thither in the death-like silence of the early morning, and when she awoke it was with a start and a chill terror, coming, she knew not whence. She saw that the room was grey, and black no longer. Her heart began to beat, and with a terrified glance she looked round at the bed where Elly was lying.

She looked once, and then again, and then suddenly her trembling hands were clasped in humblest thanksgiving, and the grey head bent lower and lower.

There was nothing to fear any more. Elly was sleeping quietly on her pillow, the fiery spots had faded out of her cheeks, her skin looked fresh and moist, the fever had left her. Death had not yet laid his cold hand on the poor little prey, he had not come while the nurse was sleeping — he had not called her as yet. I speak in this way from long habit and foolishness. For in truth, had he come, would it have been so sad, would it have been so hard a fate — would it have been death with his skeleton's head, and his theatrical grave-clothes, and his scythe, and his hour-glass? Would it have been this, or simply the great law of Nature working peacefully in its course — only the seed falling into the ground, only the decree of that same merciful Power which sent us into the world? — us men and women, who are glad to exist, and grateful for our own creation, into a world where we love to tarry for a while?

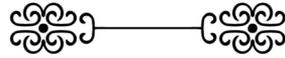
Jean Dampier, sitting there in the dawning, thought something of all this, and yet how could she help acknowledging the mercy which spared her and hers the pang of having fatally injured this poor little Elly, whom she had learnt to love with all her tender old heart? It seemed a deliverance, a blessing a hundred times beyond their deserts.

She had been prepared for the worst, and yet she had shrunk with terror from the chastisement. Now, in this first moment of relief — now that, after all, Elly was, perhaps, given back to them, to youth, to life — she felt as if she could have borne the blow better than she had ever dared to hope. The sun rose, the birds chirped freshly among the branches, the chill morning spread over the city. Sleepers began to stir, and to awake to their daily cares, to their busy life. Elizabeth's life, too, began anew from this hour.

Some one said to me just now that we can best make others happy by the mere fact of our own existence; as she got well day by day, Elly found that it was so. How had she deserved so much of those about her? she often wondered to herself. A hindrance, a trouble, a vexation to them, was all she had ever been; and yet as one by one they came to greet her, she felt that they were glad. Anthony's eyes were full of tears; Tourneur closed his for an instant, as he uttered a silent thanksgiving — she herself did not know how to thank them all.

And here, perhaps, my story ought to end, but in truth it is not finished, though I should cease to write it down, and it goes on and on as the years go by.

CHAPTER VIII.



MOVE EASTWARD, HAPPY earth, and leave
You orange sunset, waning slow
From fringes of the faded eve.
O happy planet, eastward go,
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
Thy silver sister-world, and rise
To glass herself in dewy eyes,
That watch me from the glen below.

AND SO she had left all behind, Elizabeth thought. Paris, the old house, mother, stepfather, and pasteur, the courtyard, the familiar wearisome life, the dull days breaking one by one, John Dampier, her hopeless hopes, and her foolish fancies — she had left them all on the other side of the sea for a time, and come away with kind Miss Dampier. Here, in England, whither her good friend had brought her to get well, the air is damp with sea breezes; the atmosphere is not keen and exciting as it is abroad; the sky is more often gray than blue; it rarely dazzles and bewilders you with its brilliance; there is humidity and vegetation, a certain placidity and denseness, and moisture of which some people complain. To Elizabeth — nervous, eager, excitable — this quiet green country, these autumn mists, were new life. Day by day she gained strength, and flesh, and tone, and health, and good spirits.

But it was only by slow degrees that this good change was effected; weaknesses, faintnesses, relapses, — who does not know the wearisome course of a long convalescence?

To-night, though she is by way of being a strong woman again, she feels as if she was a very very old one, somehow, as she sits at the window of a great hotel looking out at the sunset. It seems to her as if it was never to rise again. There it goes sinking, glorying over the sea, blazing yellow in the west. The place grows dark; in the next room through the open door her white bed gleams chilly; she shudders as she looks at it, and thinks of the death-bed from which she has scarce risen. There are hours, especially when people are still weak and exhausted by sickness, when life seems unbearable, when death appears terrible, and when the spirit is so weary that it seems as if no sleep could be deep enough to give it rest. “When I am dead,” thought Elizabeth; “ah me! my body will be at rest, but I myself, shall I have forgotten — do I want to forget....?”

Meanwhile Miss Dampier, wrapped in her gray cloak, is taking a brisk solitary little walk upon the wooden pier which Elly sees reflected black against the sea. Aunt Jean is serenely happy about her charge; delighted to have carried her off against all opposition; determined that somehow or other she shall never go back; that she shall be made happy one day.

It is late in the autumn. Tourists are flocking home; a little procession of battered ladies and gentlemen carrying all sorts of bundles, and bags, and parcels, disembarks every day; and then another procession of ladies and gentlemen goes to see them land. Any moment you may chance to encounter some wan sea-sick friend staggering along with the rest of the sufferers, who are more or less other people’s friends. The waves wash up and down, painted yellow by the sunset. There is no wind, but it has been blowing hard for a day or two, and the sea is not yet calm. How pleasant it is, Miss

Dampier thinks; chill, fresh, wholesome. This good air is the very thing for Elly. Along the cliffs the old lady can see the people walking against the sky like little specks. There are plenty of fishing-boats out and about. There is the west still blazing yellow, and then a long gray bank of clouds; and with a hiss and a shrill clamour here comes the tossing, dark-shadowed steamer across the black and golden water. All the passengers are crowding on deck and feebly gathering their belongings together; here the Frederick William comes close alongside, and as everybody else rushes along the pier to inspect the new comers, good old Jean trots off too to see what is what. In a few minutes the passengers appear, slowly rising through a trap like the ghost in the *Corsican Brothers*.

First, a lilac gentleman, then a mouldy green gentleman (evidently a foreigner), then an orange lady.

Then a ghostly blue gentleman, then a deadly white lady, then a pale lemon-coloured gentleman, with a red nose.

Then a stout lady, black in the face, then a faltering lady's-maid, with a band-box.

Then a gentleman with an umbrella.

Jean Dampier is in luck to-night, as, indeed, she deserves to be: a more kindly, tender-hearted, unselfish old woman does not exist — if that is a reason for being lucky — however, she has been my good friend for many a long year, and it is not today that I am going to begin to pay her compliments.

I was saying she is in luck, and she finds a nephew among the passengers — it is the gentleman with the umbrella; and there they are, greeting one another in the most affectionate manner.

The Nephew. "Let me get my portmanteau, and then I will come and talk to you as much as you like."

The Aunt. "Never mind your portmanteau, the porter will look after it. Where have you been, Will? Where do you come from? I am at the 'Flag Hotel,' close by."

The Nephew. "So I hear."

The Aunt. "Who told you that?"

The Nephew. "A sour-faced woman at Paris. I asked for you at Meurice's, and they sent me to this Madame Tournour. She told me all about you. What business is it of yours to go about nursing mad girls?"

Aunt Jean. "Elly is not mad. You have heard me talk of her a hundred times. I do believe I saved her life, Will; it was my business, if anybody's, to care for her. Her heart was nearly broken."

The Nephew. "John nearly broke her heart, did he? I don't believe a word of it" (smiling very sweetly). "You are always running away with one idea after another, you silly old woman. Young ladies' hearts are made of india-rubber, and Lady Dampier says this one is an artful — designing — horrible — abominable—"

Aunt Jean (sadly). "Elly nearly died, that is all. You are like all men, Will—"

The Nephew (interrupting). "Don't! Consider, I'm just out of the hands of the steward. Let me have something to eat before we enter into any sentimental discussion. Here (*to a porter*), bring my portmanteau to the hotel. —

Nonsense (*to a flyman*), what should I do with your carriage?"

Will Dampier was a member of the Alpine Club, and went year by year to scramble his holiday away up and down mountain sides. He was a clergyman, comfortably installed in a family living. He was something like his cousin in appearance, but, to my mind, better looking, browner, broader, with bright blue eyes and a charming smile. He looked like a gentleman. He wore a clerical waistcoat. He had been very much complimented upon his good sense; and he liked giving advice,

and took pains about it, as he was anxious not to lose his reputation. Now and then, however, he did foolish things, but he did them sensibly, which is a very different thing from doing sensible things foolishly. It seems to me that is just the difference between men and women.

Will was Miss Dampier's ideal of what a nephew should be. They walked back to the hotel together, chattering away very comfortably. He went into the coffee-room and ordered his dinner, and then he came back to his aunt who was walking on the lawn outside. Meanwhile the sun went on setting, the windows lighted up one by one. It was that comfortable hour when people sit down in little friendly groups and break bread, and take their ease, the business of the day being over. Will Dampier and his aunt took one or two turns along the gravel path facing the sea; he had twenty minutes to wait, and he thought they might be well employed in giving good counsel.

"It seems to me a very wild scheme of yours, carrying off this unruly young woman," he began; "she will have to go home sooner or later. What good will you have done?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," says Miss Dampier, meekly; "a holiday is good for us at all times. Haven't you enjoyed yours, Will?"

"I should rather think I had. You never saw anything so pretty as Berne the other morning as I was coming away. I came home by the Rhine, you know. I saw aunt Dampier and Tishy for an hour or two."

"And did you see John at Paris?"

"No; he was down at V — , staying with the M — s. And now tell me about the young lady with the heart. Is she upstairs tearing her hair? Aunt Dampier was furious."

"So she had heard of it?" said Miss Dampier, thoughtfully. And then she added rather sharply, "You can tell her that the young lady is quite getting over her fancy. In fact, John doesn't deserve that she should remember him. Now, listen, Will, I am going to tell you a story." And then, in her quiet, pleasant, old-fashioned way, she told him her version of all that had been happening.

Will listened and laughed, and said, "You will think me a brute, but I agree with aunt Dampier. Your young woman has behaved as badly as possible; she has made a dead set at poor John, who is so vain that any woman can get him into her clutches."

"What do you mean?" cries the aunt, quite angry.

"If she had really cared for him, would she have forgotten all about him already? I warn you, aunt Jenny; I don't approve of your heroine."

"I must go and look after my heroine," says Miss Dampier, dryly. "I dare say your dinner is ready."

But Will Dampier, whose curiosity at all events was excited, followed his aunt upstairs and along the passage, and went in after her as she opened a door; went into a dim chill room, with two wide-set windows, through which the last yellow streaks of the sunset were fading, and the fresh evening blast blew in with a gust as they entered. It was dark, and nothing could be seen distinctly, only something white seemed crouching in a chair, and as the door opened they heard a low sobbing sigh, which seemed to come out of the gloom; and then it was all very silent.

