The House on the Moor, Volume 1

By
Mrs. Oliphant

THE HOUSE ON THE MOOR.

CHAPTER I.

IN a gloomy room, looking out through one narrow window upon a moor, two young people together, and yet alone, consumed the dreary hours of a February afternoon. The scene within doors exhibited scarcely less monotony and dreariness than did the moor without, which stretched black and heavy to the hills under a leaden sky. The room was well-sized, and lighted only by that one window, which was deeply sunk in the deep wall, and hung with terrible curtains of red moreen, enough to kill what little amount of light there was. A large dining-table, of cold, well-polished mahogany, occupied the centre of the apartment—an old-fashioned sideboard and mysterious bureau of the same character stood out darkly from the walls—and hard, angular chairs furnished forth the dining-room, as it was called—but which was, indeed, drawing-room, study, boudoir, everything to the brother and sister who held occupation of it now.

And here were none of those traces of feminine presence which one reads of in

books—no pretty things, no flowers, no embroideries, nothing to cast a grace upon the dulness. Perhaps that might be partly Susan's fault; but when one lives all one's life on the borders of Lanwoth Moor, ten miles off from the humblest attempt at a town, without any money, and seeing nobody to stir one's ambition, even a girl of seventeen may be pardoned if she can make little brightness except that of her presence in her shady place. To tell the truth, nobody made much account of Susan; she was not expected to exert much influence on the changeless atmosphere of Marchmain. No one supposed her to be the flower of that solitude: any little embellishments which she tried were put down ruthlessly; and the little girl had long ago learned, as the first duties of womankind, to do as she was bid, and hold her peace. She was seated now before the fire, making a little centre with her work upon the cold glimmer of the uncovered table. She was very fair in her complexion, with hair almost flaxen, white teeth, blue eyes, and a pretty colour. She did not look intellectual, nor interesting, nor melancholy; but sat leaning very closely over her work, because there was not much light, and Horace stood full between her and what little there was. She had a pair of scissors, a reel of cotton, and a paper of buttons on the table before her; and on the back of her chair hang a huge bag, made of printed cotton, which it was safe to believe was her work-bag. There she sat, with a little firelight playing vainly upon her dark woollen dress—a domestic creature, not very happy, but very contented, dully occupied in the silence and the gray afternoon, living a life against which her youth protested, but somehow managing to get on with tolerable comfort, as women unawakened and undisturbed do.

Of a different character altogether was the other inmate of this room. On the end of the table nearest the light lay a confusion of open books and an old-fashioned inkstand, which two instruments of learning had, it seemed, gone towards the composition of a German exercise, which appeared, half finished, and with a big blot on the last word, between them. Twenty times over, while that blurred page was being compounded, the young student had flown at the fire in silent irritability, and poked it half out; and he now stood in the recess of the window, between the red curtains, blocking up the light, and looking out with angry eyes upon the dim black blast of February rain which came with the darkness from the hills. It was certainly a dismal prospect. The very shower was not the hearty, violent shower which sweeps white over a landscape in vehement sheets of water; it had not a characteristic of storm or vitality about it; but, saturating, penetrating, invisible, went chill to the heart of the sodden land, if heart was in that wild, low stretch of blackened moss and heather, where nothing living moved. The young man stood in the window, looking out with a vexation and dull rage indescribable upon the falling night. He had this only in common with Susan, that his features were cast in an unheroic type, and could only have been handsome under the influence of

good humour and good spirits, two beneficent fairies unknown to that lowering face. Good health and much exercise kept the colour on his cheeks and the light in his eye—against his will, one was tempted to suppose. He was short-sighted, and contracted his eyes in his gaze out, till the eyelids hung in heavy folds over the stormy stare which he sent across the moor—and querulous lines of discontent puckered the full youthful lips, which were made for a sweeter expression. Weariness, disgust, the smouldering rage of one oppressed, was in his face. He was not only in unnatural circumstances, but somebody had injured him: he carried his head with all the loftiness and superiority of a conscious victim; but it was evident that the sentiment of wrong—just or unjust—poisoned and embittered all his life.

“Rain!” he exclaimed, jerking the word out as if he threw something at fate. “My luck!—not so much as the chance of a run on the moor!”

“Are you tired of your German already, Horace?” asked Susan, as he came to the fire to make a last attempt upon its life—lifting up her contented woman’s face, not without the shadow of a smile upon it, to her restless brother.

“Tired? D’ye think I’m a child or a girl like you? Do you think I can spend my days over German exercises? What’s the good of it? Have I a chance of ever using that or any other language, unless, perhaps, as a beggar? Pshaw!—look after your work, and don’t aggravate me.”

“But it would please papa,” said Susan, with some timidity, as if this was rather a doubtful argument; “and then, perhaps he might be persuaded to do what you wish, Horace, if you tried to please him.”

“To please papa,” said her brother, imitating her words with contemptuous mockery, “is an inducement indeed. To please him! Why should I please him, I should like to know? What has he ever done for me? At least, I shan’t cheat him with a false submission. I’d rather chuck the lot of them into the fire, than have him suppose that I read German, or anything else, for his sake!”

“But oh, Horace, you would make me so unhappy!” said Susan, with a little unconscious gesture of entreaty, letting her work fall, and clasping her hands as she looked up in his face.

“I suppose so,” said the young man, with perfect indifference.

“And you don’t care?” cried his sister, moved to a momentary overflow of those sudden tears of mortification and injured affection which women weep over such cool, conscious, voluntary disregard. “I would do anything in the world for you, but you don’t mind how I feel; and yet there are only two of us in the world.”

“So much the better,” said Horace, throwing himself down in a chair before the fire; “and as for those vain professions, what is the use of them, I should

like to know? What could you do for me, if you were ever so anxious? Anything in the world, in our circumstances, means simply nothing, Susan. Oh! for heaven's sake, don't cry!—you're a good girl, and sew on my buttons—but what, in the name of fortune, could you do? You know as well as I that it is only a fashion of words——"

"I did not mean it so," cried Susan, quickly—but stopping as suddenly, cast a hurried, painful look at him, and dried her tears with a hasty hand—the look which natural Truth casts upon that cruel, reasonable fool, Wisdom, whom she cannot contest, yet knows in the wrong. A little indignation burning up upon her ingenuous cheek helped the hurried hand to dry the tears, and she returned to her work with a little tremble of haste, such as a discussion with her brother very frequently threw Susan into. She did not pretend to argue with him: she was not clever, but his philosophy filled her with impatience. She "could not bear it." She felt inclined to get up and seize hold of him, and try physical measures to shake this arrogant pretence of truth out of him; for Susan, though she could not argue, was not without a temper and opinion of her own.

Silence ensued. Susan made nervous haste with her needlework, and stumbled over it in her little flutter of vexation; but Horace was too much absorbed to notice this girlish show of feeling. When he had rocked in his chair a little, placing one foot on the side of the old-fashioned grate, he suddenly sprang up and thrust away his seat. "By George!" cried Horace—but not as that exclamation is usually uttered, "I've not got a friend in the world!—there isn't a man in existence, so far as I know, that will do anything for me!"

"Oh, Horace!" said Susan, "think how much better off you are than some people. Don't always make the worst of everything! Think of poor Roger Musgrave at Tillington, who has neither father nor home—his godfather dead without making any provision for him, and nothing to do and nobody to look to, poor fellow—and breaking his heart for grief besides, and Peggy says will either 'list or die!"

"And a very good alternative too," said Horace; "he's very well off for a poor milk-and-water nobody—free! and able to 'list if he likes, or die if he likes, without any one troubling their head about the matter. As to home and father, I heartily wish he had my share of these precious commodities. Do you think anywhere else a man like me would sell his soul for a bed and a dinner? There! there! hold your tongue, or talk of what you understand."

"What do I understand, I wonder," cried Susan, "sewing on your worship's buttons? A man like you!—you are only nineteen after all, when the truth is told."

"I am man enough to make my own way," said the youth, angrily; "it is not a question of years or days, if indeed you were able to judge of it at all, which

you are not."

"If I were so very certain of my own strength," cried Susan, following up her advantage, "I'd run away, if I did not care for home, or father, or—or anybody. If I did not mind about duty or affection, or such trifles, I'd go and make my own way, and not talk of it—I would! I know something, though I'm not so wise as you. I think it's shocking to talk discontent for ever, and gloom at everything. Why don't you go away? Think of the great people in books, that go to London with sixpence in their pockets, and turn out great merchants—or with a tragedy, and turn out Dr. Johnson. Think of Chatterton, whom you were reading of. You are better off a great deal than he!"

"Chatterton was a fool," said Horace. "I promise you I'll wait for the tide, and not shoot myself when it's in the flow. I am much obliged for your advice. I've neither a tragedy nor a sixpence that I can call my own—but some of these days I'll go."

Pronouncing these words with slow and formal emphasis, as if he meant something dreadful, Horace marched solemnly to his German exercise, and sat down to it once more. The evening grew darker round the two; by degrees Susan's head drooped down on her needlework, till you could see that she had been seized by a womanish panic, and was secretly putting up the linen on her knee to wipe her wet eyes. This terror and compunction worked its way silently as the early wintry night came on. By-and-by, through the quietness, which was broken only by Horace's pen, the ashes from the grate, and a slow patter outside of the wet which dropped from the eaves, there broke a little hurried, suppressed sob. Then Susan's white work, more distinct than herself in the twilight, went down suddenly upon the floor, and a darkling figure glided round to Horace's side. "Oh, don't think of it any more!" cried Susan; "it was only my ill-temper. Oh, Horace, never mind me!—don't think of it again."

"Think of what?" said Horace, peevishly; "what on earth do you mean, thrusting your arms about me? I did not ask to be petted, did I?—what do you mean?"

"Oh, Horace—what we were saying," said his sister, with humility.

"What were we saying? Can I remember all the nonsense you talk?" cried the young man, shaking off her arms with impatience—"can't you keep to your own business, and let me alone? Oh, you wanted me to be Whittington and the cat, didn't you?—thank you, that's not my vocation. Isn't it bad enough I must stand your sauciness, without standing your repentance—oh, for mercy's sake, go away!"

Susan went away without another word, gathered her work into her big work-bag, and went out of the room, not without making it sufficiently audible that

she had closed the door.

“He’s a coward! he does nothing but talk!” she said between her teeth, as she went up the dark stairs; but nobody save herself knew that her momentary passion had brought these words to Susan’s lips, and ten minutes after she would not have believed she had said them—nevertheless, sometimes passion, unawares, says the truth.

CHAPTER II.

THE household of Marchmain consisted of four persons. The brother and sister we have already seen, their father, and one female servant. In this little interval of twilight, while Susan puts on her clean collar for dinner, and which Horace, who would rather disarrange than improve his dress, out of pure ill-humour and disrespect, spends in the dark, staring into the fire with his head between his hands, we will explain to our readers the economy of this singular household. At this hour all is dark in the solitary house. Without, the chill invisible rain, the great unbroken blackness of the moor and the night—within, an unlighted hall and staircase, with a red glow of firelight at the end of a long passage, betraying the kitchen, and a faint thread of light coming out beneath a door opposite the dining-room. Thrift, severe and rigid, reigns in this dwelling. In Mr. Scarsdale’s own room a single candle burns, when it is no longer possible to read without one; but there are no lights in the family sitting-room till the dinner is placed on the table, and Peggy has nothing but firelight in the kitchen, and Susan puts on her collar by intuition upstairs. Everything is under inexorable rule and law. The family have breakfast between nine and ten, sometimes even later; for Mr. Scarsdale is not a man to modify his own habits for any consideration of suitability. From that time till six o’clock, when there is dinner, the young people see nothing of their father. He sits with them in the evening, imposing silence by his presence; and that, so far as family intercourse goes, is the chronicle of their life.

Let us enter at this door, which marks itself off from the floor of the hall by that slender line of light. It has the same prospect as the dining-room, when there is any daylight to see it; but it is smaller than that gloomy apartment; two large bookcases, shut in by a brass network, stand out with sharp and angular corners from the walls, no attempt having been made to fill up the vacant space at either side of them, or to harmonize these gaunt pieces of furniture with anything else in the room. There are two or three chairs, which stand fixed and immovable in corners, plainly testifying that nobody ever sits there; and before the fire a library table, and in a round-backed elbow-chair the father of the house. He sits there reading with a forlorn persistence wonderful

to see—reading for no purpose, reading with little interest, yet turning page after page with methodical regularity, and bending his lowering forehead on the book as if it were the business of his life. He is dark, not so much in complexion as in sentiment—a close, self-absorbed, impenetrable man. It is not difficult to perceive that he is neither a student by ardent inclination, nor by profession a searcher into books; but what is the secret of these solitary studies is hard to discover. He sits with his head leaning upon one hand, and the other turning the pages—sits often for hours in that one position. He is scarcely ever stimulated into interest, and never owns the enlivening touch of that zeal and curiosity which hunts for proofs or illustrations of a favourite theory through a dozen volumes. There is no heap of books by his side, but only one orderly volume, which is not of the class of those fantastic delightful reverie books in which studious men delight. The blank, straightforward manner in which he reads on comes to be impressive in its singularity after a time. He seems to pursue this occupation as a clerk keeps books, and counts his progress, you could imagine, by the number of the pages he has read, and by no less tangible criterion; and nothing moves the settled darkness of his uncommunicative face.

Behind him, hung by the side of the window, in the worst light of the room, is a portrait, a very common work, done by a mediocre painter, but in all probability very like its original, for the face looks down through the gloom with a real smile, which paint cannot give—a sweet, home-like, domestic woman, such another as Susan will be when the years and the hours have carried her into her own life. There can be no doubt it is Susan’s mother and this man’s wife. There is no other picture in the house, and he cares so little for anyone seeing this, that he has hung it in the shadows of the red moreen curtains, where nobody can distinguish the features. Most likely he knows the features well enough to penetrate that darkness; for though he sits with his back to it most usually, it is for his pleasure it is here.

Nobody knows anything about this man; he has not any family connection whatever with the house or locality. Nobody can understand why of all places in the world he should come here to the tumble-down old house on the edge of the moor, which nobody else would live in. When he came, ten years ago, the country people paid him visits—half in curiosity, half in kindness—which were never returned, till at last society dropped off entirely, even from the attempt to break upon his seclusion. To account for his ungraciousness, rumours of great crimes and great misfortunes were whispered about him; but as the novelty failed, these sunk into abeyance; and it was tacitly understood or believed now that the loss of a great lawsuit, which materially lessened his means, was the cause of his withdrawal from the world. He was then but a young man, scarcely forty; and if neither sport nor society had attractions for him then, it was not to be supposed that his heart had expanded now. He lived

in a severe, rectangular, mathematical poverty, which calculated every item, and left room for no irregularity. He kept his children rigidly within the same bounds which confined himself. If they formed acquaintances, it must needs have been at “kirk or market,” in the roads or the fields, for he strictly forbade them from either receiving or accepting invitations; while for his own part he gave a certain cold attention to their education as a duty, but spent as little time as possible in their society. It is not surprising, under these circumstances, that this gloomy and brooding man should have roused the kindred temper of his son to a slight degree of desperation, or succeeded in making the thraldom of his life very irksome to a youth who was neither amiable nor submissive, to begin with. Mr. Scarsdale did not even pretend a fatherly regard for Horace; all his life he had treated the lad with a cutting and desperate civility, which would have pierced a more sensitive child to the heart; and from his boyhood had given him a certain position of equality and rivalship, totally contrary to the relationship they really held, and which at once stimulated the pride and raised the passions of the solitary youth. This unhappy state of things had never come to a climax by any outburst of passion. Horace might be as disrespectful, as sullen, as defiant as he pleased. His father extorted a certain hard lineal obedience, but neither expected nor seemed to wish for, reverence, love, or any filial sentiment; and this aspect of affairs had become so habitual, that even Susan did not observe it. Most likely she thought all fathers were more or less the same; her whole heart of tenderness went back to her little recollection of her mother—and Mr. Scarsdale was still human so far as Susan was concerned. He was not kind certainly, but at least he seemed conscious that he was her father and she his child.

Notwithstanding his seclusion, his limited means, and morose habits, he still bore the appearance, and something of the manners, of a gentleman—something which even those neighbours whose kindnesses he had repulsed acknowledged by an involuntary respect. When the half-hour chimed from his clock on the mantel-piece—almost the only article of luxury visible in the house—he closed his book as a labourer gives up his work, pausing only to place a mark in the page, and, taking up his candle, went solemnly upstairs. He was scarcely of middle size, but so spare and erect that he seemed tall; thin almost to the point of emaciation, with marked and prominent features, unlike either of his children. Yet, strangely enough, though Horace’s face resembled that of his mother, the expression—the spiritual resemblance—was like this dark and brooding face: possibly, the very pang and keenness of opposition between the father and the son lay in their likeness. Mr. Scarsdale carried his candle up the gloomy staircase, leaving his study in darkness, to exchange his easy dressing-gown for a coat, and prepare himself for dinner. Dinner for ten years, at least, had been to him a solitary meal: during all that time his doors had never opened to admit a stranger; but he never once failed in the

customary punctilio, or neglected to close his book when the timepiece chimed the half-hour.

Meanwhile, the preparations of the kitchen were coming to a climax. This was the only cheerful place in the house. It had a large old-fashioned chimney, with a settle in its warm corner, and the warmth centered in that recess as in a chamber of light. Bundles of herbs were hung up to dry over the mantel-shelf, where was a little oil-lamp attached to the wall, but rarely lighted—so that the apartment itself, with its broad but high window, its great wooden presses and tables, was but half seen in the wavering light. There stood Peggy, putting on her “dinner cap.” Peggy was, at least, as tall as her master, and very little younger. She was his foster-sister, attached all her life to his family, and knew the secret of his retirement, if anybody did; but Peggy was of the faithful type of ancient servants, and gave no sign. She had been comely in her youth, and was still fresh-coloured and neat when she pleased—and she did please at dinner-time. She had on a dark stuff gown, with a white soft muslin handkerchief covering her neck under it, as is the fashion with elderly women in the north country; a great white apron, and the before-mentioned cap, which had pink ribbons in it. Peggy had rather a large face, and features big and strong. Had she been born a lady, with nothing to do, she would have been a strong-minded woman; but Providence had been kinder to Peggy. As it was, she had her own opinions about most things, and hesitated not at all to express her approbation and disapprobation. She was, in short, very much what old servants were, as we have said, a generation or two ago. But one thing was the pride of Peggy’s life: to have everything in perfect order for her master’s dinner, which was the event of the day to her; to feel convinced that her cookery was as careful and delicate as if she had been attended by a score of scullions; to do everything indeed, as far as it lay in one pair of active hands and one vigorous brain to do, as perfectly as if a whole establishment of servants waited on the comforts of “the family”—was the ambition of Mr. Scarsdale’s solitary waiting-woman. If no one else felt the compliment, Peggy was continually flattered and inspirited by her master’s evening-coat.

And it was she, though nearly fifty, who did everything in the house, it was she alone who knew the former history of “the family” which she tended so carefully. If ever Mr. Scarsdale unbended his reserved soul for a moment, it was Peggy who received the rare confidence. It was she who had helped the inherent woman to come to feminine life in poor little Susan’s neglected education; and it was she, the only busy, cheerful living inhabitant of the house, who now carriedthose slender silver candlesticks into the dark dining-room, and disturbed Master Horace in his reverie with the gleam of the unexpected light.

CHAPTER III.

THERE were strange elements of incongruity in the scene presented by that dinner-table. Mr. Scarsdale sat at the head of the table, with his son and daughter at the sides, and Peggy behind his chair, erect and stately in his evening dress. All the furniture of the table, the linen, the silver, the china, were of the finest description, and in beautiful order; and strangely around this little centre of light gloomed the meagre unadorned walls, the homely furniture, the heavy hangings of the cheerless apartment, which, however, scarcely formed a greater contrast to the dainty arrangements of the table than Horace Scarsdale's gray morning jacket, and disordered hair, did to the formal toilette of his father. Susan sat at Mr. Scarsdale's right hand, in her clean collar. Her dress was very homely; but Susan, at seventeen, was one of those women who have a natural fitness for their place everywhere, and never fall out of harmony. Perhaps she was not over-sensitive by nature; at all events, she was not distressed by the silence of this meal, at which there was no conversation. It was their invariable custom, and Susan had seen no other family-table to make her aware of the misery of this. Horace was of another temper: everything was an offence to the unhappy lad; the silence galled almost beyond endurance; and when his father addressed him as he did always, with formal politeness, upon helping him to anything, the blood rushed to the young man's cheeks with such sudden violence and force, that no one, who watched his countenance, could have been surprised to see him answer with some demonstration of passion. But he never did; he replied, in the stifled voice of rage, with thanks and formal courtesy. Thus they sat like two enemies, forced to civility by the circumstances of sitting at the same table, and together ate, as if it choked them, their unblessed bread. "Shall I help you to some soup?" asked Mr. Scarsdale, and Horace made a stubborn bow and said, "Thank you." Neither spoke the other's name, neither even looked in the other's face—yet, by that strange magic of antagonism, which is as strong as love, were aware, instinctively, of every movement, almost of every sentiment, which influenced each other's conduct for the moment. But they had this little duel all to themselves—Susan, dulled by habit, and knowing that it had always been so, observed it not—Peggy, behind her master's chair, saw everything, and said nothing. Sometimes, indeed, an acute observer might have noticed that the faithful servant set down something on the table with an unnecessary emphasis, which answered, instead of words, to give her impatience vent, and which her master never failed to notice. Peggy, too, did not hesitate to interfere in the business of the table—to remark that Mr. Horace did not eat, and to recommend a particular dish to Miss Susan. Peggy's dialect was rather a remarkable one, and difficult to identify. She was a North-countrywoman by birth, but had lived in many districts of England,

and had taken up, with great impartiality and candour of mind, their different manners of speech. But Mr. Scarsdale, who had killed all natural utterance in his children, had no power over Peggy; he never even tried to restrain her. Her discourse ran on a cheerful chorus during the whole solemn period of dinner; and this it was, more perhaps than anything else, which prevented a positive outbreak between the father and the son.

“Young Master Roger, Miss Susan, dear, he’s agoin’ hoam,” said Peggy; “he’s got father and mother livin’ after all, as I hear say, and none so poorly off neither, for all his goin’ off in a despair wi’ talk o’ ’listin’. Natur’s a mystery, that’s for certain—to turn off a manchild upon a godfayther, and rather to ’list nor to go hoam! I dunno know which is worst if ye ask me. Stewed chicken, master, and done perfect, though I say it as should not; but I’m none so pleased with the peatoes. I’ll not have no more from the mill—they’re agoin’ in the disease. Wine?—this very minute, if I had the keys.”

Mr. Scarsdale brought forth the keys from his pocket; and, totally regardless of Peggy’s monologue, which ran on in further gossip, broke the silence of the table in his own person—a most portentous and unusual incident. He spoke without either addressing or looking at anyone, though it was, in fact, a question which he asked.

“There is, I believe,” observed Mr. Scarsdale, “a spare bedroom in the house?”

Peggy did not hear for the first moment, being taken aback by the unusual event; and Susan said, timidly, “Yes, papa,” taking the remark to herself.

“The door was open this very day, master,” said Peggy, when she recovered her surprise; “I judge you wur lookin’ with your own eyes what like it was; but the good of a spare bedroom in this house I would wish a wise woman to tell to me.”

Mr. Scarsdale made no response, but delivered himself of his further intelligence as though he heard her not. “I wish it to be put in order,” he said, briefly; “Colonel Sutherland arrives here on a visit, to-morrow.”

Even Horace was moved to a momentary start and look of surprise at his father’s immovable countenance, while Susan clasped her hands in spite of herself, and cried—“Oh! papa, is it my uncle?” with the most eager and joyful anxiety suddenly suffusing her face.

But Susan’s voice was drowned in Peggy’s more decided accents. “Master Edward!” cried Peggy, with a restrained shout of triumph—“blessings on his honest face! he never crossed a door but he brought comfort—and as handsome a man as eye could see, and the pleasantest gentleman to speak to that ever said good-morrow. So he’s Cornel now!—and well deserves it, I’ll be bold to say. Custard, master?—as light as a May breeze—and the very tarts you had in holiday times, when you were a boy. I had a thought of old times,

and knew no reason—to be sure, it was for a forewarning of the news!”

Mr. Scarsdale thrust the china dish containing the tarts out of his way with an unusual expression of impatience. Then, recollecting himself, took it up and turned to Horace—that is to say, turned his head to him, without turning his eyes, as was his custom. “May I have the pleasure of helping you?” said the father, with a tone of suppressed bitterness. Horace put forth his plate immediately; Peggy’s harmless confectionery was evidently vexatious and annoying to Mr. Scarsdale, and his son took pains to express his enjoyment of it, and compliment Peggy on her handiwork. It was as rare an event to hear Horace’s voice at dinner as his father’s. The approaching event seemed to have loosed the tongues of both.

This little incident put an end to Peggy’s gossip; she removed the remainder of her tarts with a visible flutter of offence, and set down the wine on the table with double emphasis. When Peggy withdrew, Mr. Scarsdale took a book from his pocket, and set up a small folding reading-desk, which had been placed by his hand when the cloth was withdrawn. There he sat, with his glass of purple claret reflected in the shining mahogany, and the two tall, slender candles illuminating a little circle round him, and his head relieved against the dark curtains, which looked almost black in the feeble light. A line of magic drawn round him could not have screened him more completely from the other inmates of the room. Horace thrust his chair away rudely, and leaving it thus at a little distance from the table, went to the window and disappeared behind the curtains to look out on the night. Susan stole quietly round to the side of the table, and produced out of her big bag her evening work—an occupation dear to her heart, though it was only a patchwork quilt, the only fancy work that Susan knew; but before she sat down, withdrew her brother’s chair noiselessly to the side of the fire, where it looked human and companionable. Then silence, entire as if these three human creatures were statues, fell upon the room, where still Mr. Scarsdale sat at the shining table with its two lines of reflection, with the claret jug at his elbow, and his book supported on the reading-desk, and the glass before him half-full of purple wine. He turned the leaves at regular intervals, and went through them with mechanical gravity; but his ears were keen to every rustle of the curtain, and with all the virulence of domestic strife the mind of this singular father watched his son.

As for Susan, her whole mind, as she worked in silence, was full of the wonderful intimation she had just heard. Perhaps by this time you are disposed to think that Susan was very insensible and dull in her feelings not to be miserable about the enmity which existed between her father and brother; but Susan was accustomed to it, and had never seen other fathers and sons, and had seen this go on in the same way so long, that, though she felt it uncomfortable, she entertained no apprehensions about it. As for Horace, if he

would remain by himself in the window, looking out upon the black night, Susan could not help it. He was not more miserable there than he would be at the table with his father's austere shadow upon him; and conversation was tacitly prohibited in those dismal evenings. Susan's was still an unawakened mind; her brother did not encourage her to think her own influence over him of any importance, nor permitted her to suppose that she had any power to soothe him; and the trembling, timid, mediatory love, which holds a fearful balance in many a divided household, needs love and softness of some kind, on one side or the other, to keep it alive. Love Susan found none in either of her two nearest relatives. She loved them by nature and custom; sometimes a terrible impatience of their discord seized her, and a momentary impulse of passion, to do something or say something which should stir this stagnant, stormy calm, or perhaps change the manner of their existence, had possessed her once or twice in her life; but the tender, anxious, intense love which cruelty cannot kill when it has once developed itself, never can develop itself without the stimulus and creating power of dear love from some one to begin with. Thus it was that Susan beheld with vexation and distress sometimes, but without agony, the unnatural feud beside her, that she took neither side, because either side was equally cold, repulsive, and unaffectionate. She did not know life; she knew not even the fictitious life of books. She did not fear when her brother rushed out into the night, as he did often, that Horace would fall into the rude snares of village dissipation, or run in the way of vulgar crime. She was not alarmed for a possible outbreak of violencebetween the father and son; such things had never been suggested to her inexperienced mind.

So she sat in the silence, not resenting it for her own part, content in herself, and making out of that dismal quiet a little circle of domestic tranquillity when she arranged her patches and contrasted her colours, and secretly entertained vague anticipations of unknown pleasure, and a warmth of inextinguishable personal happiness, in the very heart of the misery through which her life had grown.

At eight o'clock to a minute Peggy brought in the tea-tray, and removed the claret-jug, which, though he had only once filled his glass, stood all that time by Mr. Scarsdale's side. Then he took his cup of tea from his daughter's hand without even looking at her, and went on with his reading. Comfort was not to be got out of anything in this house. Horace drank his standing—told his sister it did not rain now, and went off out of the room like a wind. And when Susan looked over her tea-tray to see her father's eyes fixed upon his book, and the door closed upon her brother, and herself compelled to sit formally there till Mr. Scarsdale, sipping it slowly and by intervals, had finished his second cup of tea—a certain forlorn sensation of solitude and discomfort moistened Susan's eyes, and brought an ache to her heart. Then her thoughts went back

with a joyful rebound to the promised visitor of to-morrow—her mother's brother, an actual relation, whose love and kindness she had a claim on. She lost herself in wonder what like he would be, and how he would treat his sister's children. To-morrow would solve Susan's long and troubled problem—whether all men were like papa: to-morrow would give her a glimpse into that world of which she knew nothing. Nature was sceptical in Susan's heart: she could not believe that papa was the type and impersonation of man. Kindness, unknown and longed for, seemed coming to her in the person of that uncle. She returned to her patches, longing to run into the cheerful kitchen to Peggy, to ask all about the new-comer; but bound by the customary punctilio of the house to sit there silent and occupied opposite the reading-desk—a bondage which Susan had never felt more oppressive than on this particular night—while Mr. Scarsdale still turned the mechanical pages, and Horace roamed through the black moor and the falling rain, cursing his fate.

CHAPTER IV.

THIS same evening, while Susan sat at her patchwork, comforting herself with fancies concerning the unknown uncle who was to make so strange and unexpected a break upon their solitude, an old gentleman, carrying his own carpet-bag, went into one of the carriages of the night-trains about to start from Edinburgh for the south. He was not a first-class passenger, but the railway people put up instinctive fingers to their caps as he addressed them. He was tall, thin, erect—of a soldierly bearing, with a grey moustache and gray hair, wearing thin upon the crown. That he was a little deaf it was easy to perceive, from the sudden stoop he made when the person sitting next him in the carriage put a question to him unexpectedly; and that his eyes were touched by years and usage was equally apparent when, unable to find his spectacles, he held his time-bill at arm's length to read it the better. But there was something ingratiating and prepossessing even in the bend which brought his ear to the level of the voice which addressed him, with that instinctive and delicate courtesy which will not treat the most trivial application with carelessness. The good woman who spoke felt flattered—she could not tell how; it was only to ask when the train would start—a thing which her next neighbour knew no better than she did—but the ready attention, and sincere endeavour which the old soldier instantly made to satisfy her, gave the questioner all the feeling of a personal compliment. When the long line of carriages got under weigh, our friend wrapped himself up in his warm cloak, and leaned back in his unluxurious corner. It was a gloomy, rainy, miserable night; the little lamp jolting in the roof, and throwing a feeble illumination over four benches full of drowsing night-travellers, was the only light visible

in earth and heaven, save when the nocturnal express plunged with ostentatious speed through some little oasis of a station, with faint lamps gleaming through the universal gloom. The old soldier, however, was not easily disturbed by the discomforts of his journey; if there were any special meditations in his mind, he showed no sign of them; but, with his face half buried in his cloak, kept motionless in his corner—where, in the very midst of the black night, or, to speak more properly, about three o'clock in the winter morning, the guard awaked him. He had reached the end of his journey. The rest of the night he passed in the Railway Inn of a country town, from which he set out next morning in a gig, to face the raw February blast for a drive of fourteen miles over an exposed country. Colonel Edward Sutherland, though he had been twenty years in India, had come home still a poor man; and habits of economy were strong upon the old officer, accustomed all his life, even in the luxurious eastern climate, to spare and restrain unnecessary expenses. He was a solitary man, but he was not a free old bachelor, at liberty to expend his own means on his own pleasure; wife and many children had been left behind in Indian graves, but he had a boy at Addiscombe, and one at St. Andrew's, and consequently not a shilling of his income to spare; so he placed his carpet bag carefully below the seat out of the reach of rain, and tied a travelling-cap over his ears, and muffled his cloak half over his face, and so turned his face to the wind for his chilly journey to Lanwoth Moor.

"Ay, sure the wind's in the east—it's ever in the east on this road," said the man who drove him. "When it's could as could all the country over, it's double could Lanwoth way. Beg your pardon, Cornel," said the man, touching his cap, "but it's strange for a gen'l'man to goo this gate in ought but a shay."

"That is my business, my man," said the traveller, quietly; "is it a good road?"

"Bits," said the postboy, shrugging his shoulders; "and bits the very dyeuce for the poor beasts; but we never goo this direction, Cornel, not twicest in a year—not all the way. There's Tillington, five mile this side o' Lanwoth, but the road strikes off to the reet—Lord blees you, gen'l'men know better nor to build on a moorside. The wind comes down off the fells fit to pull your skin off, Cornel; and ne'er a shelter, and ne'er a tree, but bits o' saplings in the moss. Rain and snow and hail, they sweep a' things before them. I'd never set a brute beast, let alone a christian, with its nose to Lanwoth Moor."

"Yet somebody must live there," said the traveller, shivering in spite of himself within his cloak.

"Not a soul, Cornel, but the one house," said the driver, eagerly; "not a thatch roof or a clay wall—nought but Marchmain. They say it was built at the riding of the Marches, that's once in the hunderd year, and a' foor strife, foor to part the lands of the twae Allonbys, brothers and foes as should never be seen in God's world. But sure there it stands, black as hate, and——"—the man made

a sudden pause, and looked suddenly up in the old officer's face—"Cornel, you're gooing there?"

"Do you know me, driver?" said Colonel Sutherland, with a little curiosity.

The man held down his head with a sly, half-abashed smile, not quite sure whether to pretend knowledge or to confess that he acquired his information from the card on the carpet bag. The result of his deliberations was an equivocal reply. "I know an army gen'l'man when I see him, sir," he said, raising his slouching rustic shoulders, and quickening his speech out of its Cumbrian drawl. "My father was an ould 53d, and Cornel Toppe Sawyer's own man; and, begging your pardon, Cornel, a blind man could see you had borne command."

Colonel Sutherland was human; he was not only human, but a little amiable vanity was one of his foibles. He inclined his ear blandly to this clever compliment, and perhaps thought his driver rather a sensible fellow; but at that moment the blast came wild in their faces—wet, dismal, cold—a wind that cut to the bone, and the chattering teeth and shivering frame which owned its influence was not lively enough for conversation. The horse winced, and turned his unfortunate head aside, making a momentary pause. The hills—low, gray, and piebald, with their yellow circles of lichen, and brown turrets of rock—were blurred into the dull horizon, which expressed nothing but that dismal, penetrating moisture and murderous cold; and when, by a sudden turn of the road, the hapless traveller found himself suddenly under the shelter of high banks and hedges which intercepted the blast, the sudden contrast was so grateful that Colonel Sutherland withdrew his cloak from his blue face, and looked about him with a sigh of relief. There was nothing very particular to see: a common country road descending a slope—for which some necessity of the soil had made a deep cutting expedient—with a village within sight, and a soft, broad valley; green fields, dotted with farm-houses and haystacks, and leafless trees. The houses were all of the silvery-grey limestone of the district, and walls of the same stone, more frequent than hedge-rows, divided the fields. The old Colonel, drawing breath under the shadow of the bank, thought to himself that under sunshine the prospect would be very pleasant, and was scarcely pleased to find that this, the only comfortable bit of the road, was the one on which their progress was most rapid—and to hear that they were still ten long dreary miles from Marchmain.

"There was talk enow in the country, Cornel," said the driver, resuming his discourse, "when a strange gen'l'man coom'd to take that 'ouse. Ne'er a sowl in twenty mile but had heard of Marchmain. I reckon you've never been there?"

"No," said the traveller, briefly.

“He’s a terrible quiet gen’l’man too, as we hear say,” continued the man; “a great scholard, I do suppose—and ignorant folks have little understanding on the ways of sich. They say strange foot has never crossed the door this nine year. It’s a terrible place to bring up children, Cornel, is Lanwoth Moor, and the young gen’l’man and Miss they’re kepp as close at hoam as if they were but six-year-olds; never a gun on young master’s shoulder, and the young lady ne’er saw a dance in her born days. Them things come natural to young folks. I’m saying but what I hear: it might be a parcel o’ stories for ought I know—but Mr. Scarsdale yonder, he’s a very uncommon man.”

“Poor children!” said Colonel Sutherland half aloud, with a sigh. The open air, the rustle of the wind, and the noise of the wheels improved the Colonel’s hearing, as it so often does a gentle imperfection of the kind. He beard every word of these scattered observations, and began to feel more anxiety touching his visit to his morose brother-in-law than he would have thought possible when he started. He knew, it was true, the secret calamity which had driven his sister’s husband to the wilderness; but his own simple, pious, cheery spirit had no understanding of the unwholesome passions of a self-regarding soul. He had blamed himself for years for unconsciously feeling his relative’s withdrawal from life to be pusillanimous and unworthy of a man; but nothing had suggested to the practical and innocent-minded soldier a gloomy retreat such as that which began to be revealed to him by hints and suggestions now. He was unable to conceive how a man with children could make an utter hermit of himself, “especially children under their extraordinary circumstances,” said the Colonel anxiously, in his own heart. He grew silent, absorbed, troubled, as they proceeded on their way. When, immediately after settling himself on his return from India in a home of his own, that home often longed for, to which his sons could come in their holidays, he had volunteered a visit to his brother-in-law—it was the reciprocity of honest affection and kindred which the veteran wished to re-establish between his own family and their nearest relatives. He set out to visit the Scarsdales in the full idea that they too would visit him, and that the father of that household lived like himself in the tenderest friendship with those inheritors of his blood in whom he renewed his own youth; and with an old man’s sentiment of tender gallantry, this old soldier thought of Susan, the only surviving woman of his race, his sister’s daughter and representative, his baby-favourite long ago. Perhaps a floating idea of appropriating this only woman of the house had dawned upon his fatherly mind with other matters—for the Addiscombe cadet was a year older than Susan, and boys are so likely to marry when they go to India. At all events, it was a sunny, simple picture of family kindness and comfort which had presented itself to the honest eyes of the old soldier when he set out upon his journey. This prospect began to cloud over sadly now; he could not understand nor explain these singular circumstances, which must be

facts, and visible to the common eye. A lonely house which no one else would live in, a seclusion which no stranger ever broke, young people shut out from the society of their fellows, and gloom and mystery upon the whole house! The Colonel wrapt his face once more in his cloak and subsided into deafness and silence, pondering painfully in his own mind what might be required of himself under such unexpected circumstances, and what he could do for the relief of Horace and Susan, whom in his kind heart he fondly called “the children.” These deliberations had come to no satisfactory result, when, rounding a corner of the road, the bare extent of Lanwoth Moor became suddenly visible, stretching to the fells, and the sky to the horizon, blurred with rain, where it was scarcely possible to tell which was hill and which was cloud.

They drove along in silence, a long half mile, seeing nothing but that same blank expanse traversed by the long, deep cuttings of an attempted drainage, until at last the driver silently, with a certain sympathy for the silence of his companion, pointed out the solitary walls rising on the edge of the moor. The house was a square, common-place erection of two stories, with no remarkable feature, but that one side was raised a story higher than the other, and stood up square and gray, like the little distinguishing tower of an Italian house. Like—yet how unlike!—the rough, gray limestone, unpolished and savage, the deep walls into which those small windows sank like cavernous eyes, the cold blue slated roof, the cold door coming bare out upon the path, without a morsel of garden or any enclosure, all enclosed and backed by that monotonous mystery of moor, the distant spectral hills, the clouds that carried them out in ghostly ranges, the wind and the rain so blended together that they made but one—and they went to the heart with a chill indescribable, and not to be resisted.

Colonel Sutherland looked upon all this with a sensation of anguish. It was incomprehensible to him. That he should find his relatives here, and not in the cheerful village house he had expected, overpowered him with complete wonder. He ceased even to be indignant at the father who sacrificed wilfully the happiness of his children—he suspended his judgment till he should hear what extraordinary circumstances had fixed them thus. In his unsuspecting heart he felt certain that something which he did not know must have produced this exaggerated and unnatural retirement. The sudden impression produced upon him by the sight of this house made his cheek pale, and added a nervous trembling to the shiver of the cold; he got down, stumbling at the door, which the driver watched with undisguised curiosity, as if something unnatural and portentous was about to make its appearance—and, in his emotion, let the money fall out of the purse which he took out to pay his conductor. While he stooped to pick it up, the door opened hastily, and Peggy rushed forth and seized the carpet-bag. At sight of her the Colonel recovered a little from his confusion and tremor.

“Thank God!” he exclaimed fervently, “there is some sunshine here at last.”

The driver opened his eyes somewhat disappointed. Peggy was not known at the country town, though Mr. Scarsdale’s extraordinary life had been heard of there; and the vigorous servant-woman, who began to scold forthwith between the exclamations of her joyful recognition, reduced the mysterious house to matter-of-fact. The man drove off, not knowing what to make of it; and fearing to hear of some new misfortune, with his honest heart beating with grief, sympathy, and anxiety to mend the position of his friends, Colonel Sutherland, after twenty years’ absence, entered at his brother-in-law’s inhospitable door.

CHAPTER V.

THE kitchen of Marchmain was built out from the house, and was a long and somewhat narrow apartment, quite unlike the rest of the building. People said it had been a cottage standing on the spot before this house was built, and arbitrarily connected with it—and the unceiled roof and large old-fashioned chimney favoured the notion. The mud or brick floor had been, however, replaced by a deal one; and the roof was now covered, instead of thatch, with the less picturesque but safer slates, which gave so cold an aspect to the house. Within, two large articles of furniture filled up half the space, though furniture these fixed encumbrances could scarcely be called. One was a prodigious press, in which Peggy kept her household linen—the other, a great square box with a sloping lid, which contained the immediate supply of coals, brought from the coal cellar outside. Beneath the window—which was large but high, so that Peggy, though she was tall, could do no more than look out, and Susan could only reach up to it on tiptoe—stood a large deal table, clean to the utmost extent of cleanliness, where Peggy did her ironing—(Peggy was punctilious in her concerns, and kept everything in its proper place)—another table in quite another quarter was appropriated to the cooking—and a third, a small round one, stood aside in a corner to be lifted in front of the fireplace at nights when Peggy’s work was over, beside the big old heavy elbow-chair, where Peggy took an evening nap and sipped a fourth cup of tea.

In this apartment, in the morning of the same day, while Colonel Sutherland drove through the rain, Susan, excited, happy, and restless, fluttered round Peggy at her work. Susan had in her hand the front of one of Master Horace’s new shirts, which she pretended to be stitching—but everybody knows that stitching is a delicate operation, and not to be performed on foot, or in a state of restlessness. This was the time of the day when Susan was most free to follow her own desires. Horace was out, and Mr. Scarsdale in his study. When this fortunate concurrence of circumstances was secured, Susan came lightly

out of the dull dining-room to the bright kitchen, the only place in the house which had an appearance or sentiment of home. Peggy was better company for Susan than a thousand philosophers; she laughed, she sang, she danced about, she looked like a young living creature, as she was, in Peggy's womanly presence. Her father and her brother were rather hard examples of the rule of man to Susan. Horace exacted endless sympathy—sympathy more bitter than it was in her to bestow—and scorned it when it was given; but Peggy cherished the girl with an all-indulgent tenderness—a motherly, nursely, homely love, advising, and interfering, and fretting, which kept her heart and her youth alive. But something more than usual occupied their thoughts to-day.

"Ay, honey—as if it was yesterday," said Peggy. "R'c'lect him!—he was not the young man to be forgot, I can tell you! Many a handsome lady would have gone over seas to follow the young soldier. He was just the innocentest, bravest, kindest man I ever looked in the eye."

"Why in the eye?" said Susan, who was a little matter-of-fact, and liked to understand a new phrase.

"Eh, child! his heart was in it!" cried Peggy. "When your mamma was alive, she was a dear, blessed creature, and kept religion and comfort in the house; but when Mr. Edward came, it was pleasure to be about, and the world was changed. He never arguified with a soul, nor set up his opinions, nor took slights nor offences, nor a single mortal thing that a' persons beside did. He was just right himself and happy himself without thinking upon't, and was a happiness to be nigh night and day. The master, so far as I can think, had never a cross word with Mr. Edward. Think you any other man would ever have come, or been let come, to this house?"

"No, indeed," said Susan, gravely; "it is very strange. I wonder how he thought of it at all; one would suppose he must like us, Peggy, to come here—though I don't see how that can be either. Hasn't he been in India all our lives?"

"Little matter for that; but you understand nothing about friends' feelings; and how should you, poor forlorn infant!" said Peggy. "He likes you, I'll warrant; and he's held you on his knee, Miss Susan—and besides, for your mamma's sake."

"To be sure, for mamma's sake," said Susan, satisfied; "but surely, other people, when she knew so many, must have loved mamma. Peggy, what can make papa so stiff and hard to strangers, and putting everybody out of the house, and never letting us make any friends—what do you think it can be?"

Peggy drew a long breath, which seemed to end in some inward words, said for her own private relief and satisfaction.

“Your papa has his own reasons, Miss Susan, and that’s neither for you nor me; but you see he lets Mr. Edward come. Who can tell how many more?—for Mr. Edward has the tongue of a nightingale, and steals folks’s hearts.”

“I wish he would sing into papa’s,” said Susan, laughing; “there’s never any music at Marchmain, Peggy. Oh, I wonder when Uncle Edward will come; look out and see if there’s anybody in the road; such a morning! and Horace will come in all muddy and sulky, and not get goodtempered the whole of the day. Peggy,” cried Susan, jumping down from the chair she had mounted to look out, “are boys always so dreadfully cross?”

“Indeed, Miss Susan, they’re little to be trusted,” said Peggy, with a grave face of wisdom, prudently refraining from blaming Horace, while she inculcated the moral lessons supposed to be most advantageous to feminine youth.

Susan shrugged her shoulders with a private internal reflection, which perhaps meant, “I should like to judge for myself;” but which said, “I am very glad, then, that we see so little of them.” For people don’t permit themselves to be very ingenuous, even in their thoughts—at least women and young girls do not. “I suppose, then,” she said very demurely aloud, “there never was but one Uncle Edward in the whole world, Peggy.”

“Eh, honey! if there were a hunderd the world would be saved, like the Lord said to Abraham,” cried Peggy. “My heart jumped when the master said it last night. I said to myself, ‘a good man’s coming, and a blessing will come with him.’ If I saw you out of this, you two unfortunate things, I would be content to go foot foremost the same day to Lanwoth Church.”

“That would be cheerful and pleasant for us, I am sure,” cried Susan; “I wonder how you dare say such a thing, Peggy—all about your own nonsense, and not a word of Uncle Edward! But, I say, Peggy—oh! tell me—Uncle Edward’s not a young man?”

Peggy took time to consider, pausing in her work for the purpose, with her hands covered with flour—for it was baking day. “I’m bound to allow he cannot be young—nay, it’s fifteen years since he was home,” cried Peggy, with a sigh. “Time flies!—it was the very same year, Miss Susan, that your mamma died.”

Susan paused with a question on her lips, awed by these last words; for she understood dimly that it was in some season of extreme and mysterious calamity that her mother’s life concluded. She could not have told how this impression had settled on her mind, but there it certainly was.

“Peggy,” she said suddenly, putting into words the suggestion of the moment, “was it mamma’s death that made papa so—so—“—Susan hesitated for a word, and at last, with a natural hypocrisy, substituted one that did not express her meaning for a less dutiful term—“so sad?”

Peggy made no audible answer, but she screwed her lips into a tight round circle, through which came an invisible, inarticulate “No,” most emphatic and unmistakable though unpronounced, shaking her head violently as she did so. Susan was first frightened, then amused, at the extraordinary pantomime.

“Don’t shake your head off, however,” she cried, laughing. “But about Uncle Edward—you never will keep to the point, you troublesome Peggy! If he is an old man, what is he? Has he got any children?—where does he live?—do you know anything about him at all?”

“Not a mortal thing,” said Peggy, relieving herself by speaking loud. “Who can hear anything here, I would like to know? Not of my own brother, Miss Susan, let alone your mamma’s. But he’s coming, bless him! I’m strong in the hope nature will come with him, and something will be done for you two.”

“Peggy, you never spoke of us two before like that,” said Susan. “Has anything happened to us that we don’t know?”

“Oh, bless the innocent!—what do you know?” cried Peggy. “If I never said it before, it was because I saw no hope; but I’ve told your papa my mind, and that I can tell you, Miss Susan; and I’ll tell it to Mr. Edward, if Providence spares me, before he’s been twelve hours in this unlucky house!”

“You are very odd to-day, Peggy,” said Susan, looking at her with curiosity. “But I am sure if Uncle Edward gets us permission to see people sometimes, I should be very glad—but then, we have affronted everybody,” added Susan, with a little shrug of her shoulders. “However, he is coming himself—that is the great matter. Peggy, what will you have ready if he comes early? He cannot wait all the time till dinner! How foolish I was, never to think of it before! What shall we do?”

“We’ll have in the lunch, Miss Susan, and as good a lunch as anybody need wish for,” said Peggy, in triumph. “Is that all the good Peggy is for, to think upon things at the last moment?—for as sure as I’m living, there’s a wheel upon the big stones in the road!”

Susan sprang up upon the chair, leaped down again, her colour rising, her heart beating. Then she ran breathless towards the door—then paused. “Oh, Peggy! who must tell papa?” she cried, in great excitement and trepidation. Peggy, without pausing to answer her question, rushed past her and through the hall, to throw the door open and seize upon the carpet-bag, as before related. Peggy was not afraid of papa, and her shriek of joy and welcome, “Eyeh, Master Edward!” penetrated even through the closed windows and doors of the study, where Mr. Scarsdale sat as usual, while Susan stood in the hall, eagerly bending forward to see the newcomer, and speculating with herself whether it was safe to secure herself the pleasure of her uncle’s first greeting, without the dreadful operation of telling papa. The issue was, a

sudden spring forward on the part of the excited girl, while her uncle—sad, oppressed, and wondering—stooped his deaf ear to Peggy, and tremulously bent over his carpet-bag. Susan had no sooner seen his face than the long restrained heart yearned within her—her mother's brother—somebody who loved them! She sprang forward and clasped his arm with both her hands, and fell a-crying, poor child, as girls use, and looked up in his face, all-conquering in her wistfulness, and her smiles, and her tears. The old man caught her in his arms, and read her face as if it had been a picture, with eager wet eyes that, after a moment, could scarcely tell what they gazed on. In that moment the poor lonely girl woke up, by dint of finding it, to discover the love that had been wanting, the immeasurable lack of her young life. And the old soldier took his sister's child—the only woman of the family—a new, tender, delicate tie, almost more touching and intimate than any other, into his fatherly old heart; and, on the instant, took courage about all the unknown troubles of the mysterious house, and was at home and himself again. They went in together to the dull dining-room, where Susan had no desire to remember that papa had not been told, and grew friends in half a minute, saying nothing but the common words that every stranger at the end of a journey hears from his entertainers. But the "Oh, Uncle, I am so glad you are come!"—the glistening eyes—the joyful young voice—the little figure fluttering about him, unable to rest for anxiety that he should rest, and have exactly what he wanted—spoke more eloquently than volumes of fine words. And Susan's face had already almost reconciled Uncle Edward to the savage solitude of Marchmain, and the dreary blank of Lanwoth Moor.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Colonel Sutherland had been established for nearly half-an-hour in the angular arm-chair, which was the most luxurious seat this room afforded, where he sat holding Susan's hand and keeping her by his side, it suddenly occurred to him that he had forgotten the other members of the family in his satisfaction with his new-found niece. "But, my dear child, your father?" he said, hastily; "he expected me, did he not?—he is surely at home."

And instantly Susan's countenance fell.

The old Colonel had begun to recover his spirits about his brother-in-law's house. He saw Susan in blooming health, affectionate, frank, and cheerful, and he began, with natural hopefulness, to impute the dismal house and solitary life to some caprice, and to imagine to himself a loving, united family, who were society enough to themselves. But it was impossible to mistake the cloud which fell instantly upon Susan's face. "Oh!—I ought to have told papa," she

said, with a hesitation and reluctance in her voice which went to her uncle's heart. He drew her still closer to him, and looked in her face anxiously. But Susan knew nothing of that domestic martyrdom which conceals and smiles on the family skeleton. She was not aware how great a skeleton it was—it was simply a thing of course, to her inexperienced spirit.

"I should think he must have heard—I should think Peggy must have told him," said Susan. "He is not so angry when Peggy goes into the study as when I go; but if you like, I will go and tell him, uncle, now."

"Never mind, Susan. I daresay your father will come when he chooses. A deaf man would have heard Peggy's shout," said Colonel Sutherland; "and Horace—was there nobody but my little girl who came to see the old uncle—is your brother in the study too?"

"In the study!—he would as soon go down the well or up the chimney," said Susan, with a very short and half-frightened laugh. "No, uncle—Horace is in Faneleigh Woods, or on the Moor. He never minds the weather. I do think at this time of the year he gets wet through three times a-week; but I am sure Horace will be very glad to see you—as glad as I was—oh, I am quite sure!"

This expression of conviction, made with some heat and anxiety, had a very different effect from that which Susan intended—it revealed to the Colonel very plainly that Susan was anything but quite sure of Horace's sentiment; and, perhaps, Colonel Sutherland's first sensation thereupon was offence and indignation; and his personal dignity suffered a momentary mortification, from the idea that he had volunteered a visit which was welcome to nobody but this little girl. This personal feeling, however, was but momentary. A deeper pain returned to his heart; he looked anxiously into Susan's blue eyes to find out, if possible, how and why this unnatural state of things existed; or, failing that, what effect upon her the loneliness and the hardness of her life had made. But there were no mysteries in those eyes of Susan's—her girlish, undisturbed heart, clouded by a little terror of her father, which took no deeper form than that of discomfort and uneasiness, gleamed in them with otherwise unmingled joy and satisfaction. All the natural filial love hitherto denied her had sprung to life in a moment in Susan's heart. She looked at her uncle with an affectionate pride, which made her breast swell and astonished herself. To stand by his side, to feel her hand held in his kind hand, to know by intuition that there was interest for all her little affairs, and sympathy for all her unregarded troubles in this new friend, was a new life to Susan. She felt encouraged and emboldened without knowing how, as she appropriated, involuntarily, his affection, his aid, his succour. She kept naming him over and over within herself, with a secret inexplainable swell of pride and comfort. Susan had never been disposed before to use the possessive pronoun in regard to anything more important than pin-cushions and scissors; and now to say,

“My uncle!” was something as new as pleasant. But notwithstanding that reference to her father curbed her tongue and brought a shade of restraint over her thoughts in spite of herself; and Uncle Edward’s affectionate questions flagged—he too had something else to think of—the change was apparent to both; and Susan, for the first time in her life, moved to exert herself to seek a less unfortunate subject, immediately remembered that her uncle must want refreshment, and proposed to call Peggy to bring in his luncheon.

“Suppose we ring,” said Colonel Sutherland, putting out his hand with a smile to the unused bell-rope.

Susan started with terror to prevent him.

“Oh, uncle, we never ring!” she cried, in an alarmed tone.

The sound of that bell tinkling through the house might produce Susan could not tell what tragedy in the study. She put out her trembling hand and caught at her uncle’s to stop his intended action. When she did so, to Susan’s great surprise the Colonel, dropping the bell, turned round upon her suddenly, and put his arm round her.

“My poor child!” he exclaimed, with some sudden access of feeling, scarcely intelligible to Susan, and with tears in his eyes.

She did not know what it meant, and yet she was very much inclined to cry too.

At this moment fortunately Peggy came in unsummoned, bringing the tray, but not the dainty dish which her care had prepared for Mr. Edward. When she set it down upon the table, she addressed the visitor with the tone and manner of one who has something disagreeable to say.

“The master’s in his study, Mr. Edward: he never comes out on’t at this hour of the day. Will you please to step athwart the hall, and see him there?”

“Certainly,” said Colonel Sutherland, and rose at once, releasing Susan, who could not help feeling a little tremor for the consequences of his visit to her father. The old Colonel himself stepped solemnly, with a certain melancholy in his whole figure and bearing, as he went out of the room. It went to his heart to see the clouded face with which Susan responded to his mention of her father, and he went to meet him forgetting even the discourtesy which did not come to meet him—oppressed, and grieved, and wondering. When he had closed the door behind him he laid his arm on Peggy’s arm, detaining her.

“What does it all mean?” he asked, with a troubled face, and stooped his deaf ear to Peggy’s voice.

“What does’t mean? Mischief and the devil!—and good reason he has to be proud of his handiwork,” cried Peggy, vehemently, though in a whisper; “and oh, Mr. Edward! before the two unfortunate things are killed and murdered,

save him from himself!”

Perhaps Colonel Sutherland did not perfectly hear this strange communication; he nodded and went on after her, looking puzzled and distressