APPLETONS' NEW HANDY-VOLUME SERIES.

THE

DISTRACTED YOUNG PREACHER.

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THE

DISTRACTED YOUNG PREACHER.

CHAPTER I.

HOW HIS COLD WAS CURED.

SOMETHING delayed the arrival of the Wesleyan minister, and a young man came temporarily in his stead. It was on the 13th of January, 183–, that Mr. Stockdale, the young man in question, made his humble entry into the village, unknown, and almost unseen. But when those of the inhabitants who styled themselves of his connection became acquainted with him, they were rather pleased with the substitute than otherwise, though he had scarcely as yet acquired ballast of character sufficient to steady the consciences of the hundred and forty Methodists of pure blood who at this time lived in Nether-Mynton, and to give in addition supplementary support to the mixed race which went to church in the morning

and chapel in the evening, or when there was a tea as many as a hundred and ten people more, all told, and including the parish clerk in the winter-time, when it was too dark for the vicar to observe who passed up the street at seven o'clock—which, to be just to him, he was never anxious to do.

It was owing to this overlapping of creeds that the celebrated population puzzle arose among the denser gentry of the district around Nether-Mynton: how could it be that a parish containing fifteen score of strong, full-grown Episcopalians, and nearly thirteen score of well-matured Dissenters, numbered barely two-and-twenty score adults in all?

The young man being personally interesting, those with whom he came in contact were content to waive for a while the graver question of his sufficiency. It is said that at this time of his life his eyes were affectionate, though without a ray of levity; that his hair was curly and his figure tall; that he was, in short, a very lovable youth, who won upon his female hearers as soon as they saw and heard him, and caused them to say, "Why didn't we know of this before he came, that we might have gied him a warmer welcome!"

The fact was that, knowing him to be only provisionally selected, and expecting nothing remarkable in his person or doctrine, they and the rest of his flock in Nether-Mynton had felt almost

as indifferent about his advent as if they had been the soundest church-going parishioners in the country, and he their true and appointed parson. Thus, when Stockdale set foot in the place nobody had secured a lodging for him, and, though his journey had given him a bad cold in the head, he was forced to attend to that business himself. On inquiry, he found that the only possible accommodation in the village was at the house of one Mrs. Lizzy Newberry, at the upper end of the street.

It was a youth who gave this information, and Stockdale asked him who Mrs. Newberry might be.

The boy said that she was a widow woman, who had got no husband, because he was dead. Mr. Newberry, he added, had been a well-to-do man enough, as the saying was, and a farmer; but he had gone off in a decline. As regarded Mrs. Newberry's serious side, Stockdale gathered that she was one of the trimmers who went to church and chapel both.

"I'll go there," said Stockdale, feeling that, in the absence of purely sectarian lodgings, he could do no better.

"She's a little particular, and won't hae gover'ment folks, or curates, or the passon's friends, or such like," said the lad dubiously.

"Ah, that may be a promising sign; I'll call. Or, no; just you go up and ask first if she can

find room for me. I have to see one or two persons on another matter. You will find me down at the carrier's."

In a quarter of an hour the lad came back, and said that Mrs. Newberry would have no objection to accommodate him, whereupon Stockdale called at the house. It stood within a garden-hedge, and seemed to be roomy and comfortable. He saw an elderly woman, with whom he made arrangements to come the same night, since there was no inn in the place, and he wished to house himself as soon as possible; the village being a local center from which he was to radiate at once to the different small chapels in the neighborhood. He forthwith sent his luggage to Mrs. Newberry's from the carrier's, where he had taken shelter, and in the evening walked up to his temporary home.

As he now lived there, Stockdale felt it unnecessary to knock at the door, and entering quietly he had the pleasure of hearing footsteps scudding away like mice into the back quarters. He advanced to the parlor, as the front room was called, though its stone floor was scarcely disguised by the carpet, which only overlaid the trodden areas, leaving sandy deserts under the furniture. But the room looked snug and cheerful. The firelight shone out brightly, trembling on the bulging moldings of the table-legs, playing with brass knobs and handles, and lurking in great strength

on the under surface of the chimney-piece. A deep arm-chair, covered with horsehair, and studded with a countless throng of nails, was pulled up on one side of the fireplace. The tea-things were on the table, the teapot-cover was open, and a little hand-bell had been laid at that precise point whereon a person seated in the great chair might be expected instinctively to lay his hand.

Stockdale sat down, not objecting to his experience of the room thus far, and began his residence by tinkling the bell. A little girl crept in at the summons and made tea for him. Her name, she said, was Marther Sarer, and she lived out there, nodding toward the road and village generally. Before Stockdale had got far with his meal, a tap sounded on the door behind him, and, on his telling the inquirer to come in, a rustle of garments caused him to turn his head. He saw before him a fine and extremely well-made young woman, with dark hair, a wide, sensible, beautiful forehead, eyes that warmed him before he knew it, and a mouth that was in itself a picture to all appreciative souls.

"Can I get you anything else for tea?" she said, coming forward a step or two, an expression of liveliness on her features, and her hand waving the door by its edge.

"Nothing, thank you," said Stockdale, thinking less of what he replied than of what might be her relation to the household.

"You are quite sure?" said the young woman, apparently aware that he had not considered his answer.

He conscientiously examined the tea-things, and found them all there.

"Quite sure, Miss Newberry," he said.

"It is Mrs. Newberry," said she. "Lizzy Newberry. I used to be Lizzy Simpkins."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Newberry." And before he had occasion to say more, she left the room.

Stockdale remained in some doubt till Martha Sarah came to clear the table. "Whose house is this, my little woman?" said he.

"Mrs. Lizzy Newberry's, sir."

"Then Mrs. Newberry is not the old lady I saw this afternoon?"

"No. That's Mrs. Newberry's mother. It was Mrs. Newberry who comed in to you just by now, because she wanted to see if you was good-looking."

Later in the evening, when Stockdale was about to begin supper, she came again. "I have come myself, Mr. Stockdale," she said. The minister stood up in acknowledgment of the honor. "I am afraid little Marther might not make ye understand. What will you have for supper? There's cold rabbit, and there's a ham uncut."

Stockdale said he could get on nicely with those viands, and supper was laid. He had no

more than cut a slice when tap-tap came to the door again. The minister had already learned that this particular rhythm in taps denoted the fingers of his enkindling landlady, and the doomed young fellow buried his first mouthful under a look of receptive blandness.

"We have a chicken in the house, Mr. Stockdale—I quite forgot to mention it just now. Perhaps you would like Marther Sarer to bring it up?"

Stockdale had advanced far enough in the art of being a young man to say that he did not want the chicken, unless she brought it up herself; but when it was uttered he blushed at the daring gallantry of the speech, perhaps a shade too strong for a serious man and a minister. In three minutes the chicken appeared, but, to his great surprise, only in the hands of Martha Sarah. Stockdale was disappointed, which perhaps it was intended that he should be.

He had finished supper, and was not in the least anticipating Mrs. Newberry again that night, when she tapped and entered as before. Stockdale's gratified look told that she had lost nothing by not appearing when expected. It happened that the cold in the head from which the young man suffered had increased with the approach of night, and before she had spoken he was seized with a violent fit of sneezing which he could not anyhow repress.

Mrs. Newberry looked full of pity. "Your cold is very bad to-night, Mr. Stockdale."

Stockdale replied that it was rather troublesome.

"And I've a good mind," she added archly, looking at the cheerless glass of water on the table, which the abstemious young minister was going to drink—

"Yes, Mrs. Newberry?"

"I've a good mind that you should have something more likely to cure it than that cold stuff."

"Well," said Stockdale, looking down at the glass, "as there is no inn here, and nothing better to be got in the village, of course it will do."

To this she replied: "There is something better, not far off, though not in the house. I really think you must try it, or you may be ill. Yes, Mr. Stockdale, you shall." She held up her finger, seeing that he was about to speak. "Don't ask what it is; wait and you shall see."

Lizzy went away, and Stockdale waited in a pleasant mood. Presently she returned with her bonnet and cloak on, saying: "I am so sorry, but you must help me to get it. Mother has gone to bed. Will you wrap yourself up and come this way, and please bring that cup with you?"

Stockdale, a lonely young fellow, who had for weeks felt a great craving for somebody on whom to throw away superfluous interest, and even ten-

derness, was not sorry to join her; and he followed his guide through the back door, across the garden, to the bottom, where the boundary was a wall. This wall was low, and beyond it Stockdale discerned in the night shades several gray headstones, and the outlines of the church roof or tower.

"It is easy to get up this way," she said, stepping upon a bank which abutted on the wall, then putting her foot on the top of the stonework, and descending by a spring inside, where the ground was much higher, as is the manner of graveyards to be. Stockdale did the same, and followed her in the dusk across the irregular ground till they came to the tower door, which, when they had entered, she softly closed behind them.

"You can keep a secret?" she said in a musical voice.

"Like an iron chest!" said he fervently.

Then from under her cloak she produced a small, lighted lantern, which the minister had not noticed that she carried at all. The light showed them to be close to the singing-gallery stairs, under which lay a heap of lumber of all sorts, but consisting mostly of decayed framework, pews, panels, and pieces of flooring, that from time to time had been removed from their original fixings in the body of the edifice and replaced by new.

"Perhaps you will drag some of those boards

aside?" she said, holding the lantern over her head to light him better. "Or will you take the lantern while I move them?"

"I can manage it," said the young man; and, acting as she ordered, he uncovered, to his surprise, a row of little barrels bound with wood hoops, each barrel being about as large as the nave of a common cart-wheel. When they were laid open Lizzy fixed her eyes on him, as if she wondered what he would say.

"You know what they are?" she asked, finding that he did not speak.

"Yes, barrels," said Stockdale simply. He was an inland man, the son of highly respectable parents, and brought up with a single eye to the ministry, and the sight suggested nothing beyond the fact that such articles were there.

"You are quite right, they are barrels," she said, in an emphatic tone of candor that was not without a touch of irony.

Stockdale looked at her with an eye of sudden misgiving. "Not smugglers' liquor?" he said.

"Yes," said she. "They are tubs of spirit that have accidentally come over in the dark from France."

In Nether-Mynton and its vicinity at this date people always smiled at the sort of sin called in the outside world illicit trading, and these little tubs of gin and brandy were as well known to the inhabitants as turnips; so that Stockdale's inno-

cent ignorance, and his look of alarm when he guessed the sinister mystery, seemed to strike Lizzy first as ludicrous, and then as very awkward for the good impression that she wished to produce upon him.

"Smuggling is carried on here by some of the people," she said in a gentle, apologetic voice. "It has been their practice for generations, and they think it no harm. Now, will you roll out one of the tubs?"

"What to do with it?" said the minister.

"To draw a little from it to cure your cold," she answered. "It is so burning strong that it drives away that sort of thing in a jiffy. Oh, it is all right about our taking it. I may have what I like; the owner of the tubs says so. I ought to have had some in the house, and then I shouldn't ha' been put to this trouble; but I drink none myself, and so I often forget to keep it indoors."

"You are allowed to help yourself, I suppose, that you may not inform where their hiding-place is?"

"Well, no—not that particularly; but I may take any if I want it. So help yourself."

"I will, to oblige you, since you have a right to it," murmured the minister; and though he was not quite satisfied with his part in the performance, he rolled one of the tubs out from the corner into the middle of the tower floor. "How

do you wish me to get it out—with a gimlet, I suppose?"

"No, I'll show you," said his interesting companion; and she held up with her other hand a shoemaker's awl and a hammer. "You must never do these things with a gimlet, because the wood-dust gets in; and when the buyers pour out the brandy that would tell them that the tub had been broached. An awl makes no dust, and the hole nearly closes up again. Now tap one of the hoops forward."

Stockdale took the hammer and did so.

"Now make the hole in the part that was covered by the hoop."

He made the hole as directed. "It won't run out," he said.

"Oh, yes, it will," said she. "Take the tub between your knees, and squeeze the heads; and I'll hold the cup."

Stockdale obeyed; and the pressure taking effect upon the tub, which seemed to be thin, the spirit spurted out in a stream. When the cup was full he ceased pressing, and the flow immediately stopped. "Now we must fill up the keg with water," said Lizzy, "or it will cluck like forty hens when it is handled, and show that 'tis not full."

"But they tell you you may take it?"

"Yes, the *smugglers;* but the *buyers* must not know that the smugglers have been kind to me at their expense."

"I see," said Stockdale doubtfully. "I much question the honesty of this proceeding."

By her direction he held the tub with the hole upward, and while he went through the process of alternately pressing and ceasing to press, she produced a bottle of water, which she poured on the hole, where it was sucked in at each recovery of the cask from pressure. When it was again full he plugged the hole, knocked the hoop down to its place, and buried the tub in the lumber as before.

"Aren't the smugglers afraid that you will tell?" he asked as they recrossed the churchyard.

"Oh, no, they are not afraid of that. I couldn't do such a thing."

"They have put you into a very awkward corner," said Stockdale emphatically. "You must, of course, as an honest person, sometimes feel that it is your duty to inform—really you must."

"Well, I have never particularly felt it as a duty; and, besides, my first husband—" She stopped, and there was some confusion in her voice. Stockdale was so honest and unsophisticated that he did not at once discern why she paused; but at last he did perceive that the words were a slip, and that no woman would have uttered "first husband" by accident unless she had thought pretty frequently of a second. He felt for her confusion, and allowed her time to recover and proceed. "My husband," she said,

in a self-corrected tone, "used to know of their doings, and so did my father, and kept the secret. I can not inform, in fact, against anybody."

"I see the hardness of it," he continued, like a man who looked far into the moral of things. "And it is very cruel that you should be tossed and tantalized between your memories and your conscience. I do hope, Mrs. Newberry, that you will soon see your way out of this unpleasant position."

"Well, I don't just now," she murmured.

By this time they had passed over the wall and entered the house; where she brought him a glass and hot water, and left him to his own reflections. He looked after her vanishing form, asking himself whether he, as a respectable man, and a minister, and a shining light, even though as yet only of the halfpenny-candle sort, were quite justified in doing this thing. A sneeze settled the question; and he found that when the fiery liquor was lowered by the addition of twice or thrice the quantity of water, it was one of the prettiest cures for a cold in the head that he had ever known, particularly at this chilly time of the year.

Stockdale sat in the deep chair about twenty minutes sipping and meditating, till he at length took warmer views of things, and longed for the morrow, when he would see Mrs. Newberry again. He then felt that, though chronologically at a

short distance, it would in an emotional sense be very long before to-morrow came, and walked restlessly round the room. His eye was attracted by a framed and glazed sampler in which a running ornament of fir-trees and peacocks surrounded the following pretty bit of sentiment:

"Rose-leaves smell when roses thrive,
Here's my work while I'm alive;
Rose-leaves smell when shrunk and shed,
Here's my work when I am dead.

Lizzy Simpkins. Fear God. Honor the King. Aged 11 years."

"'Tis hers," he said to himself. "Heavens, how I like that name!"

Before he had done thinking that no other name from Abigail to Zenobia would have suited his young landlady so well, tap-tap came again upon the door; and the minister started as her face appeared yet another time, looking so disinterested that the most ingenious would have refrained from asserting that she had come to affect his feelings by her seductive eyes.

"Would you like a fire in your room, Mr. Stockdale, on account of your cold?"

The minister, being still a little pricked in the conscience for countenancing her in watering the spirits, saw here a way to self-chastisement. "No, I thank you," he said firmly; "it is not necessary.

I have never been used to one in my life, and it would be giving way to luxury too far."

"Then I won't insist," she said, and disconcerted him by vanishing instantly. Wondering if she was vexed by his refusal, he wished that he had chosen to have a fire, even though it should have scorched him out of bed and endangered his self-discipline for a dozen days. However, he consoled himself with what was in truth a rare consolation for a budding lover, that he was under the same roof with Lizzy—her guest, in fact, to take a poetical view of the term lodger—and that he would certainly see her on the morrow.

The morrow came, and Stockdale rose early, his cold quite gone. He had never in his life so longed for the breakfast-hour as he did that day, and punctually at eight o'clock, after a short walk to reconnoiter the premises, he reëntered the door of his dwelling. Breakfast passed, and Martha Sarah attended; but nobody came voluntarily as on the night before to inquire if there were other wants which he had not mentioned, and which she would attempt to gratify. He was disappointed, and went out, hoping to see her at dinner. Dinner-time came; he sat down to the meal, finished it, and lingered on for a whole hour, although two new teachers were at that moment waiting at the chapel door to speak to him by appointment. It was useless to wait

longer, and he slowly went his way down the lane, cheered by the thought that, after all, he would see her in the evening, and perhaps engage again in the delightful tub-broaching in the neighboring church tower, which proceeding he resolved to render more moral by steadfastly insisting that no water should be introduced to fill up, though the tub should cluck like all the hens in Christendom. But nothing could disguise the fact that it was a queer business; and his countenance fell when he thought how much more his mind was interested in that matter than in his serious duties.

However, compunction vanished with the decline of day. Night came, and his tea and supper; but no Lizzy Newberry, and no sweet temptations. At last the minister could bear it no longer, and said to his quaint little attendant, "Where is Mrs. Newberry to-day?" judiciously handing a penny as he spoke.

"She's busy," said Martha.

"Anything serious happened?" he asked, handing another penny, and revealing yet additional ones in the background.

"Oh no, nothing at all," said she, with breathless confidence. "Nothing ever happens to her. She's only biding up stairs in bed because 'tis her way sometimes."

Being a young man of some honor, he would not question further; and assuming that Lizzy

must have a bad headache, or other slight ailment, in spite of what the girl had said, he went to bed dissatisfied, not even setting eyes on old Mrs. Simpkins. "I said last night that I should see her to-morrow," he reflected; "but that was not to be!"

Next day he had better fortune, or worse, meeting her at the foot of the stairs in the morning, and being favored by a visit or two from her during the day—once for the purpose of making kindly inquiries about his comfort, as on the first evening, and at another time to place a bunch of winter violets on his table, with a promise to renew them when they drooped. On these occasions there was something in her smile which showed how conscious she was of the effect she produced, though it must be said that it was rather a humorous than a designing consciousness, and savored more of pride than of vanity.

As for Stockdale, he clearly perceived that he possessed unlimited capacity for backsliding, and wished that tutelary saints were not denied to Dissenters. He set a watch upon his tongue and eyes for the space of one hour and a half; after which he found it was useless to struggle further, and gave himself up to the situation. "The other minister will be here in a month," he said to himself when sitting over the fire. "Then I shall be off, and she will distract my mind no more! . . . And then, shall I go on living by myself

for ever? No; when my two years of probation are finished, I shall have a furnished house to live in, with a varnished door and a brass knocker; and I'll march straight back to her, and ask her flat, as soon as the last plate is on the dresser."

Thus a titillating fortnight was passed by young Stockdale, during which time things proceeded much as such matters have done ever since the beginning of history. He saw the object of attachment several times one day, did not see her at all the next, met her when he least expected to do so, missed her when hints and signs as to where she should be at a given hour almost amounted to an appointment. This mild coquetry was perhaps fair enough under the circumstances of their being so closely lodged, and Stockdale put up with it as philosophically as he was able. Being in her own house, she could, after vexing or disappointing him of her presence, easily win him back by suddenly surrounding him with those little attentions which her position as his landlady put it in her power to bestow. When he had waited indoors half the day to see her, and on finding that she would not be seen had gone off in a huff to the dreariest and dampest walk he could discover, she would restore equilibrium in the evening with "Mr. Stockdale, I have fancied you must feel draught o' nights from your bedroom window, and so I have been putting up thicker curtains this afternoon while you were

out;" or, "I noticed that you sneezed twice again this morning, Mr. Stockdale. Depend upon it, that cold is hanging about you yet; I am sure it is. I have thought of it continually, and you must let me make a posset for you."

Sometimes in coming home he found his sitting-room rearranged, chairs placed where the table had stood, and the table ornamented with the few fresh flowers and leaves that could be obtained at this season, so as to add a novelty to the room. At times she would be standing in a chair outside the house, trying to nail up a branch of the monthly rose which the winter wind had blown down; and of course he stepped forward to assist her, when their hands got mixed in passing the shreds and nails. Thus they became friends again after a disagreement. She would utter on these occasions some pretty and deprecatory remark on the necessity of her troubling him anew; and he would straightway say that he would do a hundred times as much for her if she should so require.

CHAPTER II.

HOW HE SAW TWO OTHER MEN.

MATTERS being in this advanced state, Stockdale was rather surprised one cloudy evening, while sitting in his room, at hearing her speak

in low tones of expostulation to some one at the door. It was nearly dark, but the shutters were not yet closed, nor the candles lighted; and Stockdale was tempted to stretch his head toward the window. He saw outside the door a young man in clothes of a whitish color, and, upon reflection, judged their wearer to be the well-built and rather handsome miller who lived below. The miller's voice was alternately low and firm, and sometimes it reached the level of positive entreaty; but what the words were Stockdale could in no way hear.

Before the colloquy had ended, the minister's attention was attracted by a second incident. Opposite Lizzy's home grew a clump of laurels, forming a thick and permanent shade. One of the laurel boughs now quivered against the light background of sky, and in a moment the head of a man peered out, and remained still. He seemed to be also much interested in the conversation at the door, and was plainly lingering there to watch and listen. Had Stockdale stood in any other relation to Lizzy than that of a lover, he might have gone out and examined into the meaning of this; but, being as yet but an unprivileged ally, he did nothing more than stand up and show himself in the lighted room, whereupon the listener disappeared, and Lizzy and the miller spoke in lower tones.

Stockdale was made so uneasy by the circum-

stance, that as soon as the miller was gone he said, "Mrs. Newberry, are you aware that you were watched just now, and your conversation heard?"

"When?" she said.

"When you were talking to that miller. A man was looking from the laurel-tree as jealously as if he could have eaten you."

She showed more concern than the trifling event seemed to demand, and he added, "Perhaps you were talking of things you did not wish to be overheard?"

"I was talking only on business," she said.

"Lizzy, be frank," said the young man. "If it was only on business, why should anybody wish to listen to you?"

She looked curiously at him. "What else do you think it could be, then?"

"Well, the only talk between a young woman and man that is likely to amuse an eavesdropper."

"Ah, yes," she said, smiling in spite of her preoccupation. "Well, Owlett has spoken to me about matrimony every now and then, that's true; but he was not speaking of it then. I wish he had been speaking of it, with all my heart. It would have been much less serious for me."

"Oh, Mrs. Newberry!"

"It would. Not that I should ha' chimed in with him, of course. I wish it for other reasons. I am glad, Mr. Stockdale, that you have told me

of that listener. It is a timely warning, and I must see my cousin again."

"But don't go away till I have spoken," said the minister. "I'll out with it at once, and make no more ado. Let it be Yes or No between us. Lizzy, please do!" And he held out his hand, in which she freely allowed her own to rest, but without speaking.

"You mean Yes by that?" he asked, after waiting awhile.

"You may be my sweetheart, if you will."

"Why not say at once you will wait for me until I have a house and can come back to marry you?"

"Because I am thinking—thinking of something else," she said with embarrassment. "It all comes upon me at once, and I must settle one thing at a time."

"At any rate, dear Lizzy, you can assure me that the miller shall not be allowed to speak to you except on business? You have never directly encouraged him?"

She parried the question by saying, "You see, he and his party have been in the habit of leaving things on my premises sometimes; and as I have not denied him, it makes him rather forward."

"Things—what things?"

"Tubs—they are called Things here."

"But why don't you deny him, my dear Lizzy?"

"I can not well."

"You are too timid. It is unfair of him to impose so upon you, and get your name into danger by his smuggling tricks. Promise me that the next time he wants to leave his tubs here you will let me roll them into the street?"

She shook her head. "I would not venture to offend the neighbors so much as that," said she, "or do anything that would be so likely to put poor Owlett into the hands of the excise-men."

Stockdale sighed, and said that he thought hers a mistaken generosity when it extended to assisting those who cheated the King of his dues. "At any rate, you will let me make him keep his distance as your lover, and tell him flatly that you are not for him?"

"Please not, at present," she said. "I don't wish to offend my old neighbors. It is not only Owlett who is concerned."

"This is too bad," said Stockdale impatiently.

"On my honor, I won't encourage him as my lover," Lizzy answered earnestly. "A reasonable man will be satisfied with that."

"Well, so I am," said Stockdale, his countenance clearing.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS GREAT-COAT, AND OTHER THINGS.

STOCKDALE now began to notice more particularly a feature in the life of his fair landlady, which he had casually observed, but scarcely ever thought of, before. It was that she was markedly irregular in her hours of rising. For a week or two she would be tolerably punctual, reaching the ground-floor within a few minutes of half-past seven. Then suddenly she would not be visible till twelve at noon, perhaps for three or four days in succession; and twice he had certain proof that she did not leave her room till half-past three in the afternoon. The second time that this extreme lateness came under his notice was on a day when he had particularly wished to consult with her about his future movements; and he concluded, as he always had done, that she had a cold, headache, or other ailment, unless she had kept herself invisible to avoid meeting and talking to him, which he could hardly believe. The former supposition was disproved, however, by her innocently saying, some days later, when they were speaking on a question of health, that she had never had a moment's heaviness, headache, or illness of any kind since the previous January twelvemonth.

"I am glad to hear it," said he. "I thought quite otherwise."

"What, do I look sickly?" she asked, turning up her face to show the impossibility of his gazing on it and holding such a belief for a moment.

"Not at all; I merely thought so from your being sometimes obliged to keep your room through the best part of the day."

"Oh, as for that—it means nothing," she murmured, with a look which some might have called cold, and which was the worst look that he liked to see upon her. "It is pure sleepiness, Mr. Stockdale."

"Never!"

"It is, I tell you. When I stay in my room till half-past three in the afternoon, you may always be sure that I slept soundly till three, or I shouldn't have staid there."

"It is dreadful," said Stockdale, thinking of the disastrous effects of such indulgence upon the household of a minister, should it become a habit of every-day occurrence.

"But then," she said, divining his good and prescient thoughts, "it only happens when I stay awake all night. I don't go to sleep till five or six in the morning sometimes."

"Ah, that's another matter," said Stockdale. "Sleeplessness to such an alarming extent is real illness. Have you spoken to a doctor?"

"Oh no; there is no need for doing that; it is all natural to me." And she went away without further remark.

Stockdale might have waited a long time to know the real cause of her sleeplessness, had it not happened that one dark night he was sitting in his bedroom jotting down notes for a sermon, which unintentionally occupied him for a considerable time after the other members of the household had retired. He did not get to bed till one o'clock. Before he had fallen asleep he heard a knocking at the door, first rather timidly performed, and then louder. Nobody answered it, and the person knocked again. As the house still remained undisturbed, Stockdale got out of bed, went to the window, which overlooked the door, and, opening it, asked who was there.

A young woman's voice replied that Sarah Wallis was there, and that she had come to ask if Mrs. Newberry could give her some mustard to make a plaster with, as her father was taken very ill on the chest.

The minister, having neither bell nor servant, was compelled to act in person. "I will call Mrs. Newberry," he said. Partly dressing himself, he went along the passage and tapped at Lizzy's door. She did not answer, and, thinking of her erratic habits in the matter of sleep, he thumped the door persistently, when he discovered, by its moving ajar under his knocking, that it had only

been gently pushed to. As there was now a sufficient entry for the voice, he knocked no longer, but said in firm tones, "Mrs. Newberry, you are wanted."

The room was quite silent; not a breathing, not a rustle came from any part of it. Stockdale now sent a positive shout through the open space of the door: "Mrs. Newberry!" Still no answer, or movement of any kind within. Then he heard sounds from the opposite room, that of Lizzy's mother, as if she had been aroused by his uproar, though Lizzy had not, and was dressing herself hastily. Stockdale softly closed the younger woman's door and went on to the other, which was opened by Mrs. Simpkins before he could reach it. She was in her ordinary clothes, and had a light in her hand.

"What's the person calling about?" she said in alarm.

Stockdale told the girl's errand, adding seriously, "I can not wake Mrs. Newberry."

"It is no matter," said her mother. "I can let the girl have what she wants as well as my daughter." And she came out of the room and went down stairs.

Stockdale retired toward his own apartment, saying, however, to Mrs. Simpkins from the landing, as if on second thoughts, "I suppose there is nothing the matter with Mrs. Newberry, that I could not wake her?"

"Oh no," said the old lady hastily, "nothing at all."

Still the minister was not satisfied. "Will you go in and see?" he said. "I should be much more at ease."

Mrs. Simpkins returned up the staircase, went to her daughter's room, and came out again almost instantly. "There is nothing at all the matter with Lizzy," she said, and descended again to attend to the applicant, who, having seen the light, had remained quiet during this interval.

Stockdale went into his room and lay down as before. He heard Lizzy's mother open the front door, admit the girl, and then the murmured discourse of both as they went to the store-cupboard for the medicament required. The girl departed, the door was fastened, Mrs. Simpkins came up stairs, and the house was again in silence. Still the minister did not fall asleep. He could not get rid of a singular suspicion, which was all the more harassing from its being, if true, the most unaccountable thing within his experience. That Lizzy Newberry was in her bedroom when he made such a clamor at the door he could not possibly convince himself, notwithstanding that he had heard her come up stairs at the usual time, go into her chamber, and shut herself up in the usual way. Yet all reason was so much against her being elsewhere, that he was constrained to go back again to the unlikely theory of a heavy sleep,

though he had heard neither breath nor movement during a shouting and knocking loud enough to rouse the seven sleepers.

Before coming to any positive conclusion he fell asleep himself, and did not wake till day. He saw nothing of Mrs. Newberry in the morning, before he went out to meet the rising sun, as he liked to do when the weather was fine; but as this was by no means unusual, he took no notice of it. At breakfast-time he knew that she was not far off by hearing her in the kitchen; and though he saw nothing of her person, that back apartment being rigorously closed against his eyes, she seemed to be talking, ordering, and bustling about among the pots and skimmers in so ordinary a manner, that there was no reason for his wasting more time in fruitless surmise.

The minister suffered from these distractions, and his extemporized sermons were not improved thereby. Already he often said Romans for Corinthians in the pulpit, and gave out hymns in strange cramped meters, that hitherto had always been skipped, because the congregation could not raise a tune to fit them. He fully resolved that as soon as his few weeks of stay approached their end he would cut the matter short, and commit himself by proposing a definite engagement, repenting at leisure if necessary.

With this end in view, he suggested to her on the evening after her mysterious sleep that they

should take a walk together just before dark, the latter part of the proposition being introduced that they might return home unseen. She consented to go; and away they went over a stile, to a shrouded foot-path suited for the occasion. But, in spite of attempts on both sides, they were unable to infuse much spirit into the ramble. She looked rather paler than usual, and sometimes turned her head away.

"Lizzy," said Stockdale reproachfully, when they had walked in silence a long distance.

"Yes," said she.

"You yawned—much my company is to you!" He put it in that way, but he was really wondering whether her yawn could possibly have more to do with physical weariness from the night before than mental weariness of that present moment. Lizzy apologized, and owned that she was rather tired, which gave him an opening for a direct question on the point; but his modesty would not allow him to put it to her; and he uncomfortably resolved to wait.

The month of February passed with alternations of mud and frost, rain and sleet, east winds and northwesterly gales. The hollow places in the plowed fields showed themselves as pools of water, which had settled there from the higher levels, and had not yet found time to soak away. The birds began to get lively, and a single thrush came just before sunset each evening, and sang

hopefully on the large elm-tree which stood nearest to Mrs. Newberry's house. Cold blasts and brittle earth had given place to an oozing dampness more unpleasant in itself than frost; but it suggested coming spring, and its unpleasantness was of a bearable kind.

Stockdale had been going to bring about a practical understanding with Lizzy at least half a dozen times; but, what with the mystery of her apparent absence on the night of the neighbor's call, and her curious way of lying in bed at unaccountable times, he felt a check within him whenever he wanted to speak out. Thus they still lived on as indefinitely affianced lovers, each of whom hardly acknowledged the other's claim to the name of chosen one. Stockdale persuaded himself that his hesitation was owing to the postponement of the ordained minister's arrival, and the consequent delay in his own departure, which did away with all necessity for haste in his courtship; but perhaps it was only that his discretion was reasserting itself, and telling him that he had better get clearer ideas of Lizzy before arranging for the grand contract of his life with her. She, on her part, always seemed ready to be urged further on that question than he had hitherto attempted to go; but she was none the less independent, and to a degree which would have kept from flagging the passion of a far more mutable man.

On the evening of the 1st of March he went casually into his bedroom about dusk, and noticed lying on a chair a great-coat, hat, and leggings. Having no recollection of leaving any clothes of his own in that spot, he went and examined them as well as he could in the twilight, and found that they did not belong to him. He paused for a moment to consider how they might have got there. He was the only man living in the house; and yet these were not his garments, unless he had made a mistake. No, they were not his. He called up Martha Sarah.

"How did these things come in my room?" he said, flinging the objectionable articles to the floor.

Martha said that Mrs. Newberry had given them to her to brush, and that she had brought them up there thinking they must be Mr. Stockdale's, as there was no other gentleman a-lodging there.

"Of course you did," said Stockdale. "Now take them down to your mis'ess, and say they are some clothes I have found here and know nothing about."

As the door was left open, he heard the conversation down stairs.

"How stupid!" said Mrs. Newberry, in a tone of confusion. "Why, Marther Sarer, I did not tell you to take 'em to Mr. Stockdale's room."

"I thought they must be his as they was so muddy," said Martha humbly.

"You should have left 'em on the clothes-horse," said the young mistress severely; and she came up stairs with the garments on her arm, quickly passed Stockdale's room, and threw them forcibly into a closet at the end of a passage. With this the incident ended, and the house was silent again.

There would have been nothing remarkable in finding such clothes in a widow's house had they been clean, or moth-eaten, or creased, or moldy from long lying by; but that they should be splashed with recent mud bothered Stockdale a good deal. When a young pastor is in the aspen stage of attachment, and open to agitation at the merest trifles, a really substantial incongruity of this complexion is a disturbing thing. However, nothing further occurred at that time; but he became watchful and given to conjecture, and was unable to forget the circumstance.

One morning, on looking from his window, he saw Mrs. Newberry herself brushing the tails of a long drab great-coat, which, if he mistook not, was the very same garment as the one that had adorned the chair of his room. It was densely splashed up to the hollow of the back with neighboring Nether-Mynton mud, to judge by its color, the spots being distinctly visible to him in the sunlight. The previous day or two having been wet, the inference was irresistible that the wearer had quite recently been walking some consider-

able distance about the lanes and fields. Stockdale opened the window and looked out, and Mrs. Newberry turned her head. Her face became slowly red; she never had looked prettier or more incomprehensible. He waved his hand affectionately and said good morning. She answered with embarrassment, having ceased her occupation on the instant that she saw him, and rolled up the coat half cleaned.

Stockdale shut the window. Some simple explanation of her proceeding was doubtless within the bounds of possibility; but he himself could not think of one; and he wished that she had placed the matter beyond conjecture by voluntarily saying something about it there and then.

But, though Lizzy had not offered an explanation at the moment, the subject was brought forward by her at the next time of their meeting. She was chatting to him concerning some other event, and remarked that it happened about the time when she was dusting some old clothes that had belonged to her poor husband.

"You keep them clean out of respect to his memory?" said Stockdale tentatively.

"I air and dust them sometimes," she said, with the most charming innocence in the world.

"Do dead men come out of their graves and walk in mud?" murmured the minister, in a cold sweat at the deception she was practicing.

"What did you say?" asked Lizzy.

"Nothing, nothing," said he mournfully. "Mere words—a phrase that will do for my sermon next Sunday." It was too plain that Lizzy was unaware that he had seen actual pedestrian splashes upon the skirts of the telltale overcoat, and that she imagined him to believe it had come direct from some chest or drawer.

The aspect of the case was now considerably darker. Stockdale was so much depressed by it that he did not challenge her explanation, or threaten to go off as a missionary to benighted islanders, or reproach her in any way whatever. He simply parted from her when she had done talking, and lived on in perplexity, till by degrees his natural manner became sad and constrained.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE TIME OF THE NEW MOON.

The following Thursday was changeable, damp, and gloomy, and the night threatened to be windy and unpleasant. Stockdale had gone away to Swanage in the morning, to be present at some commemoration service there, and on his return he was met by the attractive Lizzy in the passage. Whether influenced by the tide of cheerfulness which had attended him that day, or by the drive

through the open air, or whether from a natural disposition to let bygones alone, he allowed himself to be fascinated into forgetfulness of the great-coat incident, and upon the whole passed a pleasant evening; not so much in her society as within sound of her voice, as she sat talking in the back parlor to her mother till the latter went to bed. Shortly after this Mrs. Newberry retired, and then Stockdale prepared to go up stairs himself. But before he left the room he remained standing by the dying embers awhile, thinking long of one thing and another, and was only aroused by the flickering of his candle in the socket as it suddenly declined and went out. Knowing that there were a tinder-box, matches, and another candle in his bedroom, he felt his way up stairs without a light. On reaching his chamber he laid his hand on every possible ledge and corner for the tinder-box, but for a long time in vain. Discovering it at length, Stockdale produced a spark, and was kindling the brimstone when he fancied that he heard a movement in the passage. He blew harder at the lint, the match flared up, and looking by aid of the blue light through the door, which had been standing open all this time, he was surprised to see a male figure vanishing round the top of the staircase with the evident intention of escaping unobserved. The personage wore the clothes which Lizzy had been brushing, and something in the outline and gait

suggested to the minister that the wearer was Lizzy herself.

But he was not sure of this; and, greatly excited, Stockdale determined to investigate the mystery, and to adopt his own way for doing it. He blew out the match without lighting the candle, went into the passage, and proceeded on tiptoe toward Lizzy's room. A faint gray square of light in the direction of the chamber-window as he approached told him that the door was open, and at once suggested that the occupant was gone. He turned and brought down his fist upon the handrail of the staircase: "It was she—in her husband's coat and hat!"

Somewhat relieved to find that there was no intruder in the case, yet none the less surprised, the minister crept down the stairs, softly put on his boots, overcoat, and hat, and tried the front door. It was fastened as usual: he went to the back door, found this unlocked, and emerged into the garden. The night was mild and moonless, and rain had lately been falling, though for the present it had ceased. There was a sudden dropping from the trees and bushes every now and then, as each passing wind shook their boughs. Among these sounds Stockdale heard the faint fall of feet upon the road outside, and he guessed from the step that it was Lizzy's. He followed the sound, and, helped by the circumstance of the wind blowing from the direction in which

the pedestrian moved, he got nearly close to her, and kept there, without risk of being overheard. While he thus followed her up the street or lane, as it might indifferently be called, there being more hedge than houses on either side, a figure came forward to her from one of the cottage doors. Lizzy stopped; the minister stepped upon the grass and stopped also.

"Is that Mrs. Newberry?" said the man who had come out, whose voice Stockdale recognized as that of one of the most devout members of his congregation.

"It is," said Lizzy.

"I be quite ready—I've been here this quarter-hour."

"Ah, John," said she, "I have bad news; there is danger to-night for our venture."

"And d'ye tell o't! I dreamed there might be."

"Yes," she said hurriedly; "and you must go at once round to where the chaps are waiting, and tell them they will not be wanted till to-morrow night at the same time."

"I will," he said, and instantly went off through a gate, Lizzy continuing her way.

On she tripped at a quickening pace till the lane turned into the turnpike road, which she crossed, and got into the track for Ringstead. Here she ascended the hill without the least hesitation, passed the lonely hamlet of Holworth, and

went down the vale on the other side. Stockdale had never taken any extensive walks in this direction, but he was aware that if she persisted in her course much longer she would draw near to the coast, which was here between two and three miles distant from Nether-Mynton; and as it had been about a quarter-past eleven o'clock when they set out, her intention seemed to be to reach the shore about midnight.

Lizzy soon ascended a small mound, which Stockdale at the same time adroitly skirted on the left; and a dull, monotonous roar burst upon his ear. The hillock was about fifty yards from the top of the cliffs, and by day it apparently commanded a full view of the bay. There was light enough in the sky to show her disguised figure against it when she reached the top, where she paused, and afterward sat down. Stockdale, not wishing on any account to alarm her at this moment, yet desirous of being near her, sank upon his hands and knees, crept a little higher up, and there staid still.

The wind was chilly, the ground damp, and his position one in which he did not care to remain long. However, before he had decided to leave it, the young man heard voices behind him. What they signified he did not know; but, fearing that Lizzy was in danger, he was about to run forward and warn her that she might be seen, when she crept to the shelter of a little bush which

maintained a precarious existence in that exposed spot; and her form was absorbed in its dark and stunted outline as if she had become part of it. She had evidently heard the men as well as he. They passed near him, talking in loud and careless tones, which could be heard above the uninterrupted washings of the sea, and which suggested that they were not engaged in any business at their own risk. This proved to be the fact: some of their words floated across to him, and caused him to forget at once the coldness of his situation.

"What's the vessel?"

"A lugger, about fifty tons."

"From Cherbourg, I suppose?"

"Yes, 'a b'lieve."

"But it don't all belong to Owlett?"

"Oh no. He's only got a share. There's another or two in it—a farmer and such like, but the names I don't know."

The voices died away, and the heads and shoulders of the men diminished toward the cliff, and dropped out of sight.

"My darling has been tempted to buy a share by that unbeliever Owlett," groaned the minister, his honest affection for Lizzy having quickened to its intensest point during these moments of risk to her person and name. "That's why she's here," he said to himself. "Oh, it will be the ruin of her!"

His perturbation was interrupted by the sudden bursting out of a bright and increasing light from the spot where Lizzy was in hiding. A few seconds later, and before it had reached the height of a blaze, he heard her rush past him down the hollow like a stone from a sling, in the direction of home. The light now flared high and wide, and showed its position clearly. She had kindled a bough of furze and stuck it into the bush under which she had been crouching; the wind fanned the flame, which crackled fiercely, and threatened to consume the bush as well as the bough. Stockdale paused just long enough to notice thus much, and then followed rapidly the route taken by the young woman. His intention was to overtake her, and reveal himself as a friend; but run as he would, he could see nothing of her. Thus he flew across the open country about Holworth, twisting his legs and ankles in unexpected fissures and descents, till, on coming to the gate between the downs and the road, he was forced to pause to get breath. There was no audible movement either in front or behind him, and he now concluded that she had not outran him, but that, hearing him at her heels, and believing him one of the excise party, she had hidden herself somewhere on the way, and let him pass by.

He went on at a more leisurely pace toward the village. On reaching the house he found his sur-

mise to be correct, for the gate was on the latch, and the door unfastened, just as he had left them. Stockdale closed the door behind him, and waited silently in the passage. In about ten minutes he heard the same light footstep that he had heard in going out; it paused at the gate, which opened and shut softly, and then the door-latch was lifted, and Lizzy came in.

Stockdale went forward and said at once, "Lizzy, don't be frightened. I have been waiting up for you."

She started, though she had recognized the voice. "It is Mr. Stockdale, isn't it?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, becoming angry now that she was safe indoors, and not alarmed. "And a nice game I've found you out in to-night. You are in man's clothes, and I am ashamed of you."

Lizzy could hardly find a voice to answer this unexpected reproach.

"I am only partly in man's clothes," she faltered, shrinking back to the wall. "It is only his great-coat and hat that I've got on; and I do it only because a cloak blows about so, and you can't use your arms. I have got my own dress under just the same. Will you go away up stairs and let me pass? I didn't want you to see me at such a time as this."

"But I have a right to see you. How do you think there can be anything between us now?"

Lizzy was silent. "You are a smuggler," he continued sadly.

"I have only a share in the run," she said.

"That makes no difference. What did you engage in such a trade as that for, and keep it such a secret from me all this time?"

"I don't do it always. I only do it in wintertime when 'tis new moon."

"Well, I suppose that's because it can't be done anywhen else. You have regularly upset me, Lizzy."

"I am sorry for that," Lizzy meekly replied.

"Well, now," said he more tenderly, "no harm is done as yet. Won't you for the sake of me give up this blamable and dangerous practice altogether?"

"I must do my best to save this run," said she, getting rather husky in the throat. "I don't want to give you up—you know that; but I don't want to lose my venture. I don't know what to do now? Why I have kept it so secret from you is, that I was afraid you would be angry if you knew."

"I should think so. I suppose if I had married you without finding this out, you'd have gone on with it just the same?"

"I don't know. I did not think so far ahead. I only went to-night to burn the folks off, because we found that the excisemen knew where the tubs were to be landed."

"It is a pretty mess to be in altogether, is this," said the distracted young minister. "Well, what will you do now?"

Lizzy slowly murmured the particulars of their plan, the chief of which were that they meant to try their luck at some other point of the shore the next night; that three landing-places had been agreed upon before the run was attempted, with the understanding that, if the vessel was burnt off from the first point, which was Ringstead, as it had been by her to-night, the crew should attempt to make the second, which was Lulworth, on the second night; and if there, too, danger threatened, they should on the third night try the third place, which was behind a headland farther west.

"Suppose the officers hinder them landing there too?" he said, his attention to this interesting programme displacing for a moment his concern at her share in it.

"Then we shan't try anywhere else all this dark—that's what we call the time between moon and moon; and perhaps they'll string the tubs to a stray-line, and sink 'em a little ways from shore, and take the bearings; and then when they have a chance they'll go to creep for 'em."

"What's that?"

"Oh, they'll go out in a boat and drag a creeper—that's a grapnel—along the bottom till it catch hold of the stray-line."

The minister stood thinking; and there was no sound within doors but the tick of the clock on the stairs, and the quick breathing of Lizzy, partly from her walk and partly from agitation, as she stood close to the wall, not in such complete darkness but that he could discern against its whitewashed surface the great-coat and broad hat which covered her.

"Lizzy, all this is very wrong," he said. "Don't you remember the lesson of the tribute-money? 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' Surely you have heard that read times enough in your growing up."

"He's dead," she pouted.

"But the spirit of the text is in force just the same."

"My father did it, and so did my grandfather, and almost everybody in Nether-Mynton lives by it; and life would be so dull if it wasn't for that, that I should not care to live at all."

"I am nothing to live for, of course," he replied bitterly. "You would not think it worth while to give up this wild business and live for me alone?"

"I have never looked at it like that."

"And you won't promise, and wait till I am ready?"

"I can not give you my word to-night." And, looking thoughtfully down, she gradually moved and moved away, going into the adjoining room, and closing the door between them. She

remained there in the dark till he was tired of waiting, and had gone up to his own chamber.

Poor Stockdale was dreadfully depressed all the next day by the discoveries of the night before. Lizzy was unmistakably a fascinating young woman; but as a minister's wife she was hardly to be contemplated. "If I had only stuck to father's little grocery business, instead of going in for the ministry, she would have suited me beautifully!" he said sadly, until he remembered that in that case he would never have come from his distant home to Nether-Mynton, and never have known her.

The estrangement between them was not complete, but it was sufficient to keep them out of each other's company. Once during the day he met her in the garden-path, and said, turning a reproachful eye upon her, "Do you promise, Lizzy?" But she did not reply. The evening drew on, and he knew well enough that Lizzy would repeat her excursion at night; her half-offended manner had shown that she had not the slightest intention of altering her plans at present. He did not wish to repeat his own share of the adventure; but, act as he would, his uneasiness on her account increased with the decline of day. Supposing that an accident should happen to her, he would never forgive himself for not being there to help, much as he disliked the idea of seeming to countenance such unlawful escapades.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THEY WENT TO LULWORTH AND BACK.

As he had expected, she left the house at the same hour at night, this time passing his door without stealth, as if she knew very well that he would be watching, and were resolved to brave his displeasure. He was quite ready, opened the door quickly, and reached the back door almost as soon as she.

"Then you will go, Lizzy?" he said as he stood on the step beside her, who now again appeared as a little man with a face altogether unsuited to his clothes.

"I must," she said, repressed by his stern manner.

"Then I shall go too," said he.

"And I am sure you will enjoy it!" she exclaimed, in more buoyant tones. "Everybody do who tries it."

"God forbid that I should!" he said. "But I must look after you."

They opened the wicket and went up the road abreast of each other, but at some distance apart, scarcely a word passing between them. The evening was rather less favorable to smuggling enterprise than the last had been, the wind being

lower, and the sky somewhat clear toward the north.

"It is rather lighter," said Stockdale.

"'Tis, unfortunately," said she. "But it is only from those stars over there. The moon was new to-day at four o'clock, and I expected clouds. I hope we shall be able to do it this dark, for when we have to sink 'em for long it makes the stuff taste bleachy, and folks don't like it so well."

Her course was different from that of the preceding night, branching off to the left over Lord's Barrow as soon as they had got out of the lane and crossed the highway. By the time they reached Chaldon Down, Stockdale, who had been in perplexed thought as to what he should say to her, decided that he would not attempt expostulation now, while she was excited by the adventure, but wait till it was over, and endeavor to keep her from such practices in future. It occurred to him once or twice, as they rambled on, that, should they be surprised by the exciseman, his situation would be more awkward than hers, for it would be difficult to prove his true motive in coming to the spot; but the risk was a slight consideration beside his wish to be with her.

They now arrived at a ravine which lay on the outskirts of Chaldon, a village two miles on their way toward the point of the shore they sought. Lizzy broke the silence this time: "I have to wait here to meet the carriers. I don't know if they

have come yet. As I told you, we go to Lulworth to-night, and it is two miles farther than Ringstead."

It turned out that the men had already come; for while she spoke two or three dozen heads broke the line of the slope, and a company of men at once descended from the bushes where they had been lying in wait. These carriers were men whom Lizzy and other proprietors regularly employed to bring the tubs from the boat to a hiding-place inland. They were all young fellows of Nether-Mynton, Chaldon, and the neighborhood—quiet and inoffensive persons, who simply engaged to carry the cargo for Lizzy and her cousin Owlett, as they would have engaged in any other labor for which they were fairly well paid.

At a word from her they closed in together. "You had better take it now," she said to them, and handed to each a packet. It contained six shillings, their remuneration for the night's undertaking, which was paid beforehand without reference to success or failure; but, besides this, they had the privilege of selling as agents when the run was successfully made. As soon as it was done, she said to them, "The place is the old one at Lulworth"; the men till that moment not having been told whither they were bound, for obvious reasons. "Owlett will meet you there," added Lizzy. "I shall follow behind, to see that we are not watched."

The carriers went on, and Stockdale and Mrs. Newberry followed at the distance of a stone's throw. "What do these men do by day?" he said.

"Twelve or fourteen of them be laboring men. Some be brickmakers, some carpenters, some masons, some thatchers. They are all known to me very well. Nine of 'em are of your own congregation."

"I can't help that," said Stockdale.

"Oh, I know you can't. I only told you. The others are more church-inclined, because they supply the passon with all the spirits he requires, and they don't wish to show unfriendliness to a customer."

"How do you choose 'em?" said Stockdale.

"We choose 'em for their closeness, and because they are strong and sure-footed, and able to carry a heavy load a long way without being tired."

Stockdale sighed as she enumerated each particular, for it proved how far involved in the business a woman must be who was so well acquainted with its conditions and needs. And yet he felt more tenderly toward her at this moment than he had felt all the foregoing day. Perhaps it was that her experienced manner and bold indifference stirred his admiration in spite of himself.

"Take my arm, Lizzy," he murmured.

"I don't want it," she said. "Besides, we may never be to each other again what we once have been."

"That depends upon you," said he, and they went on again as before.

The hired carriers paced along over Chaldon Down with as little hesitation as if it had been day, avoiding the cart-way, and leaving the village of East Chaldon on the left, so as to reach the crest of the hill at a lonely, trackless place not far from the ancient earthwork called Round Pound. An hour's brisk walking brought them within sound of the sea, not many hundred yards from Lulworth Cove. Here they paused, and Lizzy and Stockdale came up with them, when they went on together to the verge of the cliff. One of the men now produced an iron bar, which he drove firmly into the soil a yard from the edge, and attached to it a rope that he had uncoiled from his body. They all began to descend, partly stepping, partly sliding down the incline, as the rope slipped through their hands.

"You will not go to the bottom, Lizzy?" said Stockdale anxiously.

"No; I stay here to watch," she said. "Owlett is down there."

The men remained quite silent when they reached the shore; and the next thing audible to the two at the top was the dip of heavy oars, and the dashing of waves against a boat's bow. In a

moment the keel gently touched the shingle, and Stockdale heard the footsteps of the thirty-six carriers running forward over the pebbles toward the point of landing.

There was a sousing in the water as of a brood of ducks plunging in, showing that the men had not been particular about keeping their legs, or even their waists, dry from the brine; but it was impossible to see what they were doing, and in a few minutes the shingle was trampled again. The iron bar sustaining the rope, on which Stockdale's hand rested, began to swerve a little, and the carriers one by one appeared climbing up the sloping cliff, dripping audibly as they came, and sustaining themselves by the guide-rope. Each man on reaching the top was seen to be carrying a pair of tubs, one on his back and one on his chest, the two being slung together by cords passing round the chine-hoops, and resting on the carrier's shoulders. Some of the stronger men carried three by putting an extra one on the top behind, but the customary load was a pair, these being quite weighty enough to give their bearer the sensation of having chest and backbone in contact after a walk of four or five miles.

"Where is Owlett?" said Lizzy to one of them.

"He will not come up this way," said the carrier. "He's to bide on shore till we be safe off." Then, without waiting for the rest, the foremost

men plunged across the down; and, when the last had ascended, Lizzy pulled up the rope, wound it round her arm, wriggled the bar from the sod, and turned to follow the carriers.

"You are very anxious about Owlett's safety," said the minister.

"Was there ever such a man!" said Lizzy. "Why, isn't he my cousin?"

"Yes. Well, it is a bad night's work," said Stockdale heavily. "But I'll carry the bar and rope for you."

"Thank God, the tubs have got so far all right!" said she.

Stockdale shook his head, and, taking the bar, walked by her side toward the downs; and the moan of the sea was heard no more.

"Is this what you meant the other day when you spoke of having business with Owlett?" the young man asked.

"This is it," she replied. "I never see him on any other matter."

"A partnership of that kind with a young man is very odd."

"It was begun by my father and his, who were brother-laws."

Her companion could not blind himself to the fact that where tastes and pursuits were so akin as Lizzy's and Owlett's, and where risks were shared, as with them, in every undertaking, there would be a peculiar appropriateness in her an-

swering Owlett's standing question on matrimony in the affirmative. This did not soothe Stockdale, its tendency being rather to stimulate in him an effort to make the pair as inappropriate as possible, and win her away from this nocturnal crew to correctness of conduct and a minister's parlor in some far-removed inland county.

They had been walking near enough to the file of carriers for Stockdale to perceive that, when they got into the road to the village, they split up into two companies of unequal size, each of which made off in a direction of its own. One company, the smaller of the two, went toward the church, and by the time that Lizzy and Stockdale reached their own house these men had scaled the churchyard wall, and were proceeding noiselessly over the grass within.

"I see that Owlett hev arranged for one batch to be put in the church again," observed Lizzy. "Do you remember my taking you there the first night you came?"

"Yes, of course," said Stockdale. "No wonder you had permission to broach the tubs—they were his, I suppose?"

"No, they were not—they were mine; I had permission from myself. The day after that they went several miles inland in a wagon-load of manure, and sold very well."

At this moment the group of men who had made off to the left some time before began leap-

ing one by one from the hedge opposite Lizzy's house, and the first man, who had no tubs upon his shoulders, came forward.

"Mrs. Newberry, isn't it?" he said hastily.

"Yes, Jim," said she. "What's the matter?"

"I find that we can't put any in Badger's Clump to-night, Lizzy," said Owlett. "The place is watched. We must sling the apple-tree in the orchet if there's time. We can't put any more under the church lumber than I have sent on there, and my mixen hev already more in en than is safe."

"Very well," she said. "Be quick about it—that's all. What can I do?"

"Nothing at all, please. Ah, it is the minister—you two that can't do anything had better get indoors and not be seed."

While Owlett thus conversed, in a tone so full of contraband anxiety and so free from lover's jealousy, the men who followed him had been descending one by one from the hedge; and it unfortunately happened that when the hindmost took his leap, the cord slipped which sustained his tubs: the result was that both the kegs fell into the road, one of them being stove in by the blow.

"'Od drown it all!" said Owlett, rushing back.

"It is worth a good deal, I suppose?" said Stockdale.

"Oh, no—about two guineas and a half to us now," said Lizzy excitedly. "It isn't that—it is the smell. It is so blazing strong before it has been lowered, that it smells dreadfully when spilt in the road like that! I do hope Latimer won't pass by till it is gone off."

Owlett and one or two others picked up the burst tub and began to scrape and trample over the spot, to disperse the liquor as much as possible; and then they all entered the gate of Owlett's orchard, which adjoined Lizzy's garden on the right. Stockdale did not care to follow them, for several on recognizing him had looked wonderingly at his presence, though they said nothing. Lizzy left his side and went to the bottom of the garden, looking over the hedge into the orchard, where the men could be dimly seen bustling about, and apparently hiding the tubs. All was done noiselessly, and without a light; and when it was over they dispersed in different directions, those who had taken their cargoes to the church having already gone off to their homes.

Lizzy returned to the garden-gate, over which Stockdale was still abstractedly leaning. "It is all finished: I am going indoors now," she said gently. "I will leave the door ajar for you."

"Oh, no, you needn't," said Stockdale; "I am coming too."

But before either of them had moved, the faint clatter of horses' hoofs broke upon the ear,

and it seemed to come from the point where the track across the down joined the hard road.

"They are just too late!" cried Lizzy exultingly.

"Who?" said Stockdale.

"Latimer, the riding-officer, and some assistant of his. We had better go indoors."

They entered the house, and Lizzy bolted the door. "Please don't get a light, Mr. Stockdale," she said.

"Of course I will not," said he.

"I thought you might be on the side of the King," said Lizzy, with faintest sarcasm.

"I am," said Stockdale. "But, Lizzy Newberry, I love you, and you know it perfectly well; and you ought to know, if you do not, what I have suffered in my conscience on your account these last few days."

"I guess very well," she said hurriedly. "Yet I don't see why. Ah, you are better than I!"

The trotting of the horses seemed to have again died away, and the pair of listeners touched each other's fingers in the cold "Good night" of those whom something seriously divided. They were on the landing, but before they had taken three steps apart the tramp of the horsemen suddenly revived, almost close to the house. Lizzy turned to the staircase-window, opened the casement about an inch, and put her face close to the aperture. "Yes, one of 'em is Latimer," she

whispered. "He always rides a white horse. One would think it was the last color for a man in that line."

Stockdale looked, and saw the white shape of the animal as it passed by; but before the riders had gone another ten yards, Latimer reined in his horse, and said something to his companion which neither Stockdale nor Lizzy could hear. Its drift was, however, soon made evident, for the other man stopped also; and sharply turning the horses' heads they cautiously retraced their steps. When they were again opposite Mrs. Newberry's garden, Latimer dismounted, and the man on the dark horse did the same.

Lizzy and Stockdale, intently listening and observing the proceedings, naturally put their heads as close as possible to the slit formed by the slightly opened casement; and thus it occurred that at last their cheeks came positively into contact. They went on listening, as if they did not know of the singular circumstance which had happened to their faces, and the pressure of each to each rather increased than lessened with the lapse of time.

They could hear the excisemen sniffing the air like hounds as they paced slowly along. When they reached the spot where the tub had burst, both stopped on the instant.

"Ay, ay, 'tis quite strong here," said the second officer. "Shall we knock at the door?"

"Well, no," said Latimer. "Maybe this is only a trick to put us off the scent. They wouldn't kick up this stink anywhere near their hiding-place. I have known such things before."

"Anyhow, the things, or some of 'em, must have been brought this way," said the other.

"Yes," said Latimer musingly. "Unless 'tis all done to tole us the wrong way. I have a mind that we go home for to-night without saying a word, and come the first thing in the morning with more hands. I know they have storages about here, but we can do nothing by this owl's light. We will look round the parish and see if everybody is in bed, John; and if all is quiet, we will do as I say."

They went on, and the two inside the window could hear them passing leisurely through the whole village, the street of which curved round at the bottom and entered the turnpike-road at another junction. This way the excisemen followed, and the amble of their horses died quite away.

"What will you do?" said Stockdale, withdrawing from his position.

She knew that he alluded to the coming search by the officers, to divert her attention from their own tender incident by the casement, which he wished to be passed over as a thing rather dreamt of than done. "Oh, nothing," she replied, with as much coolness as she could command under her disappointment at his manner. "We often have

such storms as this. You would not be frightened if you knew what fools they are. Fancy riding o' horseback through the place; of course they will hear and see nobody while they make that noise; but they are always afraid to get off, in case some of our fellows should burst out upon 'em, and tie them up to the gate-post, as they have done before now. Good night, Mr. Stockdale."

She closed the window and went to her room, where a tear fell from her eyes—and that not because of the alertness of the riding-officers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT SEARCH AT NETHER-MYNTON.

STOCKDALE was so excited by the events of the evening, and the dilemma that he was placed in between conscience and love, that he did not sleep, or even doze, but remained as broadly awake as at noonday. As soon as the gray light began to touch ever so faintly the whiter objects in his bedroom he arose, dressed himself, and went down stairs into the road.

The village was already astir. Several of the carriers had heard the well-known tramp of Latimer's horse while they were undressing in the dark that night, and had already communicated

with each other and Owlett on the subject. The only doubt seemed to be about the safety of those tubs which had been left under the church gallery-stairs; and, after a short discussion at the corner of the mill, it was agreed that these should be removed before it got lighter, and hidden in the middle of a double hedge bordering the adjoining field. However, before anything could be carried into effect, the footsteps of many men were heard coming down the lane from the highway.

"Damn it, here they be," said Owlett, who, having already drawn the hatch and started his mill for the day, stood stolidly at the mill-door covered with flour, as if the interest of his whole soul was bound up in the shaking walls around him.

The two or three with whom he had been talking dispersed to their usual work; and when the excise officers, and the formidable body of men they had hired, reached the village cross, between the mill and Mrs. Newberry's house, the village wore the natural aspect of a place beginning its morning labors.

"Now," said Latimer to his associates, who numbered thirteen men in all, "what I know is that the things are somewhere in this here place. We have got the day before us, and 'tis hard if we can't light upon 'em and get 'em to Weymouth Custom-house before night. First we will try the fuel-houses, and then we'll work our way into the

chimmers, and then to the ricks and stables, and so creep round. You have nothing but your noses to guide ye, mind ; so use 'em to-day if you never did in your lives before."

Then the search began. Owlett, during the early part, watched from his mill-window, Lizzy from the door of her house, with the greatest self-possession. A farmer down below, who also had a share in the run, rode about with one eye on his fields and the other on Latimer and his myrmidons, prepared to put them off the scent if he should be asked a question. Stockdale, who was no smuggler at all, felt more anxiety than the worst of them, and went about his studies with a heavy heart, coming frequently to the door to ask Lizzy some question or other on the consequences to her of the tubs being found.

"The consequences," she said quietly, "are simply that I shall lose 'em. As I have none in the house or garden, they can't touch me personally."

"But you have some in the orchard ?"

"Owlett rents that of me, and he lends it to others. So it will be hard to say who put any tubs there if they should be found."

There was never such a tremendous sniffing known as that which took place in Nether-Mynton parish and its vicinity this day. All was done methodically, and mostly on hands and knees. At different hours of the day they had different plans. From daybreak to breakfast-time the offi-

cers used their sense of smell in a direct and straightforward manner only, pausing nowhere but at such places as the tubs might be supposed to be secreted in at that very moment, pending their removal on the following night. Among the places tested and examined were—

Hollow trees,
Potato-graves,
Fuel-houses,
Bedrooms,
Apple-lofts,
Cupboards,
Clock-cases,
Chimney-flues,
Rainwater-butts,
Pigsties,
Culverts,
Hedgerows,
Fagot-ricks,
Haystacks,
Coppers, and ovens.

After breakfast they recommenced with renewed vigor, taking a new line; that is to say, directing their attention to clothes that might be supposed to have come in contact with the tubs in their removal from the shore; such garments being usually tainted with the spirit, owing to its oozing between the staves. They now sniffed at

Smock-frocks,
Old shirts and waistcoats,
Coats and hats,
Breeches and leggings,
Women's shawls and gowns,
Smiths' and shoemakers' aprons,
Knee-naps and hedging-gloves,
Tarpaulins,
Market-cloaks,
New scarecrows.

And, as soon as the mid-day meal was over, they pushed their noses into places where the spirits might have been thrown away in alarm—

Horse-ponds, Wet ditches,
Stable-drains, Cesspools,
Cinder-heaps, Sinks in yards,
Mixens, Road-scrapings, and
Back-door gutters.

But still these indefatigable excisemen discovered nothing more than the original telltale smell in the road opposite Lizzy's house, which even yet had not passed off.

"I'll tell ye what it is, men," said Latimer, about three o'clock in the afternoon, "we must begin over again. Find them tubs I will."

The men, who had been hired for the day, looked at their hands and knees, muddy with creeping on all-fours so long, and rubbed their noses, as if they had almost had enough of it; for the quantity of bad air which had passed into each one's nostril had rendered it nearly as insensible as a flue. However, after a moment's hesitation they prepared to start anew, except three, whose power of smell had quite succumbed under the excessive wear and tear of the day.

By this time not a male villager was to be seen in the parish. Owlett was not at his mill, the farmers were not in their fields, the parson

was not in his garden, the smith had left his forge, and the wheelwright's shop was silent.

"Where the divil are the folk gone?" said Latimer, waking up to the fact of their absence, and looking round. "I'll have 'em up for this! Why don't they come and help us? There's not a man about the place but the Methodist parson; and he's an old woman. I demand assistance in the King's name."

"We must find the jineral public afore we can demand that," said his lieutenant.

"Well, well, we shall do better without 'em," said Latimer, who changed his moods at a moment's notice. "But there's great cause of suspicion in this silence and this keeping out of sight, and I'll bear it in mind. Now we will go across to Owlett's orchard, and see what we can find there."

Stockdale, who heard this discussion from the garden-gate, over which he had been leaning, was rather alarmed, and thought it a mistake of the villagers to keep so completely out of the way. He himself, like the excisemen, had been wondering for the last half hour what could have become of them. Some laborers were of necessity engaged in distant fields, but the master-workmen should have been at home; though one and all, after just showing themselves at their shops, had apparently gone off for the day. He went in to Lizzy, who sat at a back window sewing, and said, "Lizzy, where are the men?"

Lizzy laughed. "Where they mostly are when they be run so hard as this." She cast her eyes to heaven. "Up there," she said.

Stockdale looked up. "What—on the top of the church-tower?" he asked, seeing the direction of her glance.

"Yes."

"Well, I expect they will soon have to come down," said he gravely. "I have been listening to the officers, and they are going to search the orchard over again, and then every nook in the church."

Lizzy looked alarmed for the first time. "Will you go and tell our folk?" she said. "They ought to be let know." Seeing his conscience struggling within him like a boiling pot, she added: "No, never mind; I'll go myself."

She went out, descended the garden, and climbed over the churchyard wall at the same time that the preventive-men were ascending the road to the orchard. Stockdale could do no less than follow her. By the time that she reached the tower-entrance he was at her side, and they entered together.

Nether-Mynton church-tower was, as in many villages, without a turret, and the only way to the top was by going up to the singers' gallery, and thence ascending by a ladder to a square trap-door in the floor of the bell-loft; above which a permanent ladder was fixed, passing

through the bells to a hole in the roof. When Lizzy and Stockdale reached the gallery and looked up, nothing but the trap-door and the five holes for the bell-ropes appeared. The ladder was gone.

"There's no getting up," said Stockdale.

"Oh, yes, there is," said she. "There's an eye looking at us at this moment through a knot-hole in that trap-door."

And as she spoke the trap opened, and the dark line of the ladder was seen descending against the whitewashed wall. When it touched the bottom Lizzy dragged it to its place, and said, "If you'll go up, I'll follow."

The young man ascended, and presently found himself among consecrated bells for the first time in his life, nonconformity having been in the Stockdale blood for some generations. He eyed them uneasily, and looked round for Lizzy. Owlett stood here, holding the top of the ladder.

"What, be you really one of us?" said the miller.

"It seems so," said Stockdale sadly.

"He's not," said Lizzy, who overheard. "He's neither for nor against us. He'll do us no harm."

She stepped up beside them, and then they went on to the next stage, which, when they had clambered over the dusty bell-carriages, was of easy ascent, leading toward the hole through which the pale sky appeared, and into the open

air. Owlett remained behind for a moment, to pull up the lower ladder.

"Keep down your heads," said a voice, as soon as they set foot on the flat.

Stockdale here beheld all the missing parishioners, lying on their stomachs on the tower-roof, except a few who, elevated on their hands and knees, were peeping through the embrasures of the parapet. Stockdale did the same, and saw the village lying like a map below him, over which moved the figures of the excisemen, each foreshortened to a crab-like object, the crown of his hat forming a circular disk in the center of him. Some of the men had turned their heads when the young preacher's figure arose among them.

"What, Mr. Stockdale?" said Matt Grey, in a tone of surprise.

"I'd as lief that it hadn't been," said Jim Clarke. "If the passon should see him a trespassing here in this tower, 'twould be none the better for we, seeing how 'a do hate chapel-members. He'd never buy a tub of us again; and he's as good a customer as we have got this side o' Warm'll."

"Where is the passon?" said Lizzy.

"In his house to be sure, that he may see nothing of what's going on—where all good folks ought to be, and this young man likewise."

"Well, he has brought some news," said

Lizzy. "They are going to search the orchet and church; can we do anything if they should find?"

"Yes," said her cousin Owlett. "That's what we've been talking o', and we have settled our line. Well, be dazed!"

The exclamation was caused by his perceiving that some of the searchers, having got into the orchard, and begun stooping and creeping hither and thither, were pausing in the middle, where a tree smaller than the rest was growing. They drew closer, and bent lower than ever upon the ground.

"O my tubs!" said Lizzy faintly, as she peered through the parapet at them.

"They have got 'em, 'a b'lieve," said Owlett.

The interest in the movements of the officers was so keen that not a single eye was looking in any other direction; but at that moment a shout from the church beneath them attracted the attention of the smugglers, as it did also of the party in the orchard, who sprang to their feet and went toward the churchyard-wall. At the same time those of the Government men who had entered the church unperceived by the smugglers, cried aloud, "Here be some of 'em at last."

The smugglers remained in a blank silence, uncertain whether "some of 'em" meant tubs or men; but again peeping cautiously over the edge of the tower, they learned that tubs were the things descried; and soon these fated articles

were brought one by one into the middle of the churchyard from their hiding-place under the gallery-stairs.

"They are going to put 'em on Hinton's vault till they find the rest," said Lizzy hopelessly. The excisemen had, in fact, begun to pile up the tubs on a large stone slab which was fixed there; and, when all were brought out from the tower, two or three of the men were left standing by them, the rest of the party again proceeding to the orchard.

The interest of the smugglers in the next manœuvres of their enemies became painfully intense. Only about thirty tubs had been secreted in the lumber of the tower, but seventy were hidden in the orchard, making up all that they had brought ashore as yet, the remainder of the cargo having been tied to a sinker and dropped overboard for another night's operations. The excisemen, having reëntered the orchard, acted as if they were positive that here lay hidden the rest of the tubs, which they were determined to find before nightfall. They spread themselves out around the field, and, advancing on all-fours as before, went anew around every apple-tree in the inclosure. The young tree in the middle again led them to pause, and at length the whole company gathered there in a way which signified that a second chain of reasoning had led to the same results as the first.

When they had examined the sod hereabouts for some minutes, one of the men rose, ran to a disused porch of the church where tools were kept, and returned with the sexton's pickaxe and shovel, with which they set to work.

"Are they really buried there?" said the minister, for the grass was so green and uninjured that it was difficult to believe it had been disturbed. The smugglers were too interested to reply, and presently they saw, to their chagrin, the officers stand two on each side of the tree; and, stooping and applying their hands to the soil, they bodily lifted the tree and the turf around it. The apple-tree now showed itself to be growing in a shallow box, with handles for lifting at each of the four sides. Under the site of the tree a square hole was revealed, and an exciseman went and looked down.

"It's all up now," said Owlett quietly. "And now all of ye get down before they notice we are here, and be ready for our next move. I had better bide here till dark, or they may take me on suspicion, as 'tis on my ground. I'll be with ye as soon as daylight begins to pink in."

"And I?" said Lizzy.

"You please look to the linch-pins and screws; then go indoors and know nothing at all. The chaps will do the rest."

The ladder was replaced, and all but Owlett descended, the men passing off one by one at

the back of the church, and vanishing on their respective errands. Lizzy walked boldly along the street, followed closely by the minister.

"You are going indoors, Mrs. Newberry?" he said.

She knew from the words "Mrs. Newberry" that the division between them had widened yet another degree.

"I am not going home," she said. "I have a little thing to do before I go in. Martha Sarah will get your tea."

"Oh, I don't mean on that account," said Stockdale. "What *can* you have to do further in this unhallowed affair?"

"Only a little," she said.

"What is that? I'll go with you."

"No, I shall go by myself. Will you please go indoors? I shall be there in less than an hour."

"You are not going to run any danger, Lizzy?" said the young man, his tenderness reasserting itself.

"None whatever — worth mentioning," answered she, and went down toward the Cross.

Stockdale entered the garden-gate, and stood behind it looking on. The excisemen were still busy in the orchard, and at last he was tempted to enter and watch their proceedings. When he came closer he found that the secret cellar, of whose existence he had been totally unaware, was

formed by timbers placed across from side to side about a foot under the ground, and grassed over.

The excisemen looked up at Stockdale's fair and downy countenance, and, evidently thinking him above suspicion, went on with their work again. As soon as all the tubs were taken out, they began tearing up the turf, pulling out the timbers, and breaking in the sides, till the cellar was wholly dismantled and shapeless, the apple-tree lying with its roots dry to the air. But the hole which had in its time held so much contraband merchandise was never completely filled up, either then or afterward, a depression in the greensward marking the spot to this day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WALK TO WARM'ELL CROSS; AND AFTERWARD.

As the goods had all to be carried to Weymouth that night, the excisemen's next object was to find horses and carts for the journey, and they went about the village for that purpose. Latimer strode hither and thither with a lump of chalk in his hand, marking broad arrows so vigorously on every vehicle and set of harness that he came across, that it seemed as if he would chalk broad arrows on the very hedges and roads. Stockdale, who had had enough of the scene, turned in-

doors thoughtful and depressed. Lizzy was already there, having come in at the back, though she had not yet taken off her bonnet. She looked tired, and her mood was not much brighter than his own. They had but little to say to each other, and the minister went away and attempted to read; but at this he could not succeed, and he shook the little bell for tea.

Lizzy herself brought in the tray, the girl having run off into the village during the afternoon, too full of excitement at the proceedings to remember her state of life. However, almost before the sad lovers had said anything to each other, Martha came in in a steaming state.

"Oh, there's such a stoor, Mrs. Newberry and Mr. Stockdale! The King's excisemen can't get the carts ready nohow at all! They pulled Thomas Ballam's, and William Rogers's, and Stephen Sprake's carts into the road, and off came the wheels, and down fell the carts; and they found there was no linch-pins in the arms; and then they tried Samuel Shane's wagon, and found that the screws were gone from he; and at last they looked at the dairyman's cart, and he's got none neither! They have gone now to the blacksmith's to get some made, but he's nowhere to be found!"

Stockdale looked at Lizzy, who blushed very slightly, and went out of the room followed by Martha Sarah. But before they had got through

the passage there was a rap at the front door, and Stockdale recognized Latimer's voice addressing Mrs. Newberry, who had turned back.

"For God's sake, Mrs. Newberry, have you seen Hardman the blacksmith up this way? If we could get hold of him, we'd e'en a'most drag him by the hair of his head to his anvil, where he ought to be."

"He's an idle man, Mr. Latimer," said Lizzy archly. "What do you want him for?"

"Why, there isn't a horse in the place that has got more than three shoes on, and some have only two. The wagon-wheels be without strakes, and there's no linch-pins to the carts. What with that, and the bother about every set of harness being out of order, we shan't be off before night-fall—upon my soul we shan't. 'Tis a rough lot, Mrs. Newberry, that you've got about you here; but they'll play at this game once too often, mark my words they will. There's not a man in the parish that don't deserve to be whipped."

It happened that Hardman was at that moment a little farther up the lane, smoking his pipe behind a holly-bush. When Latimer had done speaking he went on in this direction, and Hardman, hearing his steps, found his curiosity too strong for his prudence. He peeped out from the bush at the very moment that Latimer's glance was on it. There was nothing left for him to do but to come forward with unconcern.

"I've been looking for you for the last hour!" said Latimer, with a glare in his eye.

"Sorry to hear that," said Hardman. "I have been out for a stroll, to look for more hid tubs, to deliver 'em up to Gover'ment."

"Oh, yes, Hardman, we know it," said Latimer, with withering sarcasm. "We know that you'll deliver 'em up to Gover'ment. We know that all the parish is helping us, and have been all day. Now you please walk along with me down to your shop, and kindly let me hire ye in the King's name."

They went down the lane together; and presently there resounded from the smithy the ring of a hammer not very briskly swung. However, the carts and horses were got into some sort of traveling condition, but it was not until after the clock had struck six, when the muddy roads were glistening under the horizontal light of the fading day. The smuggled tubs were soon packed into the vehicles, and Latimer, with three of his assistants, drove slowly out of the village in the direction of the port of Weymouth, some considerable number of miles distant, the other excisemen being left to watch for the remainder of the cargo, which they knew to have been sunk somewhere between Ringstead and Lulworth Cove, and to unearth Owlett, the only person clearly implicated by the discovery of the cave.

Women and children stood at the doors as the

carts, each chalked with the Government pitch-fork, passed in the increasing twilight; and as they stood they looked at the confiscated property with a melancholy expression that told only too plainly the relation which they bore to the trade.

"Well, Lizzy," said Stockdale, when the crackle of the wheels had nearly died away, "this is a fit finish to your adventure. I am truly thankful that you have got off without suspicion, and the loss only of the liquor. Will you sit down and let me talk to you?"

"By-and-by," she said. "But I must go out now."

"Not to that horrid shore again?" he said blankly.

"No, not there. I am only going to see the end of this day's business."

He did not answer to this, and she moved toward the door slowly, as if waiting for him to say something more.

"You don't offer to come with me," she added at last. "I suppose that's because you hate me after all this?"

"Can you say it, Lizzy, when you know I only want to save you from such practices? Come with you!—of course I will, if it is only to take care of you. But why will you go out again?"

"Because I can not rest indoors. Something is happening, and I must know what. Now, come." And they went into the dusk together

When they reached the turnpike-road she turned to the right, and he soon perceived that they were following the direction of the excise-men and their load. He had given her his arm, and every now and then she suddenly pulled it back, to signify that she was to halt a moment and listen. They had walked rather quickly along the first quarter of a mile, and on the second or third time of standing still she said, "I hear them ahead—don't you?"

"Yes," he said; "I hear the wheels. But what of that?"

"I only want to know if they get clear away from the neighborhood."

"Ah," said he, a light breaking upon him. "Something desperate is to be attempted! And now I remember there was not a man about the village when we left."

"Hark!" she murmured. The noise of the cart-wheels had stopped and given place to another sort of sound.

"'Tis a scuffle!" said Stockdale. "There'll be murder. Lizzy, let go my arm; I am going on. On my conscience, I must not stay here and do nothing!"

"There'll be no murder, and not even a broken head," she said. "Our men are thirty to four of them; no harm will be done at all."

"Then there *is* an attack!" exclaimed Stockdale; "and you knew it was to be. Why should

you side with men who break the laws like this?"

"Why should you side with men who take from country traders what they have honestly bought wi' their own money in France?" said she firmly.

"They are not honestly bought," said he.

"They are," she contradicted. "I and Owlett and the others paid thirty shillings for every one of the tubs before they were put on board at Cherbourg; and if a king who is nothing to us sends his people to steal our property, we have a right to steal it back again."

Stockdale did not stop to argue the matter, but went quickly in the direction of the noise, Lizzy keeping at his side. "Don't you interfere, will you, dear Richard?" she said anxiously, as they drew near. "Don't let us go any closer; 'tis at Warm'ell Cross where they are seizing 'em. You can do no good, and you may meet with a hard blow."

"Let us see first what is going on," he said. But before they had got much farther the noise of the cart-wheels began again; and Stockdale soon found that they were coming toward him. In another minute the three carts came up, and Stockdale and Lizzy stood in the ditch to let them pass.

Instead of being conducted by four men, as had happened when they went out of the village,

the horses and carts were now accompanied by a body of from twenty to thirty, all of whom, as Stockdale perceived to his astonishment, had blackened faces. Among them walked six or eight huge female figures whom, from their wide strides, Stockdale guessed to be men in disguise. As soon as the party discerned Lizzy and her companion, four or five fell back, and when the carts had passed came close to the pair.

"There is no walking up this way for the present," said one of the gaunt women, who wore curls a foot long, dangling down the sides of her face, in the fashion of the time. Stockdale recognized this lady's voice as Owlett's.

"Why not?" said Stockdale. "This is the public highway."

"Now, look here, youngster," said Owlett. "Oh, 'tis the Methodist parson!—what, and Mrs. Newberry! Well, you'd better not go up that way, Lizzy. They've all run off, and folks have got their own again."

The miller then hastened on and joined his comrades. Stockdale and Lizzy also turned back. "I wish all this hadn't been forced upon us," she said regretfully. "But if those excisemen had got off with the tubs, half the people in the parish would have been in want for the next month or two."

Stockdale was not paying much attention to her words, and he said: "I don't think I can go

back like this. Those four poor excisemen may be murdered for all I know."

"Murdered!" said Lizzy impatiently. "We don't do murder here."

"Well, I shall go as far as Warm'ell Cross to see," said Stockdale decisively; and, without wishing her safe home or anything else, the minister turned back. Lizzy stood looking at him till his form was absorbed in the shades; and then, with a sigh, she went in the direction of Nether-Mynton.

The road was lonely, and after nightfall at this time of the year there was often not a passer for hours. Stockdale pursued his way without hearing a sound beyond that of his own footsteps; and in due time he passed beneath the trees of the plantation which surrounded the Warm'ell Cross road. Before he had reached the point of intersection he heard voices from the thicket:

"Hoi-hoi-hoi! Help, help!"

The voices were not at all feeble or despairing, but they were unmistakably anxious. Stockdale had no weapon, and before plunging into the pitchy darkness of the plantation he pulled a stake from the hedge, to use in case of need. When he got among the trees he shouted, "What's the matter—where are you?"

"Here," answered the voices; and, pushing through the brambles in that direction, he came near the objects of his search.

"Why don't you come forward?" said Stockdale.

"We be tied to the trees."

"Who are you?"

"Poor Jim Latimer the exciseman," said one plaintively. "Just come and cut these cords, there's a good man. We were afraid nobody would pass by to-night."

Stockdale soon loosened them, upon which they stretched their limbs and stood at their ease.

"The rascals!" said Latimer, getting now into a rage, though he had seemed quite meek when Stockdale first came up. "'Tis the same set of fellows. I know they were Mynton chaps to a man."

"But we can't swear to 'em," said another. "Not one of 'em spoke."

"What are you going to do?" said Stockdale.

"I'd fain go back to Mynton, and have at 'em again!" said Latimer.

"So would we!" said his comrades.

"Fight till we die!" said Latimer.

"We will, we will!" said his men.

"But," said Latimer, more frigidly, as they came out of the plantation, "we don't *know* that these chaps with black faces were Mynton men; and proof is a hard thing."

"So it is," said the rest.

"And therefore we won't do nothing at all," said Latimer, with complete dispassionateness. "For my part, I'd sooner be them than we.

The clitches of my arms are burning like fire from the cords they two women tied round 'em. My opinion is, now I have had time to think o't, that you may serve your Gover'ment at too high a price. For these two nights and days I have not had an hour's rest; and, please God, here's for home-along."

The other officers agreed heartily to this course; and, thanking Stockdale for his timely assistance, they parted from him at the Cross, taking themselves the western road, and Stockdale going back to Nether-Mynton.

During that walk the minister was lost in reverie of the most painful kind. As soon as he got into the house, and before entering his own rooms, he advanced to the door of the little back parlor in which Lizzy usually sat with her mother. He found her there alone. Stockdale went forward, and, like a man in a dream, looked down upon the table that stood between him and the young woman, who had her bonnet and cloak still on. As he did not speak, she looked up from her chair at him, with misgiving in her eye.

"Where are they gone?" he then said listlessly.

"Who?—I don't know. I have seen nothing of them since. I came straight in here."

"If your men can manage to get off with those tubs, it will be a great profit to you, I suppose?"

"A share will be mine, a share my cousin Owlett's, a share to each of the two farmers, and a share divided among the men who helped us."

"And you still think," he went on slowly, "that you will not give this business up?"

Lizzy rose, and put her hand upon his shoulder. "Don't ask that," she whispered. "You don't know what you are asking. I must tell you, though I meant not to do it. What I make by that trade is all I have to keep my mother and myself with."

He was astonished. "I did not dream of such a thing," he said. "I would rather have swept the streets, had I been you. What is money compared with a clear conscience?"

"My conscience is clear. I know my mother, but the King I have never seen. His dues are nothing to me. But it is a great deal to me that my mother and I should live."

"Marry me and promise to give it up. I will keep your mother."

"It is good of you," she said, trembling a little. "Let me think of it by myself. I would rather not answer now."

She reserved her answer till the next day, and came into his room with a solemn face. "I can not do what you wished," she said passionately. "It is too much to ask. My whole life ha' been passed in this way." Her words and manner showed that before entering she had been struggling with

herself in private, and that the contention had been strong.

Stockdale turned pale, but he spoke quietly. "Then, Lizzy, we must part. I can not go against my principles in this matter, and I can not make my profession a mockery. You know how I love you, and what I would do for you ; but this one thing I can not do."

"But why should you belong to that profession?" she burst out. "I have got this large house ; why can't you marry me, and live here with us, and not be a Methodist preacher any more? I assure you, Richard, it is no harm, and I wish you could only see it as I do. We only carry it on in winter ; in summer it is never done at all. It stirs up one's dull life at this time o' the year, and gives excitement, which I have got so used to now that I should hardly know how to do 'ithout it. At nights, when the wind blows, instead of being dull and stupid, and not thinking whether it do blow or not, your mind is afield, even if you are not afield yourself ; and you are wondering how the chaps be getting on ; and you walk up and down the room, and look out o' window, and then you go out yourself, and know your way about as well by night as by day, and have hair-breadth escapes from old Latimer and his fellows, who are too stupid ever to really frighten us, and only make us a bit nimble."

"He frightened you a little last night, any-

how ; and I would advise you to drop it before it is worse."

She shook her head. "No, I must go on as I have begun. I was born to it. It is in my blood, and I can't be cured. O Richard, you can not think what a hard thing you have asked, and how sharp you try me when you put me between this and my love for 'ee!"

Stockdale was leaning with his elbow on the mantel-piece, his hands over his eyes. "We ought never to have met, Lizzy," he said. "It was an ill day for us! I little thought there was anything so hopeless and impossible in our engagement as this. Well, it is too late now to regret consequences in this way. I have had the happiness of seeing you and knowing you at least."

"You dissent from the Church, and I dissent from the State," she said. "And I don't see why we be not well matched."

He smiled sadly, while Lizzy remained looking down, her eyes beginning to overflow.

That was an unhappy evening for both of them, and the days that followed were unhappy days. Both she and he went mechanically about their employments, and his depression was marked in the village by more than one of his denomination with whom he came in contact. But Lizzy, who passed her days indoors, was unsuspected of being the cause ; for it was generally understood that a quiet engagement to marry existed between

her and her cousin Owlett, and had existed for some time.

Thus uncertainly the week passed on, till one morning Stockdale said to her: "I have had a letter, Lizzy. I must call you that till I am gone."

"Gone?" said she blankly.

"Yes," he said. "I am going from this place. I felt it would be better for us both that I should not stay after what has happened. In fact, I couldn't stay here, and look on you from day to day, without becoming weak and faltering in my course. I have just heard of an arrangement by which the other minister can arrive here in about a week, and let me go elsewhere."

That he had all this time continued so firmly fixed in his resolution came upon her as a grievous surprise. "You never loved me," she said bitterly.

"I might say the same," he returned; "but I will not. Grant me one favor. Come and hear my last sermon on the day before I go."

Lizzy, who was a church-goer on Sunday mornings, frequently attended Stockdale's chapel in the evening with the rest of the double-minded; and she promised.

It became known that Stockdale was going to leave, and a good many people outside his own sect were sorry to hear it. The intervening days flew rapidly away, and on the evening of the Sunday which preceded the morning of his

departure Lizzy sat in the chapel to hear him for the last time. The little building was full to overflowing, and he took up the subject which all had expected, that of the contraband trade so extensively practiced among them. His hearers, in laying his words to their own hearts, did not perceive that they were most particularly directed against Lizzy, till the sermon waxed warm, and Stockdale nearly broke down with emotion. In truth, his own earnestness, and her sad eyes looking up at him, were too much for the young man's equanimity. He hardly knew how he ended. He saw Lizzy, as through a mist, turn and go away with the rest of the congregation, and shortly afterward followed her home.

She invited him to supper, and they sat down alone, her mother having, as was usual with her on Sunday nights, gone to bed early.

"We will part friends, won't we?" said Lizzy, with forced gayety, and never alluding to the sermon—a reticence which rather disappointed him.

"We will," he said, with a forced smile on his part; and they sat down.

It was the first meal that they had ever shared together in their lives, and probably the last that they would so share. When it was over, and the indifferent conversation could no longer be continued, he arose and took her hand. "Lizzy," he said, "do you say we must part—do you?"

"You do," she said solemnly. "I can say no more."

"Nor I," said he. "If that is your answer, good-by."

Stockdale bent over her and kissed her, and she involuntarily returned his kiss. "I shall go early," he said hurriedly. "I shall not see you again."

And he did leave early. He fancied, when stepping forth into the gray morning light, to mount the van which was to carry him away, that he saw a face between the parted curtains of Lizzy's window; but the light was faint, and the panes glistened with wet; so he could not be sure. Stockdale mounted the vehicle, and was gone; and on the following Sunday the new minister preached in the chapel of the Mynton Wesleyans.

Did they ever meet again?

One day, two years after the parting, Stockdale, now settled in a midland town, came into Nether-Mynton by carrier in the original way. Jogging along in the van that afternoon, he had put questions to the driver, and the answers that he received interested the minister deeply. The result of them was that he went without the least hesitation to the door of his former lodging. It was about six o'clock in the evening, and the same time of year as when he had left; now, too, the ground was damp and glistening, the west was

bright, and Lizzy's snow-drops were raising their heads in the border under the wall.

Lizzy must have caught sight of him from the window, for by the time that he reached the door she was there holding it open; and then, as if she had not sufficiently considered her act of coming out, she drew herself back, saying with some constraint, "Mr. Stockdale!"

"You knew it was," said Stockdale, taking her hand. "I wrote to say I should call."

"Yes, but you did not say when," she answered.

"I did not. I was not quite sure when my business would lead me to these parts."

"You only came because business brought you near?"

"Well, that is the fact; but I have often thought I should like to come on purpose to see you. But what's all this that has happened? I told you how it would be, Lizzy, and you would not listen to me."

"I would not," she said sadly. "But I had been brought up to that life, and it was second nature to me. However, it is all over now. The officers have blood-money for taking a man dead or alive, and the trade is going to nothing. We were hunted down like rats."

"Owlett is quite gone, I hear."

"Yes. He is in America. We had a dreadful struggle that last time, when they tried to

take him. It is a perfect miracle that he lived through it; and it is a wonder that I was not killed. I was shot in the hand. It was not by aim; the shot was really meant for my cousin; but I was behind, looking on as usual, and the bullet came to me. It bled terribly, but I got home without fainting; and it healed after a time. You know how he suffered?"

"No," said Stockdale. "I only heard that he just escaped with his life."

"He was shot in the back; but a rib turned the ball. He was badly hurt. We would not let him be took. The men carried him all night across the meads to Bere, and hid him in a barn, dressing his wound as well as they could, till he was so far recovered as to be able to get about. He had gied up his mill for some time; and at last he got to Bristol, and took a passage to America, and he's settled in Wisconsin."

"What do you think of smuggling now?" said the minister gravely.

"I own that we were wrong," said she. "But I have suffered for it. I am very poor now, and my mother has been dead these twelve months. But won't you come in, Mr. Stockdale?"

Stockdale went in; and it is to be presumed that they came to an understanding, for a fortnight later there was a sale of Lizzy's furniture, and after that a wedding at a chapel in a neighboring town.

He took her away from her old haunts to the home that he had made for himself in his native county, where she studies her duties as a minister's wife with praiseworthy assiduity. It is said that in after-years she wrote an excellent tract called "Render unto Cæsar; or, The Repentant Villagers," in which her own experience was anonymously used as the introductory story. Stockdale got it printed, after making some corrections, and putting in a few powerful sentences of his own; and many hundreds of copies were distributed by the couple in the course of their married life.

HESTER.

CHAPTER I.

"When thou hast met with careless hearts and cold,
Hearts that young love can touch, but never hold,
Not changeless, like the loved and left of old,
Remember me, remember me,
I passionately pray of thee!"

I AM looking out of one of the windows of our long salon, at the picture I think the loveliest in the world; but my eyes are so full of tears which I am trying hard to keep from falling, that I can scarcely see the calm sweep of the Loire, bordered by its tall poplars, and the Château de Luynes in the distance, which, with the quaint old village, its tall church-spire towering above the surrounding cottages, makes altogether, on a bright day like the present, a view that many people would go far out of their way to see.

What had brought the tears into my eyes was a remark my old grandmère, who was sitting knitting, had made to me a few minutes ago. I

had been moving restlessly about from one window to another, and at last my grandmother looked up and said: "Tiens, ma chère, it must be very tiring fidgeting about like that. I fear that, if we do have a ball, you will be too worn out to dance at it!"

"Oh, grandmère!" I cried, throwing myself down again in the arm-chair from which I had just risen, preparatory to taking another look out of the farthest window, "are we really going to have a ball, and why?"

"Well, your father was telling me last night that Raoul de Montcour's people have arranged a marriage for him; and so, as we shall not have the pleasure of seeing him among us much longer in the character of a bachelor, your father talks of giving a ball in honor of the great event."

"Whom is he going to be married to?" I exclaimed breathlessly.

"Oh, a very good match," replied my grandmother abstractedly, her whole soul once more given to turning the heel of her stocking—"a Comtesse Hélène something, very rich and very beautiful—two good qualities that do not often go together; and though it appears so desirable in a worldly point of view, it does not seem altogether a *mariage de convenance*, as they are said to be quite 'in love.'"

And this is why I am standing in the window with my eyes so full of tears that I can not see

the waters of the Loire sparkling in the summer sunshine.

After a pause, I said: "I think, grandmère, I will take my pot of lilies down to the church; they are in full bloom now, and they will look pretty before the altar."

I did not seem to care to watch any longer for a chance visitor riding up the avenue.

I flew, rather than walked, up the shallow oak staircase that led to my own room; that retreat once gained, I threw myself down on the bed, and wept torrents of tears. "Cruel, cruel!" I sobbed. "What right had he to come here day after day, and try to win my love, as I knew—none better—he had tried, when he could never give his own in return? It was heartless, it was wicked, to let me betray my love, as I remembered with reddening cheeks I had done again and again, when all the time he was counting the hours to be back in Paris, and most likely was writing amusing accounts to his belle Hélène, of the country girl who had fallen so desperately in love with him. Well, and after all—this Comtesse Hélène—in what was I so much her inferior? Certainly I was not beautiful, but I was certainly not ugly, at least Raoul had never let me think so." But at that moment my grandmother's words flashed across my mind, "She was *rich* and she was beautiful, two good qualities that do not often go together."

"Ah, that was it, of course." And I rose off the bed, and began pacing hastily up and down the room with my hands clasped tightly together. "It's all the money," I exclaimed angrily. "Oh, how I wish we were rich enough to afford to be happy, or rather that it was not the law of the land that happiness is to be always sacrificed to riches!" But miserable or happy, it was quite time I started if I meant to be back for dinner; so, after dipping my face in cold water, and trusting to the air to cool my hot cheeks, for I did not wish M. le Curé to ask any questions, I started.

To reach the conservatory where my flowers were, I had to pass through the picture-gallery, a long room which ran down all one side of the house, and which was used as a ballroom on the rare occasions on which my father indulged in such a festivity—a thing he had not done since my brother Henri, who was now in Paris with his regiment, came of age three years ago.

Slowly I paced down the hall until I stood opposite a picture which always had a strange fascination for me. It represented a tall, slight girl of about sixteen, playing at battledoor and shuttlecock, in the very room where I was myself standing. Her dark, wavy hair was gathered up over a cushion on the top of her head in the fashion our grandmothers loved, and then fell in little loose curls on her forehead. Her eyes, of the

darkest, deepest sapphire blue, were gazing eagerly upward, following the flight of the shuttlecock. She was dressed in a plain muslin dress, the white folds of which were reflected in the shining parquet at her feet. Ornaments she had none, save only a plain gold wedding-ring on the hand that held the battledoor; for the curious part of the picture was that she was playing left-handed, the right being in a sling; and yet such was the skill of the artist, and the grace of the girlish figure, that there was nothing awkward about it. Underneath was engraved, "Hester de Ligny, aged 16." It was a portrait of my father's mother, taken the year of her wedding.

As I stood gazing at the picture of my Irish grandmother, whose name I had inherited, and whom I was said to strangely resemble, her story came back to my remembrance, as I had so often heard it. My grandfather had met her first in Paris, and had fallen in love first with her lovely, laughing face, and then with her sweet self. Quickly he had wooed and won his young bride, and brought her to his home by the Loire. But they were wild, lawless times in which they lived. One night my grandfather, who had gone into Tours on business, did not return as early as he was expected. Becoming uneasy, the young Countess opened the hall-door, and stood on the steps listening, until she heard the first sounds of his horse's hoofs, when she hurried down the

avenue to meet him. He, on seeing her, dismounted, and, drawing the reins over his arm, walked slowly back with her under the summer night. Suddenly her eyes, wandering from right to left, caught the gleam of a pistol in the moonlight; and before she could speak a word of warning, there was a flash and a loud report. But love is ever quicker than hate: with the instinct of defending him she stretched out her hand, and the ball that was meant to have dealt death to the man at her side only broke the arm of the woman who loved him. In the confusion that ensued, the would-be murderer escaped.

The Count de Ligny carried his bride home, and with care and loving attention she was soon all right again; but one day on opening the door of the gallery, he saw his child-wife busily engaged in trying to play battledoor and shuttlecock with her left hand, her right being still in a sling.

"Poor girl," he said pityingly, "see what you have to thank me for."

"I am sorry," she replied gravely, "because I know how you hate anything awkward!"

And then my grandfather caught her in his arms, and declared that, of all the graceful pictures he had ever seen, the most perfect was a woman playing battledoor and shuttlecock with her left hand. "And to prove I mean what I say," he added, "I shall have an artist down from

Paris, and you shall be painted just as you are, that your descendants may have a memorial always of your love and courage, and your childish heart, which I pray God you may keep for ever!"

And so she did, as far as this world is concerned; for a year after that she died, leaving a little son (my father) to mourn a lifetime the mother and the mother's love he had never known.

But, before that sad ending to her romance, the great artist had come down from Paris, and painted the memorial of love and courage, which is the only relic we possess to-day of my seventeen-year-old grandmother.

When I had thought the story over, as I was fond of doing, I said aloud, gazing up at the happy face above me: "No, I am not a bit sorry for you; for you had your happiness after all, so I can not pity you. Willingly, most willingly, would I change places with you, to be loved as you were, though it was only for a year! Well, there is no use thinking of it," I added philosophically; so, taking my pot of lilies, I started through the little wood that led to the church. Once there, I placed my flowers among the other floral offerings dedicated to the Mother of Sorrows, and after a few words of prayer I hastened to return. After crossing the hot white road that divided the churchyard from our own grounds, it felt as cool as in some Gothic cathedral to stand under the shade of the Charmille. The thick boughs

of the linden-trees, under which so many generations of De Lignys had laughed, and played, and made love, and grown old, were cut into arches and then met over the head; and so thick were they, that they formed a shelter few rays of even that hot July sun could pierce.

I took off my hat, pushed my wavy hair off my forehead, and stood still to enjoy the coolness and the faint, delicious scent of the lime-flowers. Looking down presently, I saw at my feet a large marguerite: I gathered it, determining to try my fate by it—anything to avoid returning to the house!

It was a large daisy, and took a long time pulling to pieces, but at length I came to the last round. "Il m'aime," I said aloud in my eagerness, "un peu—beaucoup—par fantaisie"—and I flung it petulantly on the ground. I might have known what the answer would be!

"Par fantaisie," repeated a voice, so close to me, that I fairly started, and turning round I found myself face to face with a tall, slight, fair-haired man, who was regarding me with a half-amused expression of countenance; in other words, Raoul de Montcour, the object of my thoughts. For a moment I was struck dumb with surprise, and then I said:

"What are you doing here?"

"Well, at present," he made answer, "I am on my way home; but I have been calling up at

the Château, and hearing from your grandmother that you had gone to the church, I took the liberty of coming this way on the chance of meeting you. I felt so interested in hearing what answer the daisy was going to give, that I could not speak before and break the charm! Really now," he went on, "you must gratify my curiosity, and tell me who it was you had in your thoughts when you pulled that daisy to pieces."

I shook my head.

"I'll tell you what," he said, "I will give three guesses, and, if I do not hit it off in them, we will drop the subject; all you will have to do will be to say 'Yes,' or 'No.' Was it," he began—"no, you must lift up your head and look at me, so that I may see whether you are answering truly."

I looked up, but unwillingly, for I was afraid he would see my eyes were red, though I half hoped that by this time the cool air had restored them to their natural color.

"Was it," he began again in a low voice, "Eustache de l'Orme, that friend of your brother's, of whom I used to hear so much?"

I made no answer.

"Was it M. le Curé?" he went on. "He is certainly not handsome, but then, as he may not marry, he possesses the charm of being forbidden fruit. I am sorry at having to waste a guess on him, but then, unfortunately, I know so few men

that you do; and I conclude it was not a *woman* all that anxiety was wasted on!"

"No, it was not," I answered boldly; for I was irritated by his teasing tones, and I looked straight up in his face as I said it.

"You have been crying," he said, with a swift glance at my flushed cheeks; and then, without waiting for me to make any remark, he went on to his third guess. "Was it—I?"

I made no reply, for I felt denial would be of no use; but my eyes sank under his, and my cheeks burned till the tears came.

"Look up," at last he said, and mechanically I obeyed. "Try as you may, you can not keep the truth out of your eyes—from *me*," he added in a lower tone. "Come and sit down in the shade for a few minutes," he said, turning toward an old carved bench that stood under one of the trees near. As we walked slowly toward it, he said, "It ought not to have been 'par fantaisie,' I think—at least not as far as I am concerned."

"That is not the way for an engaged man to talk," I cried petulantly.

With a look of blank surprise, he turned round and gazed at me. "Who told you I was engaged?"

"My grandmère," I replied; and then, with a sudden feeling I could not suppress, I exclaimed: "Oh, why did you not tell me yourself—before! I would so much rather you had told me your-

self," I repeated vaguely, with a dreadful sensation that I was saying something I should be sorry in a moment that I had said, and yet withal a feeling that I could not help it, and that the tears were coming back into my eyes, and that if I spoke again I should disgrace myself by crying. Therefore I staid quite still, my face buried in my hands, he at one end of the bench and I at the other, until he said :

"Were you sorry to hear it?"

Then there was a long silence between us, till he came round and stood in front of me; I knew he was there, though I never looked up. Presently he took one of my hands in his and stroked it softly, and then he said :

"It is all wrong, somehow, Reine." He never could say my English name, so he had given me this "petit nom" in the happy days when we first knew one another. "I don't know how it is, but it is all wrong somehow; the Fates seem all against us, even the daisies!"

At that my tears began to flow again, and before I had time to dry them I was in his arms, and he was kissing me passionately.

"I *am* going to be married, darling, and I am most utterly selfish to try and make you as miserable as I am myself, but for the life of me I can not help it! I did mean to go away without saying a word; I hoped you would not have heard of my engagement until I had left. But never

mind, it can't be helped now; it's all out, so there's no use saying any more about it. I suppose other people live through these sort of things; but it is hard! Nay, child, darling Reine, do not cry like that. There, I must go. Telle est la vie, little Reine! Stand up and give me one kiss, and say good-by."

I stood up obediently as he commanded. "Oh, Raoul," I sobbed, looking up into the gray eyes above me, in which the tears stood, "I think you are more wicked than any one I ever heard of! What do you tell me all this for, when it can do no good, merely to break my heart?"

He caught me in his arms, and pressed me closer to him. "I shall never speak so again, darling," he pleaded, "however great and many may be my opportunities; so say nothing for this once."

"You will never have the opportunity, God knows; I will never willingly see your face again as long as I live!"

"Then," he said, looking down into my tearful eyes, "this being my last chance, I shall take as many kisses as I can get, to remember when I am gone!"

"And I," I said pathetically; "do you think all this makes it easier for me?"

He flung me almost roughly from him. "Go now, quickly, before I play Comtesse Hélène false and say—stay," he said angrily.

Without a word I turned and went. I had not gone many steps before I heard his voice calling, "Come back." I turned immediately—why, I scarcely know.

He laid both his hands on my shoulders, and said, "Say, 'I forgive you, Raoul.'" I repeated the words after him, for, after all, I had no more to forgive than he had.

"And now, child, give me one kiss of your own free will—the first, and the last."

He stooped his tall head, and I lifted my trembling lips to his, and gave him, as he himself said, my first and last kiss of love. Then, before he could stretch out his hand to detain me, I was gone.

CHAPTER II.

"J'avais un seul ami;
Il est parti,
Parti bien loin d'ici,
Mon pauvre ami."

After that many days passed away in a sort of dream. I came and went outwardly as usual, but under that calm exterior burned a continual fire that those around me little dreamed of, until at last, one morning at breakfast, my father, on opening the "Journal," exclaimed: "Listen, Hester, to the grand account of Raoul's marriage.

Ah, ma foi, what fêtes! But never mind, cheer up, little one—your turn will come; and in the mean time, to keep you merry, directly the bride and bridegroom return to Montcour, I will give a ball in their honor."

Fearing, if I attempted to speak, the tears would sound in my voice, I merely smiled back at my father, who, after saying, "Ah, Hester, you are always so ready for any gayety!" became once more absorbed in his paper.

It had come then at last! He was married! Oh, how had he found it possible? It seemed to me then that to be married to another man, to have to vow to love and honor another—why, death itself would be preferable; but then, men and women are so different! Directly I could make my escape I fled to the picture-gallery, my usual place of refuge when in want of solitude. Oh, the miles I must have walked in it those first terrible days after Raoul was married! Once in there, with the doors shut at either end, I knew I was safe from interruption for hours. Up and down, up and down, I paced, with a wild, hopeless feeling at my heart. What had I ever done to him that he should have treated me like this? If he had only left me without saying a word, I should have forgotten him in time, so I thought; at least I should have no remembrances of him that were dreadful to look back upon; but now, what could I think of him? Hide it as I might,

strive as I might to forget it, still I could not but know that he had behaved most dishonorably; he had yielded, perhaps only through weakness, to a temptation that I had not helped him to overcome, and the punishment was that one, perhaps both of us, would bear the wounds of it to the day of our death.

At that time, however, I could not think of it so calmly; all I could do was to cry out in my pain, and my cry was: "I think I could bear it all, if I could only look back to one time when our love had not been sinful! If I could but do that, I should not complain, though either he or I had died directly afterward. But to have nothing of any pleasure to look back upon that is not wrong—ah! I can not bear it!" Then at last I prayed, wildly, passionately, not as our prayers should be offered to our Father, but madly, from the depths of my broken heart, that God would in mercy grant, before my life ended, that I might love him without sin; only that—I prayed only that.

Alas! indeed, we know not what to ask for; and perhaps after all, as I have somewhere read, we should thank God oftener for the prayers He does not answer than for those He does. Answered prayers are so often sent as punishments, alas! Next I wondered if he were happy. "I hope not," I exclaimed angrily; "oh, I hope not!" Then feeling that even the hot July sun, with its

chances of sunstroke, was preferable to being indoors, I put on my hat, and crept down to the oak bench where Raoul had told me of his love.

Once there, my tears flowed more calmly, and after watching the lime-leaves for a few minutes, and listening to all the summer sounds around, the trees gradually faded from my view, and I fell asleep.

I dreamed that I was struggling up a steep hill, so steep that I often paused to get my breath; but I knew within myself that if I could only get to the top I should meet Raoul; therefore the more wearied I became, the greater the efforts I made. At last I stood at the top, and close beside me was a man that I knew to be him, though I could not see his face, for between him and me was the figure of a woman.

He stretched out his hand, and I heard him say "Reine"; but, before I could answer, the woman had thrown herself upon his breast, and clasped her arms so tightly round his neck that I could not touch his outstretched hand. I could not even see his face, for her head was between us; and that, I thought, I am sorry for, for I should like to see if he is happy! And then I returned the way I had come.

But once at the bottom, I heard a mocking voice crying, "Try again, try again!" So, sadly and wearily, I began once more to climb the mountain. But it was much harder work this time;

the ground was covered with thorns, so that my feet were wounded often, and the boughs of the overhanging trees kept getting in my way, so that I could not see the top. The tears, too, would come into my eyes, as first one sharp bramble pierced my limbs, and then another; but nevertheless I stumbled on, until at last, once more, I stood on the plateau on the top.

The sun was just setting, and in the red glow it cast on all around I saw *him* standing, but alone now. With a cry of joy I staggered to his feet. "Raoul, Raoul!" I cried, "help me!" But he made no answer. Then I looked up, and the face which had appeared so distinct when afar off, was once more invisible; and when I looked again, I saw that this time an angel stood between us with outstretched shining wings, which cast a white shadow between him and me. And with that I awoke—awoke with a strange frightened feeling at my heart. What did the dream mean? Was it a warning? and if so, of what? But perhaps it was only natural, after the thoughts I had had, and the way I had behaved that morning, that I should dream of him, and under the circumstances it was not likely I should dream anything cheerful; so with that reflection I returned to the house, certainly calmer than when I had left it.

That evening, as my grandmother and I sat out on the steps that led into the garden, alone,

my father having gone to the smoking-room, after a long silence, spent by me in wondering how long it would be before Raoul returned to Montcour, I said :

"Grandmère, what sort of a woman was my mother ?"

"She was very like Henri, tall and dark, with brown eyes and hair ; she used to be very pretty, you know, my dear, before her accident."

"Tell me about it, grandmère," for I felt in the humor to hear anything sad about any one.

"She was out riding with your father ; I don't know exactly how it happened, but the horse ran away with her and she was thrown. Her spine was injured by her fall in some way, and she never walked again, though she lived on for some time ; you were only four years old when she died."

My old grandmother had tears in her eyes as she spoke. I stroked the dear hand that lay between mine.

"Don't grieve, grandmère ; I have never missed a mother's love since you came here."

She kissed me and said : "I hope not, darling ; sometimes I think I have been a better mother to you than I was to her ; but I will never, God helping me, fall into the same mistake again. But, indeed, I did it for the best," she added, somewhat eagerly.

"What was the mistake you made ?"

She hesitated a moment and then said :

"Your father was not the man she wanted to marry."

The same dreadful story over again. I started up, and exclaimed angrily :

"Then I suppose the man she was in love with was poor, and the Comte de Ligny was rich—comparatively at least. Was that it ?"

"Hush ! my dear ; please don't speak like that. Indeed, I did it for the best."

I sank back again to my place at her feet.

"I am sorry, grandmère, very sorry ; I did not mean to vex you, only it does seem so dreadful that money should always be put above everything else. Was she happy ?" I added.

"Oh, I think so—I hope so," replied the old woman. "But then she did not seem sorry to die, which sorely grieved me, for she was my only daughter, and I loved her dearly ; and your father worshiped the very ground she trod on ; it almost broke his heart watching her lying out here in this garden, as she did day after day, with her patient eyes fixed on the blue sky above her, as though her soul were eagerly waiting the summons that was to set it free. And it came at last, after months of constant pain, and neither her husband nor I could wish to keep her ; for we both knew that it was not here that she could ever have found rest for body or mind, for she had told him her whole story when she married him. Her last words to me were, would I always

live with you and take care of you, and would I promise never to let the fear of poverty stand between you and any man you might wish to marry? I swore it to her; and so far, darling, I have kept my vow, have I not? Never, as long as I am here to look after you, shall my word to your dead mother be broken."

"Yes, dear grandmère, you have always been perfectly kind to me, kinder than any words can say, and so you can tell my mother when you see her." Then there was a long pause, unbroken till my grandmother rose to go in, for the sun had set, and night was coming on with the rapidity it always does in a climate where twilight is almost unknown. "Grandmère," I said, stretching out a detaining hand, "who was the man my mother wanted to marry?"

"The Vicomte de Montcour, Raoul's father," she replied. "Now you know why it is I am so glad to hear that he is marrying happily; for *her* sake I love him, and for *her* sake it rejoices me to hear such good news of him."

Left alone, I stood on the steps and thought of my mother—my poor mother. Never had I seemed to love her as I did at that moment. Had Raoul's father resembled him at his age? Had they wept their passionate farewells as we had done?

Well, she had gathered up the tangled threads of her life, and had married and had children;

but then she had not grieved when she heard that she must die. Somehow there was something sad and touching in that. Then my thoughts wandered on to Countess Hester, and I seemed to see her standing on these same steps, watching for her husband on the very spot where my dying mother had been laid, and I cried aloud, "Ah, Countess Hester, yours was the happiest lot after all, though you never saw your twentieth birthday."

CHAPTER III.

"They seemed, to those who saw them meet,
The worldly friends of every day:
Her smile was undisturbed and sweet;
His courtesy was free and gay.
But yet, if one the other's name
In some unguarded moment heard,
The heart you thought so still and tame
Would struggle like a captured bird."

After that the days went by exactly like one another, until, on returning one day with my grandmother from our afternoon drive, I found upon the table two cards, "The Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Montcour," and then I knew that they had returned, and that the fight was about to begin.

At dinner-time my father spoke to us of the visit.

"I am so sorry you were not at home, Hester, for she is charming. It has always been very dull for you here, and it will be pleasant having a friend who is not so very far off. But, after all, it does not signify; you shall go and call there with grandmère next week."

I did not dare make any sort of refusal, but I trusted before next week some sudden illness would have seized me; and yet, all the time, I had such a longing to see the happy woman who was Raoul's wife.

"And," went on my father, "everything falls in well, for to-day I received a letter from Henri, saying he will be here the end of the week on a month's leave. So now, sweet Hester, you can have your ball."

Miserable as I was, I felt half pleased at the prospect, for should I not see them together?

Presently I said, totally irrelevantly to the subject under discussion, of which I had not heard one word:

"Did they drive?"

"Who, my dear?" said my father.

"M. de Montcour and his wife." There, I had said it at last!

"Oh, Raoul! No, they were riding, and very well she rides too! How your mind runs on the happy pair, my dear! I believe you are envious.

Well, perhaps you will meet another Raoul de Montcour at the ball!" And with a laugh he left the table.

"Another Raoul de Montcour!" I got up too, and went and stood by the window, and looked down the avenue where I had so often watched for a solitary horseman. To think of him and his wife riding under those trees together seemed like desecration of the spot I loved best on earth, and I turned away with an aching heart.

Two more days have passed away, and the dreaded visit is over.

Late in the afternoon of a hot summer's day my grandmère and I drove over to Montcour.

We were ushered into a long, shaded salon, from which every particle of sunlight had been excluded, and deliciously cool it felt after the long, hot drive.

Out of the depths of an arm-chair a lady rose on hearing our names announced. She stood still for a second in the center of the room, and passed her hands once or twice across her eyes, and then, with the sweetest laugh, she came toward my grandmother, saying: "I really don't know how to ask pardon, for I sadly fear I was asleep. But now I am wide awake, and I am sure you must be Madame de Ligny. I hope," she added, turning to me, "that you have not been here a long time, waiting for me to return from the land of dreams!"

I assured her we had only just come in; and then we all sat down, and, while she talked to my grandmother, I had plenty of time to take a long, quiet look at Madame de Montcour.

She was not tall, rather under than over the middle height, with quantities of very fair hair, cut quite short, and curling all over her head. Her eyes were dark brown, and they sparkled and laughed when she spoke, as I have seen some shady streams do when flashed upon by a ray of sunlight. But the most remarkable thing about her was her happy look; it was that, more than anything else, that would have made one single her out anywhere, for she possessed that wonderful charm of perfect happiness that nearly always passes with childhood. I could not feel I hated her then, try as I did!

Gradually, under her pleasant, genial manners, I thawed a little out of the icy reserve in which I had frozen myself up; and, though I could not quite bring myself to talk to her as I would to any one else, still I was getting on better when the door opened, and Raoul was in the room.

He evidently had not expected visitors, for I, who knew his face so well, noticed a look of annoyance pass over it when he saw who was there; but retreat was too late then. He advanced to my grandmère, and received her good wishes for his future, delivered in courtly, old-fashioned language, with a pleasant smile, for they had always

been good friends; and then he turned to me, and held out his hand.

Before I could take it, my grandmother said: "I hope, Hester, you have been thinking all this time of how you are going to offer your congratulations. I was so taken by surprise at Raoul's sudden entrance that I could with difficulty think of anything to say; but you can not make the same excuse!"

"What a dreadful thing to be told to do!" here broke in the voice of Madame de Montcour. "Never mind, mademoiselle, I will take the will for the deed. I am sure you have known my husband too long not to wish him well!"

I could have blessed her for that speech; it gave me time to recover myself a little.

"Well," said my grandmère, "after that I will let you off with merely saying, 'A happy future!'"

My hand shook so that I was ashamed to hold it out, and besides I felt myself getting as white as the dress I wore; but I looked up at him, and mechanically repeated the words, "A happy future!"

I saw a flush pass over his face as he touched my hand, and a warning look was in his eyes, which said to me as plainly as if he had spoken, "Take care!"

For the second it took me to repeat the words he stood in front of me so that Madame de Mont-

cour could not see my face; and then he turned to my grandmother, and talked to her without ceasing until we rose to leave, Madame de Montcour in the mean time devoting herself to me.

He followed us out to the steps, and put us into the carriage. As I took my seat by my grandmother, he said, so low that no one but myself caught the words: "Believe me, it was unintentional; I had no idea *you* were there!" and then we drove off.

My last view of old Montcour, having in the foreground the white-robed figure of the young wife with her hands tightly locked around her husband's arm.

CHAPTER IV.

"Alas! how easily things go wrong!
A sigh too many, or kiss too long,
There follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again."

It was the night of my long-expected, long-promised ball. Henri, with some friends of his, had come down from Paris, and the old château had become quite gay. What with riding, driving and walking parties, and other amusements, there had been very little time for thought, and now, with infinite trouble, we had converted the long gallery into a ballroom, and very success-

fully, I thought, we had done it, as I stood alone in the empty room waiting to receive the guests.

Generation after generation of De Lignys looked down on me out of wreaths of flowers and evergreens; the doors into the conservatory, which was all lit up with Chinese lanterns, were open, showing a long vista of flowers, ending in a glimpse of the starry heavens—the door into the garden being also open. I moved down to the end so as to get a better view, and there met all our own party.

"Very good," said my father, stopping short. "Really the place is scarcely recognizable; your trouble is not thrown away. And now let me look at you," he went on, turning me round so as to be able to have a good view. "Equally good, I think I may say."

I was all in white, with bunches of large daisies in my hair and looping up my dress, and in my hand I held a bouquet, composed of nothing but marguerites and fern-leaves.

"Pretty and innocent-looking," said my father, and kissed me. "Enjoy yourself," he added, "and you will make me quite happy."

"Pretty enough!" chimed in Henri, "but rather young-looking for a woman of your age, I should say."

"One might tell with one's eyes shut that that speech was made by a brother," exclaimed his friend Eustache de l'Orme, making me a low bow

as he spoke. "I, if I were your brother, mademoiselle, should say something very different!"

"No, Eustache, you would not. *Not* being related to her, you are far more likely to make her pretty speeches than I am, who have known her so long and well. But now, pray, go on—you have raised our curiosity: what *would* you say to Hester, if you were her brother? It may serve as a lesson to me on future occasions!"

"Oh, no; you are far beyond profiting from any lesson of mine; so I think I will postpone what I would have said until the first waltz, which I hope mademoiselle will give me."

I bowed acquiescence, and then, turning to my brother, said laughingly: "Don't distress yourself about my daisies. I am not quite twenty yet, but I shall most likely attain that mature age before my next ball; that rubicon passsd, I shall leave off trying to make myself look young. I shall certainly never wear daisies again!" I added, in a lower tone.

"Never mind, Hester," he said, as the others moved away, handing me back, as he spoke, my bouquet; which he had been holding while I had been striving to fasten my four-buttoned gloves; "whatever I may say, I am always proud of you, wherever you may be, or whoever may be near you!"

He was always a kind and loving brother to me, was Henri.

"Tiens, Henri!" I said, laying my hand on his sleeve, as he was moving away, "what do you think of Madame Raoul?"

"What do I think of her?" he repeated. "I really don't know—very pretty and very fascinating; don't you think so?"

"What made him marry her?" I went on.

"Money, I should think," he replied. "What could a poor aide-de-camp have done without a rich wife? But in this case he seems to have got a good deal besides money, so they ought to be very happy. I always rather hoped," he finished off in a whisper, "that Raoul would have been my brother-in-law; but I suppose money—and we will hope other things—have won the day. You, perhaps, did not imagine this; but I did at one time, and I should have liked it. Poor old Raoul! Well, let us hope he will be happy, for there is no one I am more fond of!" And with this wish my brother left me.

Half an hour afterward I was standing by the door trying to cool myself after a long waltz with M. de l'Orme, when the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Montcour were announced.

I went forward to meet them, as in duty bound: it was easy enough to do company talk in a crowded ballroom. I shook hands with them, and then Raoul said, "I hope, mademoiselle, you have kept one dance for me, for old acquaintance' sake."

I glanced down my card—anything to avoid having to look into his face—and said, "I can not give you anything before the sixteenth."

"That will be very late," he replied. "Let me look at your card, and see if I can not find another; we may be gone by that time."

I knew he suspected my little deceit, but still I hesitated; this was my way of trying to be good! So I held the card closer in my hand, for I did not wish him to see all the blanks there were before number sixteen; and, besides, his wife might think it rude. Before, however, I had time to answer again, she turned to me, and said merrily:

"Quite right, mademoiselle; put his name very low down, for he can not possibly go without dancing with his hostess; and the later that occurs, the later we shall stay, and the happier I shall be, for I do so dearly love a ball!"

"Do you, indeed?" said my father, who had joined us, "It seems cruel to ask you, then, but will you give me this quadrille?"

She took his arm and moved off. Certainly there is a wonderful charm about her; it seems to be her mission in life to make every one happy and at ease around her. How I wish that she were only somebody else's wife!

As I stood watching her, suddenly a dreadful feeling came over me that I was standing alone with Raoul, and that in a minute he must say

something to me. Looking round desperately for some one to help me out of the difficulty, my eyes fell on Eustache de l'Orme, and I made a sudden movement forward, just as Raoul had reached my side. "Monsieur," I said, "would you be so kind as to take me to some cool place, and get me an ice?"

He offered me his arm, and soon I was once more in safety by an old dowager.

"Shall I fetch you a chair?"

"Oh, no, thank you; I will stand here by Madame de Louvain, as I am not dancing this quadrille, and it is a pretty sight to look on at."

Just in front of me were Madame de Montcour and my father. She was looking perfectly lovely; dressed in her white satin wedding-dress, with diamond stars in her fair hair, her brown eyes sparkling with pleasure, and a little flush of excitement on her usually pale cheeks, she made a perfect picture.

For some minutes I was so absorbed in watching her pretty, graceful movements, that I was quite surprised when the dance came to an end. As the music concluded, and the conversation around me became once more audible, I heard a voice I knew only too well say, "What a wonderful likeness!"

I looked up. Raoul and M. de Louvain were talking together, and, as M. de Louvain had his eyes fixed on me, I concluded I was the person to whom *he* had been alluding.

"Yes, a great likeness," replied M. de Louvain, glancing as he spoke from me to the picture above my head, which I then remembered was that of Countess Hester. "A great likeness," he repeated, evidently thinking I was out of hearing, "at first sight; but if you study the *expression* of the two faces, M. de Montcour, a great deal of it goes—at least, so it seems to me. The picture is that of a happy child, but the living face is that of a woman. Mademoiselle Hester used to be much more like it than she is."

As he said the last words I looked up, and met Raoul's eyes fixed on me with an earnest, questioning gaze which frightened me.

I was quite glad to see M. de l'Orme coming up to claim me for the waltz that was just commencing. I seemed to dance a great deal with him—at least I heard afterward that others had noticed it; but as for me, I was thinking of nothing but the dreaded waltz that was drawing nearer every minute. Oh, if I had only had the courage to refuse it at once, instead of merely putting it off! At last I saw that fatal number put up over the orchestra—16. With a desperate feeling of escaping till it was over, I stepped inside the conservatory; but, as the first notes of the band struck up, Raoul stood beside me, and offered his arm.

"What made you come here?" he said. "You did not think that I would not look for you,

after waiting all these hours for this one dance! Why would you not give me another, and why would you not speak to me all the evening? Come here, and we will sit down, and you shall tell me why."

He put two chairs as he spoke by the door that led into the garden. It gave me a feeling of rest only to look at the blue heavens, and listen to the cool splash of the fountain into its marble basin; a feeling of rest and happiness to sit here with him once more by my side, after all the trouble and turmoil of the last dreadful weeks.

"Well," he said, after a moment's silence, "you have not answered my question."

"Well," I echoed, "why have you stood the whole evening without dancing, merely looking at me, and following me about, until the pleasure of my evening has been completely spoiled?"

"It was what I came for," he said in a low tone; "but I am sorry if it has spoiled the pleasure of your evening."

I made no answer.

Presently he got up and stood in front of me, and put his hands on my shoulders.

"You must forget, Reine, you must," he said harshly.

"How can I?" I cried despairingly. "You have made me miserable, most miserable, and then you tell me to forget!"

At those words he turned and stepped into the garden, and stood looking up at the starry skies.

I was touched then, and, following him, I laid my hand on his arm. "Don't let me vex you, Raoul. You remember I have forgiven you, and I don't think it was any more your fault than mine; only it seems to come harder on me than you, for you have your wife, and in time you will be happy. You are sorry for me now, but when you are away from me, of course, you are happy; but I—I have nothing, it seems to me!"

"Don't talk like that," he said, turning round hastily. "You will break my heart. And how dare you tell me that I am happy? You know I am not!"

"Then you ought to be," I said quietly, for I was frightened at his vehemence; "and, if you will only leave me alone, and try never to see me again, I am sure you will be. No one," I said after a pause, occupied in swallowing the sobs down that would rise in my throat—"no one could, I am sure, live with Comtesse Hélène, and not be happy; and you have no right, nor I any wish, that she should be made as wretched as I am!"

It required a great deal to say that, but I could think of nothing else comforting to say, and he did seem so sadly in need of comfort.

"You are a brave child, Reine; so listen. I swear it, for your sake, I will go away and winter

abroad. It has taken me all this time to make up my mind to that, but for your sake I will go away! I don't think I ever did so much for any woman before." And then he leaned down and gave me one kiss, standing there in the moonlight.

"Oh, don't! don't!" I cried out. "Have some mercy on me. Leave me alone; it all makes it so much harder for me!"

"Well, I won't touch you again, or kiss you either; but just stand quite still there, and let me take one good look at you, my queen of daisies! Daisies are quite my favorite flowers," he went on, taking two out of my bouquet as he spoke. "You take this one, and we will each trust our fate to the daisies for the last time!"

I began mechanically pulling mine to pieces, but my tears often obstructed my view of the white petals. He had finished his first.

"Beaucoup," he said, throwing the stalk on the ground, and looking with his dark gray eyes into mine. "Of course it is horridly selfish, but I am glad of it."

I pulled out the last petal as he spoke. "Par fantaisie," I said, in a grieved tone. "You see the daisy is true to its first estimate of your character!"

He snatched the stalk out of my hand, and threw it angrily away. "Don't believe it," he said; "it is not like the Reine des Marguerites—all truth!"

We stood still for a moment, listening to the splash, splash of the fountain, and then, before I had time to speak or turn away, I was in his arms, and he was covering my face with kisses. I was very weak, was I not? But when I stood once more looking at him, standing before me, with his arms folded, waiting for me to reproach him, I could only look up at him and say pathetically: "Ah, Raoul, have pity on me; do not try to make me more wicked than I am—as wicked as you are," I added.

"I *am* wicked, am I not?" he said. "But don't shiver now, and look so frightened; I am only going to give you my arm, and take you back to the ballroom for the rest of our dance, which will soon be over."

I felt ashamed of myself as I took his arm. I make no excuse, I knew it was wrong; but—I did it, and soon we were dancing to that saddest of all waltzes, "Künster leben." He never spoke till the very last bars were being played, when for a minute he held me closer to him, and whispered: "Good-by, little Reine. Something tells me we shall not meet again for a long time, but remember it is at your bidding; never fear but I shall keep my oath. Good-by; God bless you!"

I could only say, "Good-by; I think it is best," in a faltering, trembling tone, when the dance came to an end, and he led me to my seat.

As I sat down, Comtesse Hélène came up to

her husband. "Really, Raoul, I am afraid we must be going.—I am so obliged to you, Mademoiselle de Ligny, for keeping us so late. You have certainly performed your duties as a hostess —as far as we are concerned—perfectly!"

Before I could answer she turned to say something to Raoul; the look of love in her face seemed quite to glorify it. "How fond she is of him," I thought, with a pang, as they turned away—"how fond she is of him!" When they had gone the other guests began to think of leaving too, and soon I, with my faded daisies, was left standing alone in the deserted ballroom.

CHAPTER V.

"In passion's stress, the battle's strife,
The desert's lurking harms,
Maid-Mother of the Lord of Life,
Protect thy men-at-arms."

Two years have passed away since that eventful ball—two years, which, despite the changes they have brought, went slower and lasted longer than any others I have ever known. And yet changes generally make the time pass quicker! First as to the griefs I myself have suffered, for in two years who has not suffered some grief! My dear old grandmère is dead. She has been summoned home, and all I can hope is, that she

has met my mother, and that she has found her happy as in her girlish days, with all the mistakes of this world set right, in that happy home where there is no trouble or sighing.

As to other things, Raoul has kept his promise faithfully and honestly. From the day of the ball until now I have never seen him. Madame de Montcour is delicate, so both their winters since their marriage have been spent in Italy; last summer they were in England, and the short time they spent at Montcour before returning to the south, I was absent on a visit; therefore it has happened that we have never met. But despite his long absence I have not forgotten him, as he commanded me to do, and as I have prayed I may; on the contrary, the harder I have struggled against it, so it seems to me, the deeper and deeper has sunk into my heart my first girlish love. Sometimes I have thought, if I could only have seen him, however long the intervals between, I could have borne it better; and then again I have trembled with fear at the thought of the time when he should return, and almost hoped that I would die first.

And now the time is at hand, for this very day my father has received a message from Montcour, saying the Vicomte was there, and would he kindly go over and see him if possible, and as speedily as might be? and my father has gone, for these are not times to stand upon ceremony.

War, with all its horrors, is devastating the fair land around; the Germans have already crossed the Rhine, and the foot of the invader is on the soil of France.

And now there is a cry over all the country for the sons of France to come forth and defend her, and among the first to answer the summons was Raoul de Montcour; and the thoughts of seeing him again are almost swallowed up in the remembrance of the terrible days that have come upon us. My father has returned, and this is what he has told me:

Raoul has returned to Paris already; his only object in coming was to ask my father if he would follow him there, taking me with him, to stay with Comtesse Hélène while he is away in Metz, where he goes to join his regiment. He thinks his wife will be safer, besides hearing news quicker, at the Hôtel Montcour than in her country house.

"When does Raoul go to Metz?" I asked my father in a trembling voice.

"To-night, or to-morrow morning; but if we catch the first train we shall be sure to see him."

With a bewildered feeling, that gave me a strange sensation that I was not Hester de Ligny, but some one else who had taken her place, I began mechanically putting together the things I should want; and before many hours had passed my father and I were being whirled to Paris by

the express. Arrived in Paris, a footman came up, and told us that M. de Montcour's carriage was waiting for us, but that he himself had been unable to come.

Still feeling it must be a dream, I passed through the usually quiet station, now full of soldiers in every conceivable uniform, all shouting and screaming together, some singing loud, warlike choruses, some whispering hurried farewells to wives and children, while one man was reading aloud to an attentive audience the last news from the frontier, as published in an official notice on the wall. I was glad to find myself with my father out of the noise and confusion in Raoul's carriage, driving toward the Champs Elysées. I don't think we spoke one word until we drew up at the door, and then my father whispered: "I think, Hester, it would kill me if I were to see the Germans here; for the first time I am glad your mother is not alive," which showed me where his thoughts had been ever since we left Tours. "And," he added, "to think I am too old to take a sword and go to the front with them—that *I* am to be left behind!"

"Oh, don't, father," I cried, catching hold of his arm—"don't say that, and don't hint at such a dreadful thing as defeat. You may well say that would kill you!" Then the door was opened, and I stood inside, for a moment almost blinded by the glare of light after the darkness outside.

Before I had time to say anything, a door opened, and Madame de Montcour stood beside me, holding out her hand, and bidding me welcome. She looked paler than the last time I had seen her, but the childlike brightness that was so much a part of her nature had not left her, although I noticed there were dark rings round the lovely eyes which told of many sleepless nights.

"I thought you would come!" she said. "When Raoul asked me whom I would like to have to stay with me while he was in Metz, I asked for you directly; for I have never forgotten you, and I always hoped we should meet again." I murmured some unintelligible words, and she went on: "You must be dead tired. Come up stairs and take off your things, and then I dare say you will feel better."

I followed her up stairs, and I could not help noticing how small and frail she looked in her black dress—we all wore black at that time, for were we not all mourning for our native land?—so small, that I felt quite a giantess as I stood beside her. She sat down for a minute, and I stood watching her. What a lovely face hers was! But I hardened my heart against her, and when she repeated, "I am so glad you came!" I only said, "I was very glad to be of any use," and washed my hands, and smoothed my dark-brown hair, and stood ready to accompany her down stairs.

"Would you like to see our baby?" she said in a hesitating voice, as she shut the door behind us. "Ah, no!" she added; "on second thoughts he is most likely just asleep, so I dare not disturb him. But you will see plenty of him, mademoiselle, before you leave, I have little doubt!" And with a merry laugh, that reminded me of the Comtesse Hélène I had known before, she descended the stairs. When she opened the dining-room door, they were all standing there, my father, Henri, Raoul, and M. de l'Orme—all, it seemed to me, who had made up my life. I stood still for a moment with a feeling of nervousness I could not overcome, till Raoul came forward and said in a grateful voice, "I *knew* you would come!" and then immediately returned to his talk with my father.

Madame de Montcour said: "I need not introduce M. de Ligny to you, or M. de l'Orme either. They both go to Metz with my husband, so that I thought we would spend the few hours that remain to us all together."

I saw her lips tremble a little as she finished her speech, but no one else noticed it, I think. I could not help admiring her, as I saw her trying to keep her own fears down, for the sake of not disturbing him she loved. She was a brave woman, was Hélène de Montcour! Oh, that dreadful dinner! I am sure I shall never forget it. I sat by Raoul, and he tried to make conversation

to me ; but ever and again I saw his glance wander to the head of the table, where his wife sat trying hard to talk to my father and brother, with a bright flush upon her cheeks, which told to the most uninitiated eye the efforts she was making ; and every time I followed his glance, the truth was being borne deeper and deeper into my aching heart, that the love I had thought mine for ever had been taken away and given to another. It was what I had told him would happen ; I had, in the depths of my heart, known it all along ; and yet, wicked as it was, I could have cried out at the pain it was to me, instead of rejoicing at his happiness. When dessert was put upon the table and the servants had left us, we all sat for a few minutes in silence, each one too much occupied with his own thoughts to speak. Then Raoul suddenly stood up and said, "Well, friends, before we go, and go we must in a very few minutes, let us drink a last 'stirrup-cup.'" He spoke almost merrily, but I saw his hand tremble as he filled his glass. Then he looked across at his wife and said: "Fetch the child, Hélène ; I have a fancy for us to be all together. It is the correct thing," he added with a laugh, "at a last stirrup-cup."

Madame rose without a word, and presently returned with the child, in its little white night-dress, in her arms ; he was sound asleep as she had lifted him out of his cradle. We all stood up, our glasses in our hands ; but before he spoke,

Raoul moved round from his place, and put himself next his wife, with his arm round her waist.

"I must drink out of your glass," she said with a faint smile, "for I can not hold one with the baby in my arms!"

If only a painter could have seen us then, what a picture he might have made! The brilliantly lighted room, the men in their bright uniforms, with their swords unsheathed, and their glasses lifted in which the red wine sparkled; and we two women in our heavy black dresses, and the fair-haired child asleep in the midst.

"To the health and success of the Emperor!" said Raoul, and we all drank the loyal toast with bent heads. "To our safe return," he went on in a lower voice, and then I saw one tear fall on the baby's white dress; but Hélène's voice sounded as cheerily as ever, as she lifted the glass to her lips, and said:

"To our next merry meeting!" She was braver than I, for I could not have spoken to save my life.

Directly after dinner I escaped so as to leave them alone. I went into the drawing-room, and stood in the conservatory which opened out of it, gazing out of the window, and saying: "It is just, it is just! I sinned, and this is my punishment," when the door opened into the drawing-room, and they both came in. He had his arm round her, and her voice sounded rather tearful; but she was still, as always, thinking of him rather than of

herself. "Of course you will soon come back," she said wistfully.

"Of course, darling," he repeated. How his tender tones maddened me, and yet I tried to say I was glad; I prayed to be glad! "Give me one kiss—I must go."

She did not answer, but followed him out again restlessly into the passage.

As I stepped back into the drawing-room, a voice I recognized as that of M. de l'Orme's said: "Give me a daisy to fight for. Give me some hope; tell me that the answer your father gave me from you two years ago was a mistake."

As he leaned over me, whispering in an excited voice into my ear, Raoul glanced into the room, but seeing us went out again, evidently thinking himself *de trop*.

"No, don't," I cried, hastily passing him, as he stretched out his hand. "It is cruel to ask me now," I went on despairingly; and before he could speak again I was in the hall.

They were just leaving. Raoul's charger was at the door, a dark chestnut I knew well. A few more hasty words, and Hélène descended the steps, he following her out into the night. He jumped on to his horse directly—I think to avoid any more last words—without one syllable to me; I think he did not even see me.

Hélène, standing at the bridle-rein, bent her fair head, and kissed the horse once, twice, be-

tween the eyes. "Bring him safe back," she murmured passionately; and, before any one could stop her, she had hastened past us all into the dark drawing-room, and the door shut behind her.

I watched them all mount and ride away, with a feeling of pain at my heart that I had never felt since the day I first heard that Raoul was going to be married; but before the last sound of their horses' hoofs had died away in the distance, Raoul had returned. I was still standing dazed on the step where they had left me. He leaned down from his charger and whispered hoarsely in my ear: "Take care of her, Hester. I believe you were *once* fond of me; so, for the sake of the past, take care of her, and I will watch over *him* as far as in me lies!" And before my eager, "Raoul, Raoul!" could reach him, he had ridden away.

CHAPTER VI.

"The night is dreary,
The wind is eerie,
And I am all alone
My heart is weary,
And very dreary,
For my love is gone.'

GONE! before my eager disclaimers could reach him! Gone! perhaps to his death, and he would never know!

He believed that *once* I had been fond of him; oh, it was hard!

Then, after all, the command he had laid upon me, to forget, was not an utter impossibility, for had he not fulfilled it? Was it, then, indeed, so easy? In two years!

Why, why had not the same mercy been vouchsafed to me? I had prayed and struggled to forget, and had not succeeded; but, even as these wild thoughts swept over me, a still, small voice repeated in my heart of hearts: "It is just; you have sinned, and the sin has brought its punishment."

"But why?" I cried; "why am I the only one to whom it has come? When we both sinned, why is he happy? Why has memory been taken away from him, and not from me?" And the still, small voice replied: "Judge him not. There is no sin without its punishment. Perhaps his has already come; perhaps not yet. The heart knoweth its own bitterness; we can not judge another because he appears light-hearted, and say of him, 'That man is happy.'"

"No—ah, no," I said to myself. "How could I hear his last words and think him anything but miserable?" And with that I remembered his parting injunction. For his sake I would take care of *her*. What would I not have done for *his* sake? So with slow steps I traversed the hall and entered the drawing-room.

On hearing the door open Hélène came forward to meet me, brushing the tears away as she did so.

"Don't say a word," she began; "I am so ashamed of myself, but I am quite myself again now, and after a night's rest you shall see no more tears. What must you think of me? It almost looks as if I grudged him to France; but don't imagine that. Only farewells are always trying, are they not? But come, let us go to bed. You look as white as a ghost, and I have been selfishly leaving you to bear your griefs alone—without even the relief of tears."

And then I, seeing the mistake into which she had drifted, even as her husband had done, determined to do everything in my power to avoid present commiseration or future complications; so I said boldly:

"Madame, you must not think I have any more feeling for M. de l'Orme than for any other old friend. He once tried to make me care for him differently, but I could not. This I tell you in confidence," I added, "because I do not like you to waste undeserved pity on me."

She held out her hand, and, taking mine, said simply: "I am sorry, although, perhaps, it saves you much unhappiness now; but I always rather hoped you would have married him, because I consider M. de l'Orme a good, honorable gentleman, and I thought, as did Raoul, that you were

one of the few girls we knew who was worthy of him. But, perhaps, when he returns he may plead his cause again, this time more successfully: we will hope so!"

"Never, never!" I said excitedly; and with that she led me up to my room, and wished me good night.

Then week after week went by in dreary monotony. Sometimes we heard news, and sometimes none for days together. Next came the sad certainty that Metz was besieged, and that the German troops were drawing nearer and nearer to the capital itself. At that my father suggested that perhaps, after all, we should be safer at Montcour. But to this Hélène would not agree; every one was of opinion that Paris was almost impregnable, whereas in the country, with bands of soldiers, friends and enemies, wandering about, there must be always cause for alarm; so in Paris it was settled we should stay. Besides all this, if the siege of Metz were raised, to Paris Raoul would come.

And shortly after that dawned the dreadful day when the first German gun echoed in the ears of the inhabitants of the "white-walled city." It is needless to dwell upon that terrible time. Day by day Comtesse Hélène and I crept out in our long, black dresses and veils, to the hospital opposite the Hôtel Montcour, where the fresh wounded were daily brought, to nurse them and

tend them, and whisper words of hope and religion to them, and then either send them forth to lift an arm again for France, or else see them laid in their coffins, and follow with our tearful eyes the little funeral train leaving the hospital doors to take them to their last home. And day by day, as I watched her bright face bending over the sick, and saw how they one and all looked forward to her advent, and how, notwithstanding the terrible, agonizing suspense in which she lived, she yet always managed to keep a brave, cheerful face for those poor sufferers—as I saw all this, my heart softened toward her, and my coldness was being gradually melted away in the light of her sweet eyes.

"I don't know what it is," said one of the young soldiers to me, as I stood talking to him, one sunshiny, autumn morning—"I don't know what it is about Madame de Montcour, but she seems to remind us all of our mothers. Not her age," he added, with a smile—a very tearful one, however, at the remembrances that name called up.

I can not think now how I stood out so long against her soft, winning ways—in my heart, I mean; for outwardly I was always, if not friendly, at least something like it. But one day, on our return home, my father met us with the dreadful tidings that Metz had fallen.

"However, I scarcely know what to believe,"

he went on, "for the town is full of confused rumors. Now, please, don't go and imagine all kinds of dreadful things, madame, until we can find out the truth."

He added this at a frown from me, for I saw the face at my side becoming whiter and whiter.

"Don't frighten us needlessly, father; tell us what it all means. Metz taken! Impossible!"

"What does he say?" said Comtesse Hélène, looking piteously from him to me—"what does he say?"

And then my father told us that a soldier who had escaped from Metz had managed to pass through the Prussian lines into Paris, and had brought the news that Metz, our virgin fortress, had been taken by the Germans, and that Bazaine and his whole army who had escaped death had been made prisoners.

"Has," said Madame de Montcour, with trembling lips—"has he brought any list of the killed and wounded?"

"No," replied my father hurriedly; "the man was at the Palais de Justice, telling his story; but what I have told you is all I heard. But don't, pray, don't grieve now. Of course *he* is all right," went on my dear old father, putting his arm round her as though she were indeed his daughter; I am sure she had a daughter's place in his heart. "Of course *he* is all right; so many prayers could not have been all in vain!"

"Please," she said pleadingly, taking his hand in both of hers, "please, I should so like to see this man. Could you find him? I *must* speak to him!" And before either of us could answer, she had passed us and gone into the baby's room, and locked the door behind her.

"I will go, Hester," said my father. "Try and cheer her up as soon as she will see you. Truly she is deserving of help from every one she meets upon her road, for no one has ever asked help from her in vain!"

I went up to my own room, and sat down, feeling quite dazed with misery and anxiety. Hour after hour passed, but still I never moved; at last approaching night roused me. I got up and went down to the dining-room, where I found my father talking to a rough-looking soldier lad.

I would have retired, but my father called me back. "Send up and tell Madame de Montcour that the man is here she wished to see."

I gave the message to a servant, and then sat down to await with a beating heart the story that was coming.

Presently the door opened, and Hélène entered. The soldier started, and twisted his cap nervously round between his fingers, when he looked up and saw the frail figure of Madame de Montcour standing before him; for in her black dress, her brown eyes looking larger and brighter than ever, and the fair hair like a halo round her head, she did

present somewhat the look of a messenger from another world.

"This is the lady," said my father, and then he went toward her to lead her to a chair; but she paid no attention to him, only turned to the soldier, and said:

"Tell us now everything you know."

He related his story then, much in the same words in which my father had already told it to us.

"Yes," she said eagerly, "but how did you escape, and when was it—out of Metz?"

"No," he replied; "I was taken prisoner with many others, but somehow, in the confusion that followed the surrender, I managed to get away. But I did not come here directly; under the cover of the darkness, I walked on some miles during the night, until I reached a station some distance farther on, that I knew *they*" (with a little emphasis on the *they*) "would have to pass. I wanted to see the last of them—my own regiment—you understand?"

She nodded her head impatiently. He went on:

"I hid behind the station, and watched, and presently the train came in. A great many of the officers got out, and stood by their chargers, and I asked a man near me if he knew what was going to happen; and he told me that as the French were not allowed to take their horses into Germany, the officer commanding had given them

leave to try and sell them, as many as could, which of course they were willing enough to do, as money was not over-plentiful. Two or three I saw sold to farmers and those sort of men, for fifty or a hundred francs, as the case might be. I tell you all this because you want to hear everything?" he said interrogatively.

"Yes, yes," she cried; "go on; did you see anything more?"

"Let me think. Where was I? I am telling you all this, because at the end something did happen worth repeating. One officer I noticed, standing by the head of a most magnificent charger. Drawing his arm through the bridle-rein, he presently brought it up quite close to where I was standing, as far away as possible from the spot where the others were shouting and bargaining. He stood beside it quite motionless for a minute, while it looked at him, as if it knew the terrible chance that had befallen its master, and then he muttered, 'No, you shall never take me back a prisoner'; and at that he kissed it twice between the eyes; then, before a single German could interfere, he drew a pistol from his pocket, and shot it through the brain; the poor beast fell over almost at my feet, quite dead." As he finished his story, the soldier passed his rough coat-sleeve across his eyes, and looking at me said apologetically, "You would have been sorry too, madame, if you had seen it!"

"Was the officer wounded?" I asked quickly, for something seemed to tell me who he was.

"Yes, madame," he replied; "he was very lame."

"Did you never hear his name?" said Madame de Montcour, in a quick, gasping voice, that made me rise and move toward her.

"I did not, madame, although I asked; but his horse was covered with a cloth, in the corner of which was a coronet, with 'R. de M.' beneath it. See, I wrote the initials down for fear of forgetting them," and he held out to me a piece of a dirty letter, beginning "Very dear son," on which the letters were copied.

"Then he is not dead," Hélène cried out, and with that fell fainting at my feet.

My father lifted her up, and carried her to her own room, where I followed her; first, however, pausing to turn to the soldier, and hold out my hand, much to his surprise. "It is her husband," was all I could find to say, and then I followed my father.

I tried every remedy I could think of, and at last the life began to return to Hélène's pale form. She opened her eyes and smiled up at me. "You have had plenty to do looking after me," she said, "but oh, you can not imagine what this afternoon has been! I had such a dreadful presentiment that I should never see him again, and, now that my mind is easier, it has been too much for me!"

As she spoke she half rose, and stretched out her hand to draw me toward her; the movement caused her wedding-ring to fall off. I picked it up, and handed it back in silence. As she took it, she said, "That fitted too tight, when I was married, to do that!"

I threw myself down on my knees beside her. "Oh, don't, don't!" I cried; "you must not fret like this. I promised to take care of you, and just see how I have kept my promise!" And when I looked at her, my heart ached as I thought of her as she was at that ball at Ligny, only two years ago!

"My dear," she replied, "it can not be laid to your charge that I worry myself, and imagine all sorts of horrors. But you know it is useless telling me not to *think*, because I really can not help it. And yet you have your brother there too; your nearest and dearest are in as much danger as mine, but you are not as selfishly nervous as I am!"

"Yes," I sobbed, with my head resting against her knee, "I can feel for you! Sometimes I have felt as if I should go mad with fright, but it is over now," I added thankfully.

"You have some one absent, then, as dear to you as Raoul is to me?"

"Yes," I echoed absently, "as dear as Raoul is to you!"

And with these words silence fell between us

again, unbroken until Hélène said, speaking in a hesitating voice, and passing her hand over my hair with a caressing gesture, for I had never moved my head off her knee, "I think we understand one another better than we did, do we not? At least I hope you like me better—do you?"

I was crying so that I could not answer, but I stroked the soft hand I held between mine.

"What was it," she whispered, "that always stood between us?"

"Oh, don't ask," I cried—"please don't, but rest contented with this, that there is nothing between us now." And at that I kissed the white face for the first time since I had known her.

"Then we are real friends at last?" she said.

"At last," I replied sadly through my tears, and then I left her.

CHAPTER VII.

"Let us behold you near, before you pass into the night,
O fair face; let us see you well, because you are so bright;
Standing in the shadow, let us watch the light."

THE next morning, immediately after breakfast, which meal was not quite so plentiful as it had been, Madame de Montcour said, turning to me: "Will you come with me to church? I think

I should like to go this morning; and, if we start directly, we shall have plenty of time before we are due at the hospital."

"Plenty," I replied, "and I should like it of all things."

Before leaving, we went into the nursery to take a last look at the boy. She took him in her arms—such a big child as he was growing!—and kissed him many times. "Ah, when shall we see him again?" she murmured—"how many more dreadful months! Oh, I think if the Prussians only knew, little Raoul, how much we wanted him, they would either let us out to him, or send him back to us!" And, kissing him again, she left him.

Directly we were outside she began talking, and much more freely than had been her wont of late. Evidently our confidences of the night before had brought us closer together.

"You think now," she asked earnestly, "that he is *sure* to be all right?"

"Oh, surely," I replied.

"It is only a matter of time now," she went on; "the Germans must raise the siege of Paris, or — well, something must happen soon; this dreary monotony many weeks longer would kill me. And to think of his being a prisoner, and Etoile dead! It seems as if nothing were going right. If I had only followed your father's advice, we should have been safe at Montcour now.

Don't you feel angry at me sometimes for my obstinacy? And now, here am I being as irritable and cross as if I had not heard, only yesterday, that he was alive, which after all is the great thing, instead of being most thankful at having heard of him. "Of course the lameness can not be much?" she concluded interrogatively.

"Of course not," I assented, soothingly; "he would not have been walking if he had not been nearly well."

"Thank you for saying that. I think you are so unselfish, Hester; you always manage to say something soothing when I am perturbed and cross, and it must be difficult to try and cheer another when one is feeling anxious one's self. I shall tell Raoul, when he returns, what care you have taken of me."

"If I am thoughtful for others, I have learned it from you," I said slowly.

"From me?" she repeated. "Indeed, that can not be, for I never think of any one but Raoul, which of course, in the end, means the same thing as never thinking of any one but myself! But we will hope," she finished as we reached the steps of the church, "for your sake, that I shall come out in a more cheerful temper."

"I don't wish you the least bit altered," I exclaimed enthusiastically, "for I think you are perfect!" And with these words we entered, and knelt down side by side.

I knelt down devoutly enough, but my thoughts would not be controlled. They wandered away, first, to the dear old Ligny gardens—I almost seemed to smell the sweet scent of the linden-flowers; and from that to my strange dream on that hot July morning: what had it meant? I wondered, as I had so often wondered since; and from that to the entangled present and on to the more entangled future. How would it all end?

And as I thus thought, there came across me with a shudder the memory of my wild prayers that I had then offered up. Then I prayed earnestly, most earnestly, that they might be forgiven me, and that for the future I might learn to trust everything to my Father in heaven, and not strive to arrange things for myself; for, though I did not love Raoul any less than I had done, yet clearer sight seemed to have been given me, and so when I looked at the woman at my side, whom I had at last learned to love also, and who was so far worthier of him than I was, I realized how wicked my prayers had been, which, if answered, would have brought down such grief upon her innocent head!

As I rose from my knees, I felt like the ancient mariner when the albatross had at last fallen from his neck; and with that feeling of release from my own sins, came a kindlier feeling than I had ever had before for Hélène de Montcour, whom, after all, I had so deeply wronged.

As we walked down the aisle together, I, seeing that there were tears in her eyes, took her hand between both of mine, and caressing it gently, said, "Courage, Hélène"; and as we stood once more on the church-steps, I repeated, "Courage! think of the *end* of all this; one enjoys happiness so much the more, in proportion to the sorrows that have preceded it!"

"The end," she said dreamily, gazing up at the blue sky above us. "Ah, yes! But who knows when and how the end may come?"

And even as she spoke the end came. There was a flash—a quick report—and with one sharp cry, that echoed in my ears for years, that I still sometimes hear, Hélène lay stretched at my feet. With strength that must have been given me for the occasion, I lifted her up and bore her, staggering under her light weight, to the hospital where she had spent so many hours. It was only a few steps from where we had been standing, but I was almost speechless from exhaustion when I entered. I laid her down on one of the beds, and, taking off her veil, sprinkled cold water over the white face, while the nuns crowded round, asking questions and making suggestions, until I was too bewildered to think of anything to say or do. The next thing I remember was a tall man in uniform pushing his way toward where I was, and begging to know if there was anything he could do. Without attending to his question

I stood up, and said in stiff, unnatural tones, which did not sound like the creation of my own voice, "How did it happen?"

"It began with a fight between two drunken soldiers; I was passing up the street and attempted to separate them, upon which one suddenly drew a pistol from his pocket; I tried to snatch it out of his hand, and in the struggle that ensued it went off. The shock sobered the man, who is now under arrest. But," breaking off in his narrative, "have you sent for a doctor?"

"Oh, yes!" I exclaimed, clasping my hands together. "Why does he not come? If you really would be of any service, pray go to the Hôtel Montcour on the Champs Elysées, and ask M. de Ligny to come here immediately; tell him all that has happened, and ask him to bring Madame de Montcour's baby."

Directly he had withdrawn, Hélène opened her eyes and looked round for me. "Have you sent for a doctor?"

I nodded, and as I did so he entered the room.

I suppose I must have looked very white—I never am useful in an emergency—for he said to one of the sisters standing by, "Take mademoiselle away."

She led me unresisting into another ward of the hospital, where the white faces of the soldiers looked eagerly round for news. I sat down on a

chair and remained speechless, my face buried in my hands for what seemed hours; then I again heard voices near me: the officer who had done my commission was standing close beside me, talking to the doctor. Her fate was then settled.

"What is it?" I cried wildly, starting to their side—"what is it—life or death?"

The doctor looked from him to me, and answered slowly and sadly: "Death, mademoiselle; nothing could save her. She may live a couple of hours, but not more."

The blow was too great almost to be realized; the very force of the shock seemed to calm me.

"Did you," I said to the officer, "give my message to M. de Ligny?"

"Yes," he answered, coming nearer, and attempting to take my cold hand in his. "Don't look like that; you frighten me; I would rather you wept torrents! And don't shrink away from me," he went on, "and look at me as if I were her murderer. Do you not think it is awful for me too? I feel almost as if I had killed her, and I thank God the pistol was not in *my* hand when it went off."

Although I knew he was just as innocent as I was myself, yet I could not prevail upon myself to touch his proffered hand. I pushed past him into the room where *she* lay, looking to me almost as if she were already dead. I knelt down by

her side, and at my touch she opened her eyes and turned toward me. "The baby," she whispered.

"He is coming," I returned soothingly.

"I can not speak much, it hurts me so, and besides it wastes my strength, and I must live to see the child; but will you tell *him* all about the siege, and how kind you were—and that I was quite happy after I heard that *he* was safe?" she went on in little disjointed sentences. "Be sure and remember to say that I was *happy*," she repeated.

I nodded my head.

After a little pause: "Where is the officer who was *there?* Here?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then please ask him to come here."

I opened the door and called to him.

"Monsieur," she said, with a shadow of the bright smile of old, "I wanted to say good-by to you, and to thank you for all you tried to do to save me, but it was not to be. And please don't let the man be shot; it was not intentional. Will you promise?" she said, holding out her hand.

"I will do my best for him," he answered, taking it in his. "Good-by, madame. I feel, though I know before Heaven I am perfectly guiltless, as if I had killed you; and I have a sister no older than you are."

"Hush!" said the soft, faint voice; "don't speak like that; it only makes me unhappy. I

saw all, only I seemed incapable of moving; but I know exactly how it happened."

"Good-by," he repeated. I think he could not trust his voice to say any more, and he turned to go, meeting as he left the room my poor old father, accompanied by a priest, and behind him the nurse carrying the child.

The little Raoul was laid by his mother's side, and the last words of consolation to the dying were read over them both, while I knelt by their side. At last the service was concluded, the Benedicite was said, the tinkle of the bell preceding the Host had died away on the air, when she spoke again:

"Hester, take off my diamond ring and give it to Raoul, when you see him, with my very dear love; don't forget, dearest." I took it from her as she spoke. "And now kiss me for good-by; and you too, monsieur. I am so glad," she whispered to me, "that we understood one another at last!"

Then she fell back, and I thought her dead, but once again she spoke. "Tell Raoul—Raoul"—and with that word, that had been all her life to her, she gave a little sigh, and so fell on sleep.

And I was left thinking—thinking of my wicked prayers that I had prayed in my madness, and of *how* they had been answered! For now, at last, it *was* no sin to love him, for was not the woman who had stood between us taken away?

Yes, but only when I had found out that she was necessary to his happiness; only when I would have given my life to see her standing once more a loving, living wife, by his side.

And so in this way the reply came. Oh, let us take heed then for what we ask; let us learn to say, not only with our lips, but with our hearts, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

CHAPTER VIII.

"Glances of fire are glinted back,
Like the moon from a frozen sea.
Fairer than all earth's loveliest
Is my dead love to me."

We buried Hélène de Montcour in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, on the very same day that we also laid in his grave the young soldier who had told me that she reminded him of his mother.

My old father, the officer who had been the innocent cause of her death, and I, with the child, followed the coffin, besides many of those who had learned to love her in those terrible times.

A simple stone cross was all we put to mark her resting-place, all else being left till Raoul returned; and then we had nothing further to do but to wait day by day for the termination of the siege.

Every day the same things happened; every

morning there was a fresh sortie of brave, hopeful hearts, firmly believing that before evening they must break through the Prussian lines; and every nightfall fresh soldiers were brought into the hospital to be nursed and cared for, and every night also fresh graves were dug for the fallen in the cemeteries around. But all things must come to an end some time, and at last a day arrived when it was declared to be a useless waste of human lives to hold out any longer, and that the keys of the capital were to be given into the hand of the enemy—a day when, with an aching heart and tear-blinded eyes, I leaned over the sleeping child, with my fingers in my ears to shut out the tramp, tramp of marching feet up the streets, that told of the presence of the conqueror within the gates of Paris.

Ah me! ah me! I hope I shall never live to hear such sounds again. Perhaps it is wrong to sacrifice more lives than are absolutely necessary; but it seems to me that, rather than have seen that day, it would have been preferable that every man, woman, and child within those walls had armed, and died upon the ramparts!

It did not kill my father, as he had once said it would; but, though he moved about and spoke as of old, yet I think the day that saw the German flag float above ours in the capital destroyed in him all that makes life worth having. To my mind he has never been the same man since.

Some weeks after that, as I sat in the drawing-room on the hearth-rug, watching the flames, and dreaming of many things past and present, the door was slowly opened, and some one entered.

I did not speak, did not even look up; for, though it was too dark to see any one, I concluded it was my father, until suddenly a voice fell on my ear—a voice so sad, so unutterably hopeless, and the one word it said was "Hélène."

Changed as it was, for all the glad ring of youth had gone out of it, I knew it in a moment.

"Hélène," he repeated, "comfort me, for I sorely need it. Are you broken-hearted too?"

"Then he does not know," was the thought that flashed across me, "and *I* have to tell him!"

I started to my feet, feeling sure that the difference in our height would appear even in this dim light.

"I beg your pardon," he said, sinking down into an arm-chair, "but it was very dark. Where is Hélène?"

There was not the slightest *echo* even of cheerfulness in his voice; anything so drearily sad I never heard.

I crossed over to his side, and laid my burning hand on his cool one, and, without a word, for speak I could not, I drew off the diamond ring I had worn ever since her death, and laid it on the table.

The stones gave a flash in the light from the

dying embers on the fire, and in that flash he seemed to recognize it. He walked over to the hearth, deliberately knelt down, and stirred the fire into a blaze, and examined it in the light.

"What is this for?" he said calmly; but I saw his hands tremble as he held it toward me.

I could not speak even yet; but I suppose there was no need for words; my reply must have been written on my face, for with a despairing cry he sank down into the arm-chair from which he had risen, and, throwing his arms on the table, buried his face in them.

How long we sat there I know not. I never moved from my position on the rug; my eyes never quitted the fire. I can remember now how it sent up some little bright jets of flame, in the place where he had stirred it to see the ring, and then how it gradually settled down into a dull, gray mass of burned-out ashes, all the time I was thinking thoughts that well-nigh maddened me; for was it not almost maddening to see the man I loved best on earth suffering such cruel grief, and to feel that by my own sin I was so far away from him that I could not even attempt to comfort him?

Then I rose to my feet, for I thought I heard a sob, and I could not bear it any longer.

"Raoul," I said, laying my hand on his shoulder, "I am so sorry for you. Oh, Raoul, what can I do?"

He made no answer, so I bethought me of the child. I ran up stairs, and, lifting him off the nursery floor, carried him down stairs. At the door I kissed him and put him down. "Go in, dear little Raoul, to papa," I whispered.

I placed the candle I held in my hand on a table inside, to guide the tottering footsteps, and then I shut the door again, confident that the presence of the child must rouse him. I was right; before I moved away I heard an exclamation as he started to his feet, and then I guessed by the loving whispers that he had taken him in his arms.

An hour afterward the nurse came to me in my room, to tell me that M. le Vicomte wished me to take him a glass of wine in the drawing-room. "I tried to persuade him," said the old woman, who had nursed the father, as now she nursed the son, "to go in and take his dinner comfortably in the dining-room, where it is all ready; but he would not hear of it. 'Anywhere but there!' he cried out. Ah, but he is sadly changed!"

I could easily imagine why he did not wish to go in there, when I remembered that last eventful evening.

Changed indeed, I thought, as I opened the door—so changed that it was hard to believe how few were the months since I had seen him last. The tall figure looked taller than ever from his great thinness, and there were dark shadows un-

der the gray eyes that had never been there before. His aide-de-camp's uniform, that had looked so fresh and gay the night he had started, was tattered and frayed in many places ; and when he moved toward me to take the wine from my hand, I saw that he was a little lame.

"You have been wounded," I said quickly.

"It is nothing," he replied ; "I am all right again now. Now please tell me *everything*."

Without another word I told him the whole sad story. All the time I was speaking he stood at the entrance of the little conservatory, gazing out into the night, so motionless that I might almost have thought he did not hear me, until I gave him her last message, when he turned round, and, pouring himself out a glass of wine, drank it hastily.

I said all I had to say in a hard, dry voice, that I could not alter, try as I would. When I had finished he said, with a feeble attempt at a smile : "Thank you mademoiselle, and good night. I am sorry for the way I have behaved, but really I felt quite stunned ! You can tell your father when he comes in that I have returned, and will see him in the morning." Then he went up stairs, leaving me where I had stood the whole of that dreadful interview.

Directly his footsteps had died away in the distance, I ran up to the nursery and made my moan to the old nurse ; there seemed no one else left to comfort me now.

CHAPTER IX.

"None ever loved in vain;
Even when love is unrequited
And hope is dead, and the heart is blighted,
Sweet thoughts will still remain.
And the memory of some kind, loving word,
In the silent night-time faintly heard,
Will soothe a lifelong pain."

ONCE again I am at dear old Ligny, and I am glad that it should be in this house that I put the few last words to the story of my life, which story has all been contained in three years.

Once again the hot July days have come round; but, to tell how the end came about, I must go back some three months, when, after hearing and telling the history of those terrible weeks we had been separated, my father and I had returned to Ligny.

From Raoul we learned that Eustache de l'Orme and my own brave brother had fallen in one of the sorties from Metz; and then with the sound of weeping in our ears, for every one seemed to have lost a husband or brother in that awful war, we returned home.

A week ago I was leaning listlessly against the window of the salon, gazing with eyes that saw nothing at the linden-trees and the placid waters of the Loire, which no changes could ever move

out of their course; and as I did so that other day came back to my remembrance, when, like to-day, I had looked out on the lovely landscape and seen nothing. Involuntarily I turned round, almost expecting to see my old grandmother, but her absence disturbed my dream. "Ah, dear old grandmère," I cried aloud, "how I wish you were here! O that these three years could come over again! how different would I make them!" But, alas! the dead return not, and the days that are no more come not back to us!

So imbued was I with the spirit of the past, that it seemed the most natural thing in the world to see Raoul riding up the avenue, though I had no idea he had returned to Montcour; but, before I had time even to wonder what had brought him away from Paris, he was in the room.

"Good morning, mademoiselle. Where is your father?"

"He is out, but I expect he will not be very long."

"Then I will wait."

No more. He did not seem inclined either to speak again, but wandered about the room, taking up first one thing and then another. I sat down and took out a piece of work, but not many were the stitches I put into it; my eyes would stray to the tall figure moving so sadly and hopelessly about.

"I beg your pardon for fidgeting so, but it

seems to work off some of the restlessness of my mind. I can not sit still any more," he said with a faint smile.

"Raoul," at last I said, laying my work down, and folding my trembling hands above it, "I did try to take care of her; you believe it, do you not?"

He stopped in his restless walk, and stood gazing down into my anxious eyes. "Certainly. Of course I do. I never saw any one kinder than you are, and no one ever could, try as he might, have had unkind thoughts about her, after he had known her." And then after a little pause: "I had once, as *you* know. Do you think I should be as hopelessly unhappy as I am, if it were not for the knowledge that for the first year of our short married life I almost hated her! You can not imagine what it is, night and day, to bear about with me the burden of this sin—a sin indeed repented of; but repentance can not take away the punishment or the remembrance. Don't cry, Reine; you did try to make me do right, I know you did; and at last, after causing you almost as much grief as I had suffered myself, I left you alone, and, as you told me that night, if I only tried I must grow fond of her. But after your sweet words had come true, and I had learned to love her as you had prophesied, then I always felt certain that sooner or later my sin would find me out; and it has, Reine. See," he went on, push-

ing back as he spoke his fair curls off his forehead, and showing how white his hair was underneath, "I shall be gray-headed before I am forty! All sorrow, little Reine, all sorrow; and the worst of it is, that it is all brought by my own fault!"

"Oh, Raoul," I sobbed, "shall we be punished all our lives?"

"Not *we*, dear, for you did your duty. You might have said, 'Stay,' and you knew full well that had you said so then I should have staid; but you behaved well and bravely, and said, 'Go,' and I obeyed, but only after trying to teach you the same thoughts I had myself. I did you a grievous wrong, and I am heartily sorry for it."

"Reine," he began again after a long silence, while I was thinking of words wherein to answer him, "I might now do you, perhaps, a worse wrong; I might try and persuade you to marry me, and share my ruined life; but when I think of doing so I seem to see *her* spirit between us, bidding me pause and consider whether that would not be falling into the same mistake that I did once before, namely, marrying where I do not love as I should love the woman who is to be my wife. And yet, Reine, do not think from this that I am not very, very fond of you; only I am puzzled sometimes to know what is best. Now I leave it to you; you shall decide. What say you?"

When he began to speak I had laid my work down, and crossed my hands, to try and hide the

trembling of my fingers; but when he had done, strength seemed to be given me; by my very love I conquered. Marry him thus! Find out day after day that his heart was buried in his dead wife's grave, and that never, try as I might, could I hope to be anything to him! Live, perhaps, to see him hate me, as the woman who had been the cause of his disloyalty—the woman who had caused him, as he himself owned, to lose a whole year of happiness in his short married life?

"Never," I exclaimed sadly; "never, never!" And then there was a long pause, spent by him in pacing up and down the salon. At last he stood still, and placed his hands upon my shoulders; but I did not look up into his face as I had done the day under the lindens, to see the love that was lighting it up. No; this time I kept my eyes bent upon my folded hands, so as not to let a glimpse of the saddened eyes above me tempt me to alter my decision.

"Reine, did you ever hear your mother's history?"

"Yes."

"I only ask you because I want you to think of yourself—if you think it would make you happier to be cared for by me, as I would care for you, than to be left here all alone. Come! it is only for your own sake I warn you against myself, for I have so very little to offer."

For one minute I hesitated. With his hand

upon me, and his voice in my ear, the temptation was strong. I think if there had been one word in all his pleading for himself, I should have yielded; but no, it was all for me, and my pride could not stoop to that.

"No, Raoul; I think you are very kind and thoughtful, but *nothing* can make me happier now!"

"Nothing? Is it, then, indeed true that you did lose your dearest on the battle-field?"

He waited evidently with anxiety for my answer. How could I add to the burden of his own ruined life the weight of another? No; whatever might be my future, no shadow from it, as far as it was in my power to prevent it, should ever fall across his; so I looked up full into his eyes, and answered, "Yes!"

I was glad then when I saw a gleam of relief pass over his careworn face, and I am glad still. I had caused him trouble enough, God knows, as it was; and, after all, had not the answer a great deal of truth in it, for had I not lost my dearest on the battle-field of life?

"I have long sought an opportunity, Reine, to give you a message that *he* sent to you. Here it is," he said in a low voice. "'Tell her that the daisy, though not for me, was worth fighting—and dying for!' I always feared that that message meant that the daisy was unwon; now I hope that it was only ungathered!"

I made no answer.

"Those were his last words," he concluded.

"Did he suffer much?"

"Not for long, at any rate; a bullet through the lungs is a quick ending. Did you hear that I made an effort, though an unsuccessful one, to save him? I hoped that once off the field, with care, his life might have been saved, and so I went back for him; but I knew it was of no use directly I had lifted him up on the saddle in front of me. So *my* bullet, which has pretty well lamed me, was all of no use."

Not till long afterward did I hear from an eye-witness of the gallant attempt Raoul had made to rescue his dying friend, who had been left, sorely wounded, on the battle-field.

"Poor Eustache! Well, it was for your sake —and his; and it was worth *something*, for I was able to follow him to his grave, and to bring back to you his last words. See also," he added, drawing an envelope from his pocket, "here is a lock of his hair I cut from his head after he was dead. Would you like to have it?"

I unfastened the paper with trembling fingers and tear-dimmed eyes; for, though I had not loved him in the way that Raoul believed, still I had been fond of Eustache de l'Orme. I just glanced at the thick, black curl; then I opened my desk, and locked it up in it. I did not seem able or willing to listen to anything about him

then; I put it by to solace me with the remembrance of the faithful love I had won, in the dreary times that I knew were coming—dreary times that have indeed come at last, for since that day I have heard that Raoul is going to Algeria. He can not bear any longer to be a French soldier in France, and at this very moment I am sitting waiting until he has left my father, when he is to come and wish *me* farewell.

I bore the waiting as long as I could; but his last words to my father seemed to take a great while saying, and at last I rose up, determining to seek the picture-gallery, always my favorite resort in time of trouble; and my trouble is now verily and indeed great, for I seem with my own hand to be pushing the glass of happiness away from my lips untasted, and my sorrow is so great that even the commending voice of conscience is hushed.

There are two new pictures in the hall now, one of myself and one of my brother. This latter still stands half-finished on an easel in the center of the room. I stood a long time looking at it, and trying to realize that terrible battle-field, where he and Eustache, who had been such friends through life, in death had not been divided. But he, unlike his brother in arms, had had no time to send last, loving messages to broken-hearted friends at home. Struck down in one minute, leaving no time for those around to ques-

tion even whether it were life or death; perhaps more merciful for him, but ah, far sadder for us! But my thoughts would stray away from him to that other soldier risking his life to try and save the friend.

Oh, Raoul, Raoul! And even as my thoughts reached him, the door from the conservatory opened, and he came in. He walked straight up to my side, and stood for a few moments in silence, gazing at the representation of myself that hung above me.

"It *is* like," at length he said, glancing from it to me.

I was painted in the long black dress and white cap that I had worn so many months while working in the hospital at Hélène's side. I had chosen the dress in memory of her.

"Very like," he repeated; and as he said so he stretched out his hand and took mine in his. I did not shrink away from him. He was my brother in all but name, in his own eyes at least; and I was to him, now and for ever, a woman broken-hearted at her lover's death, and therefore very, very much in need of comfort.

"But it grieves me, Hester," he went on, "to see you looking so worn and sad; is there nothing I can do for you—nothing?"

And what could I do now but echo sadly, "Nothing"?

Then his eyes wandered to the picture of

Comtesse Hester opposite. "I can not think, Hester, how we could ever have thought you so like her. Let me look at you well," he continued, putting me at a little distance from him, so as to see me better. "I can not make it out, for the features are the same; it must be the expression that is so different."

Did no remembrance come back to him then as he said those words? Was it possible so totally to forget?

I scarcely dared look up, so frightened was I lest my eyes should say too much. But there was no danger; the grave that lay between us was wide as it was deep—so wide, that no memories from the years that had gone before could bridge across it.

Had not the warning sent me in my dream been fulfilled? I felt it had then as I stood there. I almost seemed to see, as I saw once before, the white wings between him and me. "Surely, surely," I solaced myself by thinking, "it must be right if it is an angel of God that stands between us!"

So I looked from my picture, with its folded hands and tearful eyes, to the laughing, lovely face opposite, and said: "Yes, of course the expression is different, Raoul. No one could go through what I have done and remain a child."

Then we walked up and down the old gallery many times, he telling me things he wished done

while he was away. I listened to all he had to say, and then I told him of a plan my father and I had formed of bringing the little Raoul to live with us at Ligny.

"Would you really do that?" said Raoul, his face brightening. "I should so like him to grow up with one who knew his mother."

"And loved her," I added, with tears in my eyes; "and, God helping me, Raoul, her little child shall grow up like her."

"Thank you, Reine; there is no one to whom I would sooner trust him. Take care of him, and of yourself; and some day I will return to thank you for all the help you have been to me through my life."

Then he stooped and pressed one kiss, a brother's kiss, upon my forehead, and whispered, as he had once done before, "Good-by, God bless you, little Reine!"

And I? In that moment I clung desperately to him; it seemed then as if I could not let him go—as if my very life was going with him. But before I said a detaining word all my good resolutions came back to me; were they all to be broken like this at the very last out of pure selfishness? No, a thousand times no!

So I loosened my hold upon his arm, and only said: "God bless you, dear, dear Raoul. Good-by!" And he went, and, as the door shut behind him, I fell fainting on the floor. Well, that is the

story of my life—all the joy, the suffering, and the love, begun and ended in three years!

Now the time of rest after the strife has come, and I live on here in dear old Ligny, with my father and little Raoul, contentedly if not happily; for the end must come some time, and in the mean while, if it were not for the thought of how my life has been spoiled by my own sins, I could wait peaceably enough. And it is something to have gained the love of the child. I believe there is no one in the whole world he adores like his aunt Reine, who tells him stories of his sweet, dead mother, and his broken-hearted, absent father; and then when twilight falls he and I enter together into a little room where I keep all my treasures—three photographs, and a lock of dark hair, and a fair curl just touched with gray—to say good night to those whom little Raoul and I call our heroes. We say good night to them all, although two of them lie in their grave, in that last long sleep from which no calls of ours will awaken them; but when we leave the darkened room, it is not for my dead brother or his brave, loving friend that my heart aches, but for the man who has not yet won the peace of death—for the man who is toiling through the burden and heat of the day, to obtain pardon for the sins of his youth. Surely that pardon which is so infinite will not be denied to him!

THE END.

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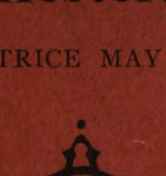

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