"Elly, my dear child," said Miss Dampier, what is the matter?"

There was no answer.

"Why don't you speak?" said the kind old lady, groping about, and running up against chairs and tables.

"Because I can't speak without crying," gasps Elly, beginning to cry. "And it's so ungrateful—"

“You are tired, dear,” says aunt Jean, “and cold” — taking her hand; and then turning round and seeing that her nephew had come in with her, she said, “Ring the bell, Will, and go to your dinner. If you will tell them downstairs to send up some tea directly I shall be obliged to you.” William Dampier did as he was bid, and walked away considerably mollified towards poor Elly. “One is so apt to find fault with people,” he was thinking. “And there she was crying upstairs all the time, poor wretch.”

He could never bear to see a woman cry. His parishioners — the women, I mean — had found this out, and used to shed a great many tears when he came to see them. He had found them out — he knew that they had found him out, and yet as sure as the apron-corner went up, the half-crown came out of the pocket.

9.80 — Reading Room, Flay Hotel, Boatstown. — Mr. William Dampier writing at à side-table to a married sister in India. Three old gentlemen come creaking in; select limp newspapers, and take their places. A young man who is going to town by the 10.80 train lies down on the sofa and falls asleep, and snores gently. A soothing silence. Mr. Dampier’s blunt pen travels along the thin paper... “What a dear old woman aunt Jenny is. How well she tells a story. Lady Dampier was telling me the same story the other day. I was very much bored. I thought each one person more selfish and disagreeable than the other. Now aunt Jenny takes up the tale. The personages all brighten under her friendly old spectacles, and become good, gentle-hearted, romantic, and heroic all at once — as she is herself. I was a good deal struck by her report of poor John’s sentimental imbroglio. I drank tea with the imbroglio this evening, and I can’t help rather liking her. She has a sweet pretty face, and her voice, when she talks, pipes and thrills like a musical snuff-box. Aunt Jenny wants her for a niece, that is certain, and says that a man ought to marry the wife he likes best. You are sure to agree to that; I wonder what Miles says? But she’s torn with sympathy, poor old dear, and first cries over one girl, and then over the other. She says John came to her one day at Paris in a great state of mind, declared he was quite determined to finish with all his uncertainty, and that he had made up his mind to break with Laetitia, and to marry Elizabeth, if she was still in her old way of thinking. Aunt Jean got frightened, refused to interfere, carried off the young lady, and has not spoken to her on the subject. John, who is really behaving very foolishly, is still at Paris, and has not followed them, as I know my aunt hoped he would have done. I can’t help being very sorry for him. Lady Dampier has heard of his goings on. A Frenchman told some people, who told some people who ——— — you know how things get about.

Some day when I don’t wish it, you will hear all about me, and write me a thundering letter all the way from Lucknow. There is no doubt about the matter. It would be a thousand pities if John were to break off with Laetitia, to speak nothing of the cruelty and the insult to the poor child.

“And so Rosey and Posey are coming home. I am right sorry for their poor papa and mamma. I hope you have sometimes talked to my nieces about their respectable uncle Will. They are sure to be looked after and happy with aunt Jenny, but how you will be breaking your hearts after them! A priest ought perhaps to talk to you of one consolation very certain and efficacious. But I have always found my dear Prue a better Christian than myself, and I have no need to preach to her.” —

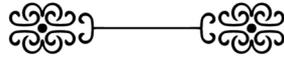
Will Dampier wrote a close straight little handwriting; only one side of his paper was full, but he did not care to write any more that night: he put up his letter in his case, and walked out into the garden.

It was a great starlight night. The sea gloomed vast and black on the horizon. A few other people were walking in the garden, and they talked in hushed yet distinct

voices. Many of the windows were open and alight. Will looked up at the window of the room where he had been to see his aunt. That was alight and open, too, and some one was sitting with clasped hands, looking at the sky. Dampier lit a cigar, and he, too, walked along gazing at the stars, and thinking of Prue's kind face as he went along. Other constellations clustered above her head, he thought; between them lay miles of land and sea, great countries, oceans rushing, plains arid and unknown; vast jungles, deserted cities, crumbling in a broiling sun; it gave him a little vertigo to try and realize what hundreds of miles of distance stretched between their two beating hearts. Distance so great, and yet so little; for he could love his sister, and think of her, and see her, and talk to her, as if she was in the next room. What was that distance which could be measured by miles, compared to the immeasurable gulf that separates each one of us from the nearest and dearest whose hands we may hold in our own?

Will walked on, his mind full of dim thoughts, such as come to most people on starlit nights; when constellations are blazing, and the living soul gazes with awe-stricken wonder at the great living universe, in the midst of which it waits, and trembles, and adores. "The world all about has faded away," he thought, "and lies dark and dim, and indistinct. People are lying like dead people stretched out, unconscious on their beds, heedless, unknowing. Here and there in the houses, a few dead people are lying like the sleepers. Are they as unconscious as the living?" He goes to the end of the garden, and stands looking upward, until he cannot think longer of things so far above him. It seems to him that his brain is like the string of an instrument, which will break under the passionate vibration of harmonies so far beyond his powers to render. He goes back into the house. Everything suddenly grows strangely real and familiar, and yet it seemed, but a moment ago, as if to-day and its cares had passed away for ever.

CHAPTER IX.



TO HUMBLER FUNCTIONS, awful Power,
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour.
Oh, let my weakness have an end.
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice —
The confidence of reason give,
And in the light of truth *thy bondman* let me live.
Ode to Duty.

ELLY had a little Indian box that her father had once given to her. It served her for a work-box and a treasure casket. She kept her scissors in it and her ruby ring; some lavender, a gold thimble, and her father's picture. And then in a lower tray were some cottons and tapes, one or two letters, a pencil, and a broken silver chain. She had a childish habit of playing with it still, sometimes, and setting it to rights. It was lying on the breakfast-table next morning when Will Dampier came in to see his aunt. Miss Dampier, who liked order, begged Elly to take it off, and Dampier politely, to save her the trouble, set it down somewhere else, and then came to the table and asked for some tea. The fishes had had no luck that morning, he told them; he had been out in a boat since seven o'clock, and brought back a basketful. The sea air made them hungry, no doubt, for they came by dozens — little feeble whiting — and nibbled at the bait. "I wish you would come," he said to his aunt; "the boat bobs up and down in the sunshine, and the breeze is delightfully fresh, and the people come down on the beach and stare at you through telescopes." As he talked to his aunt he glanced at Elly, who was pouring out his tea; he said to himself that she was certainly an uncommonly pretty girl; and then he began to speculate about an odd soft look in her eyes. "When I see people with that expression," he wrote to his sister, "I always ask myself what it means? I have seen it in the glass, sometimes, when I have been shaving. Miss Gilmour was not looking at me, but at the muffins and tea-cups. She was nicely dressed in blue calico; she was smiling; her hair trim and shiny. I could hardly believe it was my wailing banshee of the previous night." (What follows is to the purpose, so I may as well transcribe a little more of Will's letter.) "When she had poured out my tea, she took up her hat and said she should go down to the station, and get *The Times* for my aunt. I should have offered my services, but aunt Jean made me a sign to stay. What for, do you think? To show me a letter she had received in the morning from that absurd John, who cannot make up his mind. 'I do not,' he says, 'want you to talk poor Elly into a *grande passion*. But if her feelings are unchanged, I will marry her to-morrow, if she chooses; and I daresay Tishy will not break her heart. Perhaps you will think me a fool for my pains; but I shall not be alone in the world. What was poor little Elly herself when she cried for the moon?' This is all rodomontade; John is not acting fairly by Laetitia, to whom he is bound by every possible promise.

"My aunt said just now that it would be hard for Tishy if he married her, liking Elizabeth best: and there is truth in that. But he mustn't like her best; Miss Gilmour will get over her fancy for him, and he must get over his for her. If he had only behaved like a man and married her right off two years ago, and never hankered after

the flesh-pots of Egypt, or if he had only left her alone to settle down with her French pasteur —

“‘If — if,’ cried my aunt, impatiently, when I said as much — (you know her way)—’ he has done wrong and been sorry for it, Will, which of us can do more? I doubt whether you would have behaved a bit better in his place.’”

This portion of Mr. Will’s letter was written at his aunt’s writing-book immediately after their little talk. Elly came in rosy from her walk, and Will went on diligently, looking up every now and then with the sense of *bien-être* which a bachelor experiences when he suddenly finds himself domesticated and at home with kind women.

Miss Dampier was sitting in the window. She had got *The Times* in her hand, and was trying to read. Every now and then she looked up at her nephew, with his curly head bent over his writing, at Elly leaning lazily back in her chair, sewing idly at a little shred of work. Her hair was clipped, the colour had faded out of her cheeks, her eyes gleamed. Pretty as she was, still she was changed — how changed from the Elizabeth of eighteen months ago whom Miss Dampier could remember! The old lady went on with her paper, trying to read. She turned to the French correspondent, and saw something about the Chamber, the Emperor, about Italy; about M. X, the rich banker, having resolved to terminate his existence, when fortunately his servant enters the room at the precise moment when he was preparing to precipitate himself.... “The servant to precipitate.... the window.... the.... poor Tishy! At my age I did think I should have done with sentimental troubles. Heigho! heigho!” sighs Miss Dampier.

Elly wanted some thread, and rose with a soft rustle, and got her box and came back to her easy chair. Out of the window they could see all the pleasant idle business of the little sea-port going on, the people strolling in the garden, or sitting in all sorts of queer corners, the boats, the mariners (I do believe they are hired to stand about in blue shirts, and shake their battered old noses as they prose for hours together). The waiter came and took away the breakfast, William went on with his letter, and Miss Dampier, with John’s little note in her pocket, was, as I say, reading the most extraordinary things in *The Times* all about her own private concerns. Nobody spoke for some ten minutes, when suddenly came a little gasp, a little sigh from Elly’s low chair, and the girl said, “Aunt Jean! look here,” almost crying, and held out something in her thin hand.

“What is it, my dear?” said Miss Dampier, looking up hastily, and pulling off her spectacles: they were dim somehow, and wanted wiping.

“Poor dear, dearest Tishy,” cried Elly, in her odd impetuous way. “Why does he not go to her? Aunt Jean, look here, I found it in my box — only look here;” and she put a little note into Miss Dampier’s hand.

Will looked up curiously from his writing. Elly had forgotten all about him. Miss Dampier took the letter, and when she had read what was written, and then turned over the page, she took off her glasses again with a click, and said, “What nonsense!”

And so it was nonsense, and yet the nonsense touched Elizabeth, and brought tears into her eyes. They came faster and faster, and then suddenly remembering that she was not alone, and ashamed that Dampier should see her cry again, she jumped up with a shining, blushing tear-dimmed tender face, and ran away out of the room. Aunt Jean looked at Will doubtfully, then hesitated, and gave him the little shabby letter that had brought these bright tears into the girl’s eyes. Dear old soul! she made a sort of confessor of her nephew.

The confessor saw a few foolish words which Lætitia must have written days ago, never thinking that her poor little words were to be scanned by stranger eyes —

written perhaps unconsciously on a stray sheet of paper. There was “John. Dear John! Dear, dearest! I am so hap.... John and Lætitia. John my jo. Goose and gander.” And then, by some odd chance, she must have folded the blotted sheet together and forgotten what she had written, and sent it off to Elly Gilmour, with a little careless note about Schlangenbad, and “more fortunate next time,” on the other side.

“Poor little Letty!” thought Dampier, and he doubled the paper up, and put it back into the lavender box as the door opened, and Miss Gilmour came back into the room. She had dried her eyes, she had fastened on her grey shawl. She picked up her hat, which was lying on the floor, and began pulling on two very formidable looking gauntlets over her slim white hands. “I am going for a little walk,” she said to Miss Dampier. “Will you” — hesitating and blushing— “direct that little note of Lætitia’s to Sir John? I am going along the cliff towards the pretty little bay.”

Will was quite melted and touched. Was this the scheming young woman, against whom he had been warned? the woman who had entangled his cousin with her wiles?

“Aunt Jenny,” he says, with a sudden glance, “are you going to tell her why John Dampier does not go to Laetitia?”

“Why does he not go?” Elly repeats, losing her colour a little.

“He says that if you would like him to stay, he thinks he ought not to go,” says Jean Dampier, hesitating, and tearing corners off *The Times* newspaper.

Will Dampier turned his broad back and looked out of window. There was a moment’s silence. They could hear the tinkling of bells, the whistling of the sea, the voices of the men calling to each other in the port: the sunshine streamed in: Elly was standing in it, and seemed gilt with a golden background. She ought to have held a palm in her hand, poor little martyr!

It seemed a long time, it was only a minute, and then she spoke; a sweet honest blush came deepening into Elizabeth’s pale cheeks: “I don’t want to marry him because I care for him,” she said, in a thrilling pathetic voice. “Why should Lætitia, who is so fond of him, suffer because I behaved so badly?” — The tears once more came welling up into her eyes. “I shall think I ought to have died instead of getting well,” she said. “Aunt Jean, send him the little note; make him go, dear aunt Jean.”

Miss Dampier gave Elly a kiss; she did not know what to say; she could not influence her one way or another.

She wrote to John that morning, taking good care to look at the back of her paper first.

“Flag Hotel, Boatstown, Nov. 15th.

“MY DEAR JACK,

“I HAD great doubts about communicating your letter to Elizabeth. It seemed to me that the path you *had* determined upon was one full of thorns and difficulties, for her, for you, and for my niece Lætitia. But although Elly is of far too affectionate a nature ever to give up caring for any of her friends, let me assure you that her feelings are now only those of friendly regard and deep interest in your welfare. When I mentioned to her the contents of your letter (I think it best to speak plainly), she said, with her eyes full of tears, that she did not want to marry you — that she felt you were bound to return to Laetitia. She had been much affected by discovering the enclosed little note from your cousin. I must say that the part which concerns you interested me much, more so than her letter to her old friend. But she was evidently preoccupied at the time, and Elly, far from feeling neglected, actually began to cry, she was so

touched by this somewhat singular discovery. Girls' tears are easily dried. If it lies in my power she shall yet be made happy.

"There is nothing now, as you see, that need prevent your fulfilling your engagements. You are all very good children, on the whole, and I trust that your troubles are but fleeting clouds that will soon pass away. That you and Laetitia may enjoy all prosperity is the sincere hope and desire of your

"Affectionate old aunt,
"J. M. DAMPIER."

Miss Dampier, having determined that she had written a perfectly impartial letter, put it up in an envelope, rang the bell, and desired a waiter to post it.

Number twenty-three's bell rang at the same moment; so did number fifteen; immediately after a quantity of people poured in by the eleven o'clock train; the waiter flung the letter down on his pantry table, and rushed off to attend to half-a-dozen things at once, of which posting the note was not one.

About three o'clock that afternoon Miss Dampier in her close bonnet was standing in the passage talking to a tall young man with a black waistcoat and wide-awake.

"What are you going to do?" he said. "Couldn't we go for a drive somewhere?"

"I have ordered a carriage at three," said Miss Dampier, smiling. "We are going up on the hills. You might come, too, if you liked it." And when the carriage drove up to the door there he was, waiting to hand her in.

He had always, until he saw her, imagined Elly a little flirting person, quite different from the tall young lady in the broad hat, with the long cloak falling from her shoulders, who was prepared to accompany them. She had gone away a little, and his aunt sent him to fetch her. She was standing against the railing, looking out at the sea with her sad eyes. There was the lawn, there was the sea, there was Elly. A pretty young lady always makes a pretty picture; but out of doors in the sunshine she looks a prettier young lady than anywhere else, thought Mr. Will, as Elizabeth walked across the grass. He was not alone in his opinion; more than one person looked up as she passed. He began to think that far from doing a foolish thing his aunt had shown her usual good sense in taking such good care of this sad, charming, beautiful young woman. It was no use trying to think ill of her. With such a face as hers, she has a right to fall in love with anybody she pleases, he thought; and so, as they were walking towards the carriage, Will Dampier, thinking that this was a good opportunity for a little confidential communication, said, somewhat in his professional manner, "You seem out of spirits, Miss Gilmour. I hope that you do not regret your decision of this morning."

"Yes, I do regret it," said poor Elly, and two great tears came dribbling down her cheeks. "Do you think that when a girl gives up what she likes best in the world she is not sorry? I am horribly sorry."

Will was very much puzzled how to answer this unexpected confidence. He said, looking rather foolish, "One is so apt to ask unnecessary questions. But, take my word for it, you have done quite right, and some day you will be more glad than you are now."

I must confess that my heroine here got exceedingly cross.

"Ah, that is what people say who do not know of what they are talking. What business of yours is my poor unlucky bruised and broken fancy?" she said. "Ah! Why were you ever told? What am I? What is it to you?"

All the way she sat silent and dull, staring out at the landscape as they went along; suffering, in truth, poor child, more than either of her companions could tell: saying

good-by to the dearest hope of her youth, tearing herself away from the familiar and the well-loved dreams. Dreams, do I say? They had been the Realities to her, poor child! for many a day. And the realities had seemed to be the dreams.

They drove along a straight road, and came at last to some delightful fresh downs, with the sea sparkling in the distance, and a sort of autumnal glow on the hills all about. The breeze came in fresh gusts, the carriage jogged on, still up hill, and Will Dampier walked alongside, well pleased with the entertainment, and making endless jokes at his aunt. She rather liked being laughed at; but Elly never looked up once, or heeded what they said. They were going towards a brown church, that was standing on the top of a hill. It must have been built by the Danes a thousand years ago. There it stood, looking out at the sea, brown, grim, solitary, with its graveyard on the hillside. Trees were clustering down in a valley below; but here, up above, it was all bleak, bare, and solitary, only tinted and painted by the brown and purple sunshine.

They stopped the carriage a little way off, and got out and passed through a gate, and walked up the hill-top. Elly went first, Will followed, and Miss Dampier came slowly after. As Elly reached the top of the hill she turned round, and stood against the landscape, like a picture with a background, and looked back and said —

“Do you hear?”

The organ inside the church was playing a chaunt, and presently some voices began chaunting to the playing of the organ. Elly went across the graveyard, and leant against the porch, listening. Five minutes went by; her anger was melting away. It was exquisitely clear, peaceful, and tranquil here, up on this hill where the dead people were lying among the grass and daisies. All the bitterness went away out of her heart, somehow, in the golden glow. She said to herself that she felt now, suddenly, for the first time, as if she could bury her fancy and leave it behind her in this quiet place. As the chaunt went on, her whole heart uttered in harmony with it, though her lips were silent. She did not say to herself, what a small thing it was that had troubled her: what vast combinations were here to make her happy; hills, vales, light, with its wondrous refractions, harmony, colour; the great ocean, the great world, rolling on amid the greater worlds beyond!



ON THE TOP OF THE HILL.

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But she felt it somehow. The voices ceased, and all was very silent.

“Oh, give thanks,” the Psalm began again; and Elly felt that she could indeed give thanks for mercies that were more than she had ever deserved. When she was at home with her mother she thought — just now the thought of returning there scarce gave her a pang — she should remember to-day all the good hopes, good prayers, and aspirations which had come to her in this peaceful grave-yard up among the hills. She had been selfish, discontented, and ungrateful all her life, angry and chafed but an hour ago, and here was peace, hers for the moment; here was tranquil happiness. The mad, rash delight she had felt when she had been with John Dampier was nothing compared to this great natural peace and calm. A sort of veil seemed lifted from her eyes, and she felt for the first time, that she could be happy though what she had wished for most was never to be hers — that there was other happiness than that which she had once fancied part of life itself. Did she ever regret the decision she had made? Did she ever see occasion to think differently from this? If, in after times, she may have felt a little sad, a little lonely now and then — if she may have thought with a moment’s regret, of those days that were now already past and over for ever — still she knew she had done rightly when she determined to bury the past, with all kindness, with reverent hands. Somehow, in some strange and mysterious manner, the bitterness of her silly troubles had left her — left her a better girl than she had been ever before. She was more good, more happy, more old, more wise, now, and, in truth, there was kindness in store for her, there were suns yet to shine, friendly words to be spoken, troubles yet to be endured, other than those sentimental griefs which had racked her youth so fiercely.

While they were all on the hill-top the steamer came into the port earlier than on the day when Will Dampier arrived. One of the passengers walked up to the hotel and desired a waiter to show him to Miss Dampier’s room. It was empty, of course; chairs pushed about, windows open, work and books on the table. The paper was lying on

the floor — the passenger noticed that a corner had been torn off; a little box was open on the table, a ruby ring glittering in the tray. “How careless,” he thought! and then went and flung himself into a great arm-chair.

So! she had been here a minute ago. There was a glove lying on a chair; there were writing materials on a side-table — a blotting-book open, pens with the ink scarcely dry; and in this room, in this place, he was going to decide his fate — rightly or wrongly he could not tell. Laetitia is a cold-blooded little creature, he kept saying to himself; this girl, with all her faults, with all her impulses, has a heart to break or to mend. My mother will learn too late that I cannot submit to such dictation. By Jove, what a letter it is! He pulled it out of his pocket, read it once more, and crumpled it up and threw it into the fire-place. It was certainly not a very wise composition — long, vicious, wiry tails and flourishes. “John, words cannot,” &c. &c. “What Lady Tomsey,” &c. &c. “How horror-struck Major Potterton,” &c. &c.; and finally concluded with a command that he should instantly return to Schlangenbad; or, failing this, an announcement that she should immediately join him, *wherever* he might be!

So Sir John, in a rage, packed up and came off to Boatstown — his mother can follow him or not, as she chooses; and here is walking up and down the room, while Elly, driving over the hills, is saying farewell, farewell, good-by to her old love for ever.

Could he have really cared for anybody? By some strange contradiction, now that the die is cast, now that, after all these long doubts and mistrusts, he has made up his mind, somehow new doubts arise. He wonders whether he and Elly will be happy together? He pictures stormy scenes; he intuitively shrinks from the idea of her unconventionalities, her eagerness, her enthusiasm. He is a man who likes a quiet life, who would appreciate a sober, happy home — a gentle, equable companion, to greet him quietly, to care for his tastes and his ways, to sympathize, to befriend him. Whereas now it is he who will have to study his companion all the rest of his life; if he thwart her she will fall ill of sorrow, if he satisfy her she will ask more and more; if he neglect her — being busy, or weary, or what not — she will die of grief; if he want sympathy and common sense, she will only adore him. Poor Elly! it is hard upon her that he should make such a bugbear of her poor little love. His courage is oozing out at his finger-ends. He is in a rage with her, and with himself, and with his mother, and with his aunt. He and everybody else are in a league to behave as badly as possible. He will try and do his duty, he thinks, for all that, for my hero is an honest-hearted man, though a weak one. It is not Lady Dampier’s letter that shall influence him one way or another; if Elly is breaking her heart to have him, and if Letty doesn’t care one way or the other, as is likely enough, well then he will marry Elizabeth, he cries, with a stout desperation, and he dashes up and down the room in a fury.

And just at this minute the waiter comes in, and says Miss Dampier has gone out for a drive, and will not be back for some time. Mr. Dampier is staying in the house, but he has gone out with her, and who shall he say? And Sir John, looking up, gives his name and says he will wait.

Upon which the waiter suddenly remembers the letter he left in his pantry, and, feeling rather guilty, proposes to fetch it. And by this time Elly, and Will, and Miss Dampier have got into the carriage again and are driving homewards.

There was a certain humility about Elly, with all her ill-humours and varieties, which seemed to sweeten her whole nature. Will Dampier, who was rather angry with her for her peevishness, could not help forgiving her, when, as he helped her out of the carriage in the courtyard, she said, —

“I don’t quite know how to say it — but I was very rude just now. I was very unhappy, and I hope you will forgive me,” and she looked up. The light from the hills was still in her face.

“It was I who was rude,” says Will, good-naturedly holding out his hand; and of course he forgave her.

The band was playing, the garden was frill of people; but aunt Jenny was cold, and glad to get home. The ladies went upstairs: Will remained down below, strolling up and down in the garden with the rest of the people; but at five o’clock the indefatigable bell began to ring once more; the afternoon boat was getting up its steam, and making its preparations to cross over to the other side.

Will met a friend of his, who was going over in it, and he walked down with him to see him off. He went on board with him, shook hands, and turned to come away. At that minute some one happened to look round, and Will, to his immense surprise, recognized his cousin. That was John; those were his whiskers; there was no doubt about it.

He sprang forward and called him by name. “John,” he said, “you here?”

“Well!” said John, smiling a little, “why not me, as well as you? are you coming across?”

“Are you going across?” said Will, doubtfully.

“Yes,” the other answered; “I came over on business; don’t say anything of my having been here. Pray remember this. I have a particular reason.”

“I shall say nothing,” said Will. “I am glad you are going, John,” he added, stupidly. “I think I know your reason — a very nice, pretty reason too.”

“So those women have been telling you all about my private affairs?” said Sir John, speaking quick, and looking very black.

“Your mother told me first,” Will said. “I saw her the other day. For all sakes, I am glad you are giving up all thoughts of Elly Gilmour.”

“Are you?” said John, dryly. They waited for a minute in awkward silence, but as they were shaking hands and saying “Good-by,” suddenly John melted and said, “Look here, Will, I should like to see her once more. Could you manage this for me. I don’t want her to know, you know; but could you bring her to the end of the pier?”

I am going back to Letty, as you see, so I don’t think she need object.”

Will nodded, and went up the ladder and turned towards the house without a word, walking quickly and hurrying along. The band in the garden burst out into a pretty melancholy dance tune. The sun went down peg by peg into the sea; the steamer still whistled and puffed as it got up its steam.

Elly was sitting alone. She had lighted a candle, and was writing home. Her hat was lying on a chair beside her. The music had set her dreaming; her thoughts were far away, in the dismal old home again, with Françoise, and Anthony, and the rest of them. She was beginning to live the new life she had been picturing to herself; trying to imagine herself good and contented in the hateful old home; it seemed almost endurable just at this minute, when suddenly the door burst open, and Will Dampier came in with his hat on.

“I want you to come out a little way with me,” he said. “I want you to come and see the boat off. There’s no time to lose.”

“Thank you,” said Elly, “but I’m busy.”

“It won’t take you five minutes,” he said.

She laughed. “I am lazy, and rather tired.” Will could not give up. He persisted: he knew he had a knack of persuading his old women at home; he tried it on Miss Gilmour.

"I see you have not forgiven me," he said; "you won't trust yourself with me."

"Yes, indeed," said Elly; "I am only lazy." The time was going. He looked at his watch; there were but five minutes — but five minutes for John to take leave of his love of many a year; but five minutes and it would be too late. He grew impatient.

"Pray, come," he said. "I shall look upon it as at sign that you have forgiven me. Will you do me this favour — will you come? I assure you I shall not be ungrateful."

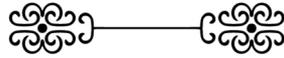
Elly thought it odd, and still hesitated; but it seemed unkind to refuse. She got up, fetched her hat and cloak, and in a minute he was hurrying her along across the lawn, along the side of the dock, out to the pier's end.

They were only just in time. You are very mysterious," said Elly. "Why do you care so much to see the boat go out? How chilly it is. Are you not glad to be here on this side of the water? Ah! how soon it will be time for me to go back!"

Will did not answer, he was so busy watching the people moving about on board. Puff! puff! Cannot you imagine the great boat passing close at their feet, going out in the night into the open sea; the streaks of light in the west; Elly, with flushed, rosy-red cheeks, like the sunset, standing under the lighthouse, and talking in her gentle voice, and looking out, saying it would be fine to-morrow?

Can't you fancy poor Sir John leaning against a pile of baggage, smoking a cigar, and looking up wistfully? As he slid past he actually caught the tone of her voice. Like a drowning man who can see in one instant years of his past life flashing before him, Sir John saw Elly — a woman with lines of care in her face, — there, standing in the light of the lamp, with the red streams of sunset beyond, and the night closing in all round about; and then he saw her as he had seen her once — a happy, unconscious girl, brightening, smiling at his coming: and as the picture travelled on, a sad girl, meeting him in the street by chance — a desperate, almost broken-hearted woman, looking up greyly into his face in the theatre. Puff! puff! — it was all over, she was still smiling before his eyes. One last glimpse of the two, and they had disappeared. He slipped away right out of her existence, and she did not even guess that he had been near. She stood unwitting for an instant, watching the boat as it tossed out to sea, and then said, "Now we will go home." A sudden gloom and depression seemed to have come over her. She walked along quite silently, and did not seem to heed the presence of her companion.

CHAPTER X.



— . — . Poor forsaken Flos!
Not all her brightness, sportfulness, and bloom,
Her sweetness and her wildness, and her wit,
Could save her from desertion. No; their loves
Were off the poise. Love competent
Makes better bargains than love affluent.

BEFORE he went to bed that night Dampier wrote the end of his letter to Prue. He described, rather amusingly, the snubbing which Elly had given him, the dry way in which Sir John had received his advances, the glances of disfavour with which aunt Jean listened to his advice. "So this is all the gratitude one gets for interfering in the most sensible manner. If you are as ungrateful, Prue, for this immense long letter, I shall, indeed, have laboured in vain. It is one o'clock. Bong! there it went from the tower. Good-night, dear; your beloved brother is going to bed. Love to Miles. Kiss the children all round for their and your affectionate W. D."

Will Dampier was not in the least like his letter. I know two or three men who are manly enough, who write gentle, gossiping letters like women. He was a big, commonplace young man, straight-minded and tender-hearted, with immense energy, and great good spirits. He believed in himself; indeed, he tried so heartily and conscientiously to do what was right, that he could not help knowing more or less that he was a good fellow. And then he had a happy knack of seeing one side of a question, and having once determined that so and so was the thing to be done, he could do so and so without one doubt or compunction. He belonged to the school of athletic Christianity. I heard some one once say that there are some of that sect who would almost make out cock-fighting to be a religious ceremony. William Dampier did not go so far as this; but he heartily believed that nothing was wrong that was done with a Christian and manly spirit. He rode across country, he smoked pipes, he went out shooting, he played billiards and cricket, he rowed up and down the river in his boat, and he was charming with all the grumbling old men and women in his parish, he preached capital sermons — short, brisk, well-considered. He enjoyed life and all its good things with a grateful temper, and made most people happy about him.

One day, Elly began to think what a different creed Will Dampier's was from her stepfather's, only she did not put her thoughts into words. It was not her way.

Tourneur, with a great heart, set on the greatest truth, feeling the constant presence of those mightier dispensations, cared but little for the affairs of to-day: they seemed to him subordinate, immaterial; they lost all importance from comparison to that awful reality that this man had so vividly realized to himself. To Dampier, it was through the simple language of his daily life that he could best express what good was in him. He saw wisdom and mercy, he saw order and progression, he saw infinite variety and wonder in all natural things, in all life, at all places and hours. By looking at this world, he could best understand and adore the next.

And yet Tourneur's was the loftier spirit: to him had come a certain knowledge and understanding, of which Dampier had scarce a conception. Dampier, who felt less keenly, could well be more liberal, more forbearing. One of these two told Elly that we were put into the world to live in it, and to be thankful for our creation; to do our

duty, and to labour until the night should come when no man can work. The other said, sadly, you are born only to overcome the flesh, to crush it under foot, to turn away from all that you like most, innocent or not. What do I care? Are you an immortal spirit, or are you a clod of earth? Will you suffer that this all-wondrous, all-precious gift should be clogged, and stifled, and choked, and destroyed, may be, by despicable daily concerns? Tourneur himself set an example of what he preached by his devoted, humble, holy, self-denying life. And yet Elly turned with a sense of infinite relief to the other creed: she could understand it, sympathize with it, try to do good, though to be good was beyond her frail powers. Already she was learning to be thankful, to be cheerful, to be unselfish, to be keenly penitent for her many shortcomings.

As the time drew near when an answer to her note might be expected, Miss Dampier grew anxious and fidgety, dropped her stitches, looked out for the post, and wondered why no letter came. Elly was only a little silent, a little thoughtful. She used to go out by herself and take long walks. One day Will, returning from one of his own peregrinations, came upon her sitting on the edge of a cliff staring at the distant coast of France. It lay blue, pale, like a dream-country, and glimmered in the horizon. Who would believe that there was reality, busy life in all earnest going on beyond those calm, heavenly-looking hills! Another time his aunt sent him out to look for her, and he found her at the end of the pier, leaning against the chain, and still gazing towards France.

In his rough, friendly manner he said, "*I wish you would look another way sometimes, Miss Gilmour, up or down, or in the glass even. You make me feel very guilty, for to tell the truth I — I advised John—*"

"I thought so," Elly cried, interrupting. "And you were quite right. I advised him too," she said, with a smile. "Don't you think he has taken your advice?"

Will looked down uncomfortably. "I think so," he said in a low tone.

And, meanwhile, Miss Dampier was sitting in the window and the sunshine, knitting castles in the air.

"Suppose he does not take this as an answer? Suppose Laetitia has found somebody else, suppose the door opens and he comes in, and the sun shines into the room, and then he seizes Elly's hand, and says, 'Though you give me up I will not give up the hope of calling you mine,' and Elly glances up bright, blushing, happy... Suppose Lady Dampier is furious, and dear Tishy makes peace? I should like to see Elizabeth mistress of the dear old house. I think my mother was like her. I don't approve of cousins' marriages — How charming she would look coming along the old oak gallery." Look at the old maid in the window building castles in the air through her spectacles. But it is a ridiculous sight; she is only a fat, foolish old woman. All her fancies are but follies flying away with caps and jingling bells — they vanish through the window as the door opens and the young people come in.

"Here is a letter for you the porter gave me in the hall," said Will, as carelessly as he could; Jean saw Elly's eyes busy glancing at the writing.

"MY DEAR AUNT JEAN, "MANY thanks for your note, and the enclosure. My mother and Lætitia are with me, and we shall all go back to Friar's Bush on Thursday. Elly's decision is the wisest under the circumstances, and we had better abide by it. Give her my love. Lætitia knows nothing, as my mother has had the grace to be silent.

"Yours affectionately, "J. C. D."

"P.S. — You will be good to her, won't you?"

Miss Dampier read the note imperturbably, but while she read there seemed to run through her a cold thrill of disappointment, which was so unendurable that after a minute she got up and left the room.

When she came back, Elly said with a sigh, "Where is he?"

"At Paris," said Miss Dampier. "They have saved him all trouble and come to him. He sends you his love, Elly, which is very handsome of him, considering how much it is worth."

"It has been worth a great deal to me," said Elly, in her sweet voice. "It is all over; but I am grateful still and always shall be. I was very rash; he was very kind. Let me be grateful, dear aunt Jean, to those who are good to me." And she kissed the old woman's shrivelled hand.

Miss Gilmour cheered up wonderfully from that time. I am sure that if she had been angry with him, if she had thought herself hardly used, if she had had more of what people call self-respect, less of that sweet humility of nature, it would not have been so.

As the short, happy, delightful six weeks which she was to spend with Miss Dampier came to an end, she began to use all her philosophy and good resolves to reconcile herself to going home. Will Dampier was gone. He had only been able to stay a week. They missed him. But still they managed to be very comfortable together. Tea-talk, long walks, long hours on the sands, novels and story-books, idleness and contentment — why couldn't it go on for ever? Elly said. Aunt Jean laughed and said they might as well be a couple of jelly-fish at once. And so the time went by, but one day just before she went away, Mr. Will appeared again unexpectedly.

Elly was sitting in the sun on the beach, throwing idle stones into the sea. She had put down her novel on the shingle beside her. It was *Deerbrook*, I think — an old favourite of Jean Dampier's. Everybody knows what twelve o'clock is like on a fine day at the sea-side. It means little children, nurses in clean cotton gowns, groups of young ladies scattered here and there; it means a great cheerfulness and tranquillity, a delightful glitter, and life, and light: happy folks plashing in the water, bathing-dresses drying in the sun, all sorts of aches, pains, troubles, vanishing like mist in its friendly beams. Elly was thinking: "Yes, how pleasant and nice it is, and how good, how dear aunt Jean is! Only six months, and she says I am to come to her in her cottage again." (Splash a stone goes into the water.) "Only six months! I will try and spend them better than I ever spent six months before. Eugh! If it was not for Mme. Jacob — I really do love my stepfather, and could live happily enough with him." (Splash.) Suddenly an idea came to Elly — the Pasteur Boulot was the idea.

"Why should not he marry Mme. Jacob? He admires her immensely. Ah! what fun that would be!" (Splash, splash, a couple of stones.) And then, tramp, tramp, on the shingle behind her, and a cheery man's voice says, "Here you are!"

Elly stares up in some surprise, and looks pleased, and attempts to get up, but Will Dampier — he was the man — sits down beside her, opens his umbrella, and looks very odd. "I only came down for the day," he said, after a little preliminary talk. "I have been with aunt Jean; she tells me you are going home to-morrow."

"Yes," says Elly, with a sigh; "but I'm to come back again and see her in a little time."

"I'm glad of that," says the clergyman. "What sort of place do you live in at Paris?"

"It is rather a dull place," says Elly. "I'm very fond of my stepfather; besides him, there is Anthony, and five young pupils, there is an old French cook, and a cross

maid, and my mother, and a horri — a sister of Monsieur Tourneur's, and Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou, and me.”

“Why, that is quite a little colony,” said Dampier. “And what will you do there when you get back?”

“I must see,” said the girl, smiling. “Till now I have done nothing at all; but that is stupid work. I shall teach Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou a little, and mind the house if my mother will let me, and learn to cook from Françoise. I have a notion that it may be useful some day or other.”

“Do, by all means,” said Will; “it is a capital idea. But as years go on, what do you mean to do? Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou will grow up, and you will have mastered the art of French cookery—”

“How can you ask such things?” Elly said, looking out at the sea. “I cannot tell, or make schemes for the future.”

“Pray forgive me,” said Will, “for asking such a question, but have you any idea of marrying M. Anthony eventually?”

“He is a dear old fellow,” said Elly, flushing up. “I am not going to answer any such questions. I am not half good enough for him — that is my answer.”

“But suppose — ?”

“Pray don't suppose. I am not going to marry anybody, or to think much about such things ever again. Do you imagine that I am not the wiser for all my experience?”

“Are you wise now?” said Will, still in his odd manner.

“Look at that pretty little fishing-smack,” Elly interrupted.

“Show it,” he went on, never heeding, “by curing yourself of your fancy for my cousin John; by curing yourself, and becoming some day a really useful personage and member of society.”

Elly stared at him, as well she might.

“Come back to England some day,” he continued, still looking away, “to your home, to your best vocation in life, to be happy, and useful, and well-loved,” he said, with a sweet inflexion in his voice; “that is no very hard fate.”

“What are you talking about?” said Elly. “How can I cure myself? How can I ever forget what is past? I am not going to be discontented, or to be particularly happy at home. I am going *to try* — to try and do my best.”

“Well, then, do your best to get cured of this hopeless nonsense,” said Mr. William Dampier, “and turn your thoughts to real good sense, to the real business of life, and to making yourself and others happy, instead of wasting and maudling away the next few best years of your life, regretting and hankering after what is past and unattainable. For some strong minds, who can defy the world, and stand alone without the need of sympathy and sustainment, it is a fine thing to be faithful to a chimera,” he said, with a pathetic ring in his voice. “But I assure you infidelity is better still sometimes, more human, more natural, particularly for a confiding and uncertain person like yourself.” Was he thinking of to-day as he spoke? Was he only thinking of Elly, and preaching only to her?

“You mean I had better marry him?” said Elly, while her eyes filled up with tears, and she knocked one stone against another. “And yet aunt Jean says, ‘No!’ — that I need not think of it. It seems to me as if I — I had rather jump into the sea at once,” said the girl, dashing the stones away, “though I love him dearly, dear old fellow!”

“I did not exactly mean M. Anthony,” said Will, looking round for the first time and smiling at her tears and his own talk.

Elizabeth was puzzled still. For, in truth, her sad experience had taught her to put but little faith in kindness and implications of kindness — to attach little meaning to the good-nature and admiration a beautiful young woman was certain to meet with on every side. It had not occurred to her that Will, who had done so little, seen her so few times, could be in love with her; when John, for whom she would have died, who said and looked so much, had only been playing with her, and pitying her as if she had been a child; and she said, still with tears, but not caring much —

“I shall never give a different answer. I believe you are right, but I have not the courage to try. I think I could try and be good if I stay as I am; but to be bound and chained to Anthony all the rest of my life — once I thought it possible; but now — You who advise it do not know what it is.”

“But I never advised it,” Will said; “you won’t understand me. Dear Elizabeth, why won’t you see that it is of myself that I am speaking?”

Elly felt for a moment as if the sea had rushed up suddenly, and caught her away on its billows, and then the next moment she found that she was only sitting crying in the sun, on the sands.

“Look here: every day I live, I get worse and worse,” she sobbed. “I flirt with one person after another — I don’t deserve that you should ever speak to me again — I can’t try and talk about myself — I do like you, and — and yet I know that the only person I care for really is the one who does not care for me; and if I married you tomorrow, and I saw John coming along the street I should rush away to meet him. I don’t want to marry him, and I don’t know what I want. But, indeed, I have tried to be good. You are stronger than me, don’t be hard upon me.”

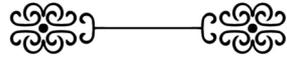
“My dear little girl,” said Will, loyally and kindly, “don’t be unhappy, you have not flirted with me. I couldn’t be hard upon you if I tried: you are a faithful little soul. Shall I tell you about myself? Once not so very long ago I liked Tishy almost as well as you like John. There, now, you see that you have done no great harm, and only helped to cheer me up again, and I am sure that you and I will be just as good friends as ever. As for John,” he added, in quite a different tone, “the sooner you forget all about him the better.” —

Will took her hand, which was lying limp on the shingle, said “Good-by,” took up his umbrella, and walked away.

And so, by some strange arrangement, Elly put away from her a second time the love of a good and honourable man, and turned back impotently to the memory — it was no more — of a dead and buried passion. Was this madness or wisdom? Was this the decree of fate or of folly?

She sat all in a maze, staring at the sea and the wavelets, and in half an hour rushed into the sitting-room, flung her arms round Miss Dampier’s neck, and told her all that happened.

CHAPTER XI.



OF ALL THE gifts of heaven to us below, that felicity is the sum and the chief. I tremble as I hold it, lest I should lose it, and be left alone in the blank world without it. Again, I feel humiliated to think that I possess it: as hastening home to a warm fireside, and a plentiful table, I feel ashamed sometimes before the poor outcast beggar shivering in the street.

ELLY expected, she did not know why, that there would be some great difference when she got back to the old house at Paris. Her heart sank as Clementine, looking just as usual, opened the great door, and stepped forward to help with the box. She went into the courtyard. Those cocks and hens were pecketing between the stones, the poplar-trees shivering, Françoise in her blue gown came out of the kitchen: it was like one of the dreams which used to haunt her pillow. This sameness and monotony was terrible. Already in one minute it seemed to her that she had never been away. Her mother and father were out. Mme. Jacob came downstairs with the children to greet her and see her. Ah! they had got new frocks, and were grown — that was some relief. Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou were not more delighted with their little check black-and-white apacas than Elly was.

Anthony was away — she was glad. After the first shock the girl took heart and courage, and set herself to practise the good resolutions she had made when she was away. It was not so hard as she had fancied to be a little less ill-tempered and discontented, because you see she had really behaved so very badly before. But it was not so easy to lead the cheerful devoted life she had pictured to herself. Her mother was very kind, very indifferent, very unhappy, Elizabeth feared. She was ill too, and out of health, but she bore great Buffering with wonderful patience and constancy. Tournour looked haggard and worn. Had he begun to discover that he could not understand his wife, that he had not married the woman he fancied he knew so well, but some quite different person? Ill-temper, discontent, he could have endured and dealt with, but a terrible mistrust and doubt had come into his heart, he did not know how or when, and had nearly broken it.

A gloom seemed hanging over this sad house; a sort of hopeless dreariness. Do you remember how cheerful and contented Caroline had been at first? By degrees she began to get a little tired now and then — a little weary. All these things grew just a little insipid and distasteful. Do you know that torture to which some poor slaves have been subjected? I believe it is only a drop of water falling at regular intervals upon their heads. At first they scarcely heed it, and talk and laugh; then they become silent; and still the drop falls and drips. And then they moan and beg for mercy, and still it falls; and then scream out with horror, and cry out for death, for this is more than they can bear — but still it goes on falling. I have read this somewhere, and it seems to me that this applies to Caroline Tournour, and to the terrible life which had begun for her.

Her health failed, and she daily lost strength and interest in the things by which she was surrounded; then they became wearisome. Her tired frame was not equal to the constant exertions she had imposed upon herself: from being wearisome, they grew hateful to her; and, one by one, she gave them up. Then the terrible sameness of a life in which her heart was no longer set, seemed to crush her down day by day: a life never lived from high and honourable motives, but for mean and despicable ends; a life lofty and noble to those who, with great hearts and good courage, knew how to

look beyond it, and not to care for the things of the world, but dull and terrible beyond expression to a woman whose whole soul was set amidst the thorns and thistles; and who had only rushed by chance into this narrow path blindfold with passion and despair.

Now she has torn the bandage off her eyes; now she is struggling to get out of it, and beating against the thorns, and wearily trying to trace back her steps. Elly used to cry out in her childish way. Caroline, who is a woman, is silent, and utters not one word of complaint; only her cheeks fall away and her eyes glare out of great black rings.

Elly came home blooming and well, and was shocked and frightened at first to see the change which had come over her mother. She did not ask the reason of it, but, as we all do sometimes, accepted without much speculation the course of events. Things come about so simply and naturally that people are often in the midst of strangest histories without having once thought so, or wondered that it should be. Very soon all the gloomy house, though she did not know it, seemed brightened and cheered by her coming home. Even Mme. Jacob relented a little when she heard Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou's shouts of laughter one day coming through the open window. The three girls were at work in the garden. I do not know that they were doing much good except to themselves. It was a keen, clear, brilliant winter morning, and the sun out of doors put out the smouldering fires within.

The little girls were laughing and working with all their hearts. Elly was laughing too, and tearing up dried old plants, and heaping broken flower-pots together. Almost happy, almost contented, almost good.... And there is many a worse state of mind than this. She was sighing as she laughed, for she was thinking of herself, pacing round and round the neglected garden once not so long ago; then she thought of the church on the hill-top, then of Will Dampier, and then of John, and then she came upon a long wriggling worm, and she jumped away and forgot to be sentimental. Besides working in the garden, she set to teaching the children in her mother's school. What this girl turned her hand to, she always did well and thoroughly. She even went to visit some of the sick people, and though she never took kindly to these exercises, the children liked to say their lessons to her, and the sick people were glad when she came in. She was very popular with them all; perhaps the reason was, that she did not do these things from a sense of duty, and did not look upon the poor and the sick as so many of us do, as a selfish means for self-advancement; she went to them because it was more convenient for her to go than for anybody else — she only thought of their needs, grumbled at the trouble she was taking, and it never occurred to her that this unconsciousness was as good as a good conscience.

My dear little Elizabeth! I am glad that at last she is behaving pretty well. Tournour strokes her head sometimes, and holds out his kind hand to her when she comes into his room. His eyes follow her fondly as if he were her father. One day she told him about William Dampier. He sighed as he heard the story. It was all ordained for the best, he said to himself. But he would have been glad to know her happy, and he patted her cheek and went into his study.

Miss Dampier's letters were Elly's best treasures: how eagerly she took them from Clementine's hands, how she tore them open and read them once, twice, thrice! No novels interest people so much as their own — a story in which you have ever so little a part to enact thrills, and excites, and amuses to the very last. You don't skip the reflections; the descriptions do not weary. I can fancy Elly sitting in a heap on the floor, and spelling out Miss Dampier's; Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou looking on with respectful wonder.

But suddenly the letters seemed to her to change. They became short and reserved; they were not interesting any more. Looked for so anxiously, they only brought disappointment when they came, and no word of the people about whom she longed to hear, no mention of their doings. Even Lady Dampier's name would have been welcome. But there was nothing. It was in vain she read and re-read so eagerly, longing and thirsting for news.

Things were best as they were, she told herself a hundred times; and so, though poor Elly sighed and wearied, and though her heart sank, she did not speak to any one of her trouble: it was a wholesome one, she told herself, one that must be surmounted and overcome by patience. Sometimes her work seemed almost greater than her strength, and then she would go upstairs and cry a little bit and pity herself, and sop up all her tears, and then run round and round the garden once or twice, and come back, with bright eyes and glowing cheeks, to chatter with Françoise, to look after her mother and Stephen Tourneur, to scold the pupils and make jokes at them, to romp with the little girls.

One day she found her letter waiting on the hall-table, and tore it open with a trembling hope.... Aunt Jean described the weather, the pigsty, made valuable remarks on the news contained in the daily papers, signed herself, ever her affectionate old friend. And that was all. Was not that enough? Elly asked herself, with such a sigh. She was reading it over in the doorway of the *salle-à-manger*, bonneted and cloaked, with all the remains of the mid-day meal congealing and disordered on the table.

“Es-tu prête, Elizabeth?” said Tou-Tou, coming in with a little basket — there were no stones in it this time. “Tiens, voilà ce que ma tante envoie à cette pauvre Madame Jonnes.”

Madame Jonnes was only Mrs. Jones, only an old woman dying in a melancholy room hard-by — in a melancholy room in a deserted street, where there were few houses, but long walls, where the mould was feeding, and yellow placards were pasted and defaced and flapping in shreds, and where Elly, picking her little steps over the stones, saw blades of grass growing between them. There was a *chantier* — a great wood-yard — on one side; now and then a dark doorway leading into a black and filthy court, out of which a gutter would come with evil smells, flowing murkily into the street; in the distance, two figures passing; a child in a nightcap, thumping a doll upon a kerbstone; a dog snuffing at a heap; at the end of the street the placarded backs of tall houses built upon a rising ground; a man in a blouse wheeling a truck, and singing out dismally; and meanwhile, good old Mrs. Jones was dying close at hand, under this black and crumbling doorway, in a room opening with cracked glass-doors upon the yard.

She was lying alone upon her bed; the nurse they had sent to her was gossiping with the porter in his lodge. Kindly and dimly her eyes opened and smiled somehow at the girl, out of the faded bed, out of a mystery of pain, of grief, and solitude.

It was a mystery indeed, which Elizabeth, standing beside it, could not understand, though she herself had lain so lately and so resignedly upon a couch of sickness. Age, abandonment, seventy years of life — how many of grief and trouble? As she looked at the dying, indifferent face, she saw that they were almost ended. And in the midst of her pity and shrinking compassion Elly thought to herself that she would change all with the sick woman, at that minute, to have endured, to have surmounted so much.

She sat with her till the dim twilight came through the dirty and patched panes of the windows. Even as she waited there her thoughts went wandering, and she was trying to picture to herself faces and scenes that she could not see. She knew that the shadows were creeping round about those whom she loved, as quietly as they were

rising here in this sordid room. It was their evening as it was hers; and then she said to herself that they who made up so large a part of her life must, perforce, think of her sometimes: she was part of their lives, even though they should utterly neglect and forget and abandon her; even though they should never meet again from this day; though she should never hear their names so much as mentioned; though their paths should separate for ever. For a time they had travelled the same road — ah! she was thankful even for so much; and she unconsciously pressed the wasted hand she was holding: and then her heart thrilled with tender, unselfish gladness as the feeble fingers tried to clasp hers, and the faltering whisper tried to bless.

She came home sad and tired from her sick woman's bedside, thinking of the last kind gleam of the eyes as she left the room. She went straight upstairs and took off her shabby dress, and found another, and poured out water and bathed her face. Her heart was beating, her hands trembling. She was remembering and regretting; she was despairing and longing, and yet resigned, as she had learnt to be of late. She leant against the wall for a minute before she went down; she was dressed in the blue dress, with her favourite little locket hanging round her neck. She put her hand tiredly to her head; and so she stood, as she used to stand when she was a child, in a sort of dream, and almost out of the world. And as she was waiting a knock came at the door.

It was Clementine who knocked, and who said, in the sing-song way in which Frenchwomen speak—"Mademoiselle, voilà pour vous."

It was too dark to see anything, except that it was another familiar-looking letter. Elly made up her mind not to be disappointed any more, and went downstairs leisurely to the study, where she knew she should find Tourneur's lamp alight. And she crossed the hall and turned the handle of the door, and opened it and went in.

The lamp, with its green shade on the table, lit up one part of the room, but in the duskiess, standing by the stove and talking eagerly, were two people whom she could not distinguish very plainly. One of them was Tourneur, who looked round and came to meet her, and took her hand; and the other....

Suddenly her heart began to beat so that her breath was taken away. What was this? Who was this — ? What chance had she come upon?

Such mad hopes as hers, were they ever fulfilled? Was this moment, so sudden, so unlooked for, the one for which she had despaired and longed; for which she had waited and lived through an eternity of grief? Was it John Dampier into whose hand Tourneur put hers? Was she still asleep and dreaming one of those delighting but terrible dreams, from which, ah me! she must awake? In this dream she heard the pasteur saying, "Il a bien des choses à vous dire, Elizabeth," and then he seemed to go away and to leave them.

In this dream, bewildered and trembling, with a desperate effort, she pulled her hand away, and said, "What does it mean? Where is Tishy? Why do you come, John? Why don't you leave me in peace?"

And then it was a dream no longer, but a truth and a reality, when John began to speak in his familiar way, and she heard his voice, and saw him before her, and — yes, it was he; and he said, "Tishy and I have had a quarrel, Elly. We are nothing to one another any more, and so I have come to you — to — to — tell you that I have behaved like a fool all this time." And he turned very red as he spoke, and then he was silent, and then he took both her hands and spoke again: "Tell me, dear," he said, looking up into her sweet eyes, "Elly, tell me, would you — won't you — be content with a fool for a husband?" And Elizabeth Gilmour only answered, "Oh, John, John!" and burst into a great flood of happy tears: tears which fell raining peace and calm after this long drought and misery; tears which seemed to speak to him, and made him

sad, and yet happier than he had ever dreamt of or imagined; tears which quieted her, soothed her, and healed all her troubles.

Before John went away that night, Elly read Miss Dampier's letter, which explained his explanations. The old lady wrote in a state of incoherent excitement. — It was some speech of Will's which had brought the whole thing about.

"What did he say?" Elly asked, looking up from the letter, with her shining eyes.

Sir John said, "He asked me if I did not remember that church on the hill, at Boatstown? We were all out in the garden, by the old statue of the nymph. Tishy suddenly stopped, and turned upon me, and cried out, when was I last at Boatstown? And then I was obliged to confess, and we had a disagreeable scene enough, and she appealed to William — gave me my congé, and I was not sorry, Elly."

"But had you never told her about —?"

"It was from sheer honesty that I was silent," said Sir John; "a man who sincerely wishes to keep his word doesn't say, 'Madam, I like some one else, but I will marry you if you insist upon it;' only the worst of it is, that we were both uncomfortable, and I now find she suspected me the whole time. She sent me a note in the evening. Look here:" —

The note said —

"I have been thinking about what I said just now in the garden. I am more than ever decided that it is best we two should part. But I do not choose to say good-by to you in an angry spirit, and so this is to tell you that I forgive you all the injustice of your conduct to me. Everybody seems to have been in a league to deceive me, and I have not found out one true friend among you all. How could you for one moment imagine that I should wish to marry a man who preferred another woman? You may have been influenced and worked upon; but for all that I should never be able to place confidence in you again, and I feel it is best and happiest for us both that all should be at an end between us.

"You will not wonder that, though I try to forgive you, I cannot help feeling indignant at the way in which I have been used. I could never understand exactly what was going on in your mind. You were silent, you equivocated; and not you only, everybody seems to have been thinking of themselves, and never once for me. Even William, who professes to care for me still, only spoke by chance, and revealed the whole history. When he talked to you about Boatstown, some former suspicions of mine were confirmed, and by the most fortunate chance two people have been saved from a whole lifetime of regret.

"I will not trust myself to think of the way in which I should have been bartered had I only discovered the truth when it was too late. If I speak plainly, it is in justice to myself, and from no unkindness to you; for though I bid you farewell, I can still sincerely sign myself,

"Yours affectionately,

"LÆTITIA."

Elly read the letter, and gave it back to him, and sighed, then smiled, then sighed again, and then went on with Miss Dampier's epistle.

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walls, where the mould was feeding, and yellow placards were pasted and defaced and flapping in shreds, and where Elly, picking her little steps over the stones, saw blades of grass growing between them. There was a *chantier* — a great wood-yard — on one side; now and then a dark doorway leading into a black and filthy court, out of which a gutter would come with evil smells, flowing murkily into the street; in the distance, two figures passing; a child in a nightcap, thumping a doll upon a kerbstone; a dog snuffing at a heap; at the end of the street the placarded backs of tall houses built upon a rising ground; a man in a blouse wheeling a truck, and singing out dismally; and meanwhile, good old Mrs. Jones was dying close at hand, under this black and crumbling doorway, in a room opening with cracked glass-doors upon the yard.

She was lying alone upon her bed; the nurse they had sent to her was gossiping with the porter in his lodge. Kindly and dimly her eyes opened and smiled somehow at the girl, out of the faded bed, out of a mystery of pain, of grief, and solitude.

It was a mystery indeed, which Elizabeth, standing beside it, could not understand, though she herself had lain so lately and so resignedly upon a couch of sickness. Age, abandonment, seventy years of life — how many of grief and trouble? As she looked at the dying, indifferent face, she saw that they were almost ended. And in the midst of her pity and shrinking compassion Elly thought to herself that she would change all with the sick woman, at that minute, to have endured, to have surmounted so much.

She sat with her till the dim twilight came through the dirty and patched panes of the windows. Even as she waited there her thoughts went wandering, and she was trying to picture to herself faces and scenes that she could not see. She knew that the shadows were creeping round about those whom she loved, as quietly as they were rising here in this sordid room. It was their evening as it was hers; and then she said to herself that they who made up so large a part of her life must, perforce, think of her sometimes: she was part of their lives, even though they should utterly neglect and forget and abandon her; even though they should never meet again from this day; though she should never hear their names so much as mentioned; though their paths should separate for ever. For a time they had travelled the same road — ah! she was thankful even for so much; and she unconsciously pressed the wasted hand she was holding: and then her heart thrilled with tender, unselfish gladness as the feeble fingers tried to clasp hers, and the faltering whisper tried to bless.

She came home sad and tired from her sick woman's bedside, thinking of the last kind gleam of the eyes as she left the room. She went straight upstairs and took off her shabby dress, and found another, and poured out water and bathed her face. Her heart was beating, her hands trembling. She was remembering and regretting; she was despairing and longing, and yet resigned, as she had learnt to be of late. She leant against the wall for a minute before she went down; she was dressed in the blue dress, with her favourite little locket hanging round her neck. She put her hand tiredly to her head; and so she stood, as she used to stand when she was a child, in a sort of dream, and almost out of the world. And as she was waiting a knock came at the door.

It was Clementine who knocked, and who said, in the sing-song way in which Frenchwomen speak—"Mademoiselle, voilà pour vous."

It was too dark to see anything, except that it was another familiar-looking letter. Elly made up her mind not to be disappointed any more, and went downstairs leisurely to the study, where she knew she should find Tourneur's lamp alight. And she crossed the hall and turned the handle of the door, and opened it and went in.

The lamp, with its green shade on the table, lit up one part of the room, but in the duskiess, standing by the stove and talking eagerly, were two people whom she

could not distinguish very plainly. One of them was Tourneur, who looked round and came to meet her, and took her hand; and the other....

Suddenly her heart began to beat so that her breath was taken away. What was this? Who was this? What chance had she come upon? Such mad hopes as hers, were they ever fulfilled? Was this moment, so sudden, so unlooked for, the one for which she had despaired and longed; for which she had waited and lived through an eternity of grief? Was it John Dampier into whose hand Tourneur put hers? Was she still asleep and dreaming one of those delighting but terrible dreams, from which, ah me! she must awake? In this dream she heard the pasteur saying, "Il a bien des choses a, vous dire, Elizabeth," and then he seemed to go away and to leave them.

In this dream, bewildered and trembling, with a desperate effort, she pulled her hand away, and said, "What does it mean? Where is Tishy? Why do you come, John? Why don't you leave me in peace?"

And then it was a dream no longer, but a truth and a reality, when John began to speak in his familiar way, and she heard his voice, and saw him before her, and — yes, it was he; and he said, "Tishy and I have had a quarrel, Elly. We are nothing to one another any more, and so I have come to you — to — to — tell you that I have behaved like a fool all this time." And he turned very red as he spoke, and then he was silent, and then he took both her hands and spoke again: "Tell me, dear," he said, looking up into her sweet eyes, "Elly, tell me, would you — won't you — be content with a fool for a husband?" And Elizabeth Gilmour only answered, "Oh, John, John!" and burst into a great flood of happy tears: tears which fell raining peace and calm after this long drought and misery; tears which seemed to speak a man who preferred another woman? You may have been influenced and worked upon; but for all that I should never be able to place confidence in you again, and I feel it is best and happiest for us both that all should be at an end between us.

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Miss Dampier hoped that John himself would put an end to this false situation. She did not know how to write about either of them to Elly. Her perplexities had seemed unending.

“But I also never heard that you came to Boatstown,” Elly said.

“And yet I saw you there,” said John, “standing at the end of the pier.” And then he went on to tell her a great deal more, and to confess all that he had thought while he was waiting for her.

Elly passed her hand across her eyes with the old familiar action.

“And you came to Boatstown, and you went away when you read Tishy’s writing, and you had the heart to be angry with me?” she said.

“I was worried, and out of temper,” said John. “I felt I was doing wrong when I ran away from Tishy. I blamed you because I was in a rage with myself. I can’t bear to think of it. But I was punished, Elly. Were you ever jealous?” She laughed and nodded her head. “I daresay not,” he went on; “when I sailed away and saw you standing so confidentially with Will Dampier, I won’t try and tell you what I suffered. I could bear to give you up — but to see you another man’s wife — Elly, I know you never were jealous, or you would understand what I felt at that moment.”

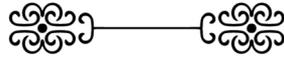
When their *tête-à-tête* was over they went into the next room. All the family congratulated them, Madame Tourneur among the rest; she was ill and tired that evening, and lying on the yellow Utrecht velvet sofa. But it was awkward for them and uncomfortable, and John went home early to his inn. As Elly went up to bed that night Françoise brought her one other piece of news — Madame Jonnes was dead. They had sent to acquaint the police. But Elly was so happy, that, though she tried, she could not be less happy because of this. All the night she lay awake, giving thanks and praise, and saying over to herself, a hundred times, “At last — at last!”

At last! after all this long rigmarole. At last! after all these despairing adjectives and adverbs. At last! after all these thousands of hours of grief and despair. Did not that one minute almost repay her for them all? She went on telling herself, as I have said, that this was a dream — from which she need never awake. And I, who am writing her story, wonder if it is so — wonder if even to such dreams as these there may not be a waking one day, when all the visions that surround us shall vanish and disappear for ever into eternal silence and oblivion. Dear faces — voices whose tones speak to us even more familiarly than the tender words which they utter! It would, in truth, seem almost too hard to bear, if we did not guess — if we were not told — how the love which makes such things so dear to us endures in the eternity out of which they have passed.

Happiness like Elly’s is so vague and so great that it is impossible to try to describe it. To a nature like hers, full of tenderness, faithful and eager, it came like a sea, ebbing and flowing with waves, and with the sun shining and sparkling on the water, and lighting the fathoms below. I do not mean to say that my poor little heroine was such a tremendous creature that she could compass the depths and wide extent of a sea in her heart. Love is not a thing which belongs to any one of us individually; it is everywhere, here and all round about, and sometimes people’s hearts are opened, and they guess at it, and realize that it is theirs.

Dampier came early next morning, looking kind and happy and bright, to fetch her for a walk; Elly was all blue ribbons and blue eyes; her feet seemed dancing against her will, she could hardly walk quietly along. Old Françoise looked after them as they walked off towards the Bois de Boulogne; Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou peeped from their bedroom window. The sun was shining, the sky had mounted Elly’s favourite colours.

CHAPTER XII.



O BLESSED REST, O royal night!
Wherefore seemeth the time so long
Till I see yon stars in their fullest light,
And list to their loudest song?

WHEN I first saw Lady Dampier she had only been married a day or two. I had been staying at Guildford, and I drove over one day to see my old friend Jean Dampier. I came across the hills and by Coombe Bottom and along the lanes, and through the little village street, and when I reached the cottage I saw Elly, of whom I had heard so much, standing at the gate. She was a very beautiful young woman, tall and straight, with the most charming blue eyes, a sweet frank voice, and a taking manner, and an expression on her face that I cannot describe. She had a blue ribbon in her hair, which was curling in a crop. She held her hat full of flowers; behind her the lattices of the cottage were gleaming in the sun; the creepers were climbing and flowering about the porch.

All about rose a spring incense of light, of colour, of perfume. The country folks were at work in the fields and on the hills. The light shone beyond the church spire, beyond the cottages and glowing trees. Inside the cottage, through the lattice, I could see aunt Jean nodding over her knitting.

She threw down her needles to welcome me. Of course I was going to stay to tea — and I said that was my intention in coming. As the sun set, the clouds began to gather, coming quickly we knew not from whence; but we were safe and dry, sitting by the lattice and gossiping, and meanwhile Miss Dampier went on with her work.

Elly had been spending the day with her, she told me. Sir John was to come for her, and presently he arrived, dripping wet, through the April shower which was now pouring over the fields.

The door of the porch opens into the little dining-room, where the tea was laid: a wood fire was crackling in the tall cottage chimney. Elizabeth was smiling by the hearth, toasting cakes with one hand and holding a book in the other, when the young man walked in.

He came into the room where we were sitting and shook hands with us both, and then he laughed and said he must go and dry himself by the fire, and he went back.

So Jean Dampier and I sat mumbling confidences in the inner room, and John and Elly were chattering to one another by the burning wood logs.

The door was open which led, with a step, into the dining-room, where the wood fire was burning. Darkness was setting in. The rain was over, the clouds swiftly breaking and coursing away, and such a bright, mild-eyed little star peeped in through the lattice at us two old maids in the window. It was a shame to hear, but how could we help it? Out of the fire-lit room the voices came to us, and when we ceased chattering for an instant, we heard them so plainly —

“I saw Will to-day,” said a voice. “He was talking about Lætitia. I think there will be some news of them before long. Should you be glad?”

“Ah! so glad. I don’t want to be the only happy woman in the world.”

“My dearest Elly!” said the kind voice.

“And you will never regret — And are you happy?”

“Can you ask?” said Elly. “Come into the porch, and I will tell you.” And then there was a gust of fresh rain-scented air, and a soft rustle, and the closing click of a door. And then we saw them pass the window, and Jean clasped my hand very tightly, and flung her arms round my neck, and gave me a delighted kiss.

“You dear, silly woman,” said I, “how glad I am they are so happy together.”

“I hope she won’t catch cold,” said Jean, looking at the damp walks. “Could not you take out a shawl?”

“Let her catch cold!” said I; “and in the meantime give me some tea, if you please. Remember, I have got to drive home in the dark.”

So we went into the next room. Jean rang for the candles. The old silver candlesticks were brought in by Kitty on a tray.

“Don’t shut the curtains,” said Miss Dampier; “and come here, Mary, and sit by the fire.”

While Elizabeth and John Dampier were wandering up and down in the dark damp garden, Jenny and I were comfortably installed by the fire drinking hot, sweet tea, and eating toasted cakes, and preserves, and cream. I say *we*, but that is out of modesty, for she had no appetite, whereas I was very hungry.

“Heigho!” said Jean, looking at the fire. “It’s a good thing to be young, Mary. Tell me honestly: what would you give—”

“To be walking in the garden with young Dampier,” said I (and I burst out laughing), “without a cloak, or an umbrella, or india-rubbers? My dear Jenny, where are your five wits?”

“Where indeed?” said Jean, with another sigh. “Yet I can remember when you used to cry instead of laughing over such things, Mary.”

Her sadness had made me sad. Whilst the young folks were whispering outside, it seemed as if we two old women were sitting by the fire and croaking the elegy of all youth, and love, and happiness. “The night is coming for you and me, Jenny,” I said. “Dear me, how quickly.”

“The night is at hand,” echoed she, softly, and she passed her fingers across her eyes, and then sighed, and got up slowly and went to the door which opened into the porch. And then I heard her call me. “Come here!” she said, “Mary!” And then I, too, rose stiffly from my chair, and went to her. The clouds had cleared away. From the little porch, where the sweet-briar was climbing, we could see all the myriad worlds of heaven, alight and blazing, and circling in their infinite tracks. An awful, silent harmony, power and peace, and light and life eternal — a shining benediction seemed to be there hanging above our heads. “This is the night,” she whispered, and took my hand in hers.

And so this is the end of the story of Elizabeth Gilmour, whose troubles, as I have said, were not very great; who is a better woman, I fancy, than if her life had been the happy life she prophesied to herself. Deeper tones and understandings must have come to her out of the profoundness of her griefs, such as they were. For when other troubles came, as they come to all as years go by, she had learnt to endure and to care for others, and to be valiant and to be brave. And I do not like her the less because I have spoken the truth about her, and written of her as the woman she is.

I went to Paris a little time ago. I saw the old grass-grown court; I saw Françoise and Anthony, and Tou-Tou and Lou-Lou, who had grown up two pretty and modest and smiling young girls. The old lady at Asnières had done what was expected, and died and left her fortune to Tou-Tou, her goddaughter. (The little Chinese pagoda is still to let.) Poor Madame Jacob did not, however, enjoy this good luck, for she died

suddenly one day, some months before it came to them. But you may be sure that the little girls had still a father in Tourneur, and Caroline too was very kind to them in her uncertain way. She loved them because they were so unlike herself — so gentle, and dull, and guileless. Anthony asked me a great many questions about Elizabeth and her home, and told me that he meant to marry Lou-Lou eventually. He is thin and pale, with a fine head like his father, and a quiet manner. He works very hard, he earns very little — he is one of the best men I ever knew in my life. As I talked to him, I could not but compare him to Will Dampier and to John, who are also good men. But then they are prosperous and well-to-do, with well-stored granaries, with vineyards and fig-trees, with children growing up round them. I was wondering if Elizabeth, who chose her husband because she loved him, and for no better reason, might not have been as wise if she could have appreciated the gifts better than happiness, than well-stored granaries, than vineyards, than fig-trees, which Anthony held in his hand to offer? Who shall say? Self-denial and holy living are better than ease and prosperity? But for that reason some people wilfully turn away from the mercies of heaven, and call the angels devils, and its gracious bounties temptation.

Anthony has answered this question to himself as we all must do. His father looks old and worn. I fear there is trouble still under his roof — trouble, whatever it may be, which is borne with Christian and courageous resignation by the master of the house: he seems, somehow, in these later years to have risen beyond it. A noble reliance and peace are his; holy thoughts keep him company. The affection between him and his son is very touching.

Madame Tourneur looks haggard and weary: and one day, when I happened to tell her I was going away, she gasped out suddenly—” Ah! what would I not give—” and then was silent and turned aside. But she remains with her husband, which is more than I should have given her credit for.

And so when the appointed hour came, I drove off, and all the personages of my story came out to bid me farewell. I looked back for the last time at the courtyard with the hens pecketting round about the kitchen door; at the garden with the weeds and flowers tangling together in the sun; at the shadows falling across the stones of the yard. I could fancy Elizabeth a prisoner within those walls, beating like a bird against the bars of the cage, and revolting and struggling to be free.

The old house is done away with and exists no longer. It was pulled down by order of the Government, and a grand new boulevard runs right across the place where it stood.

THE END

DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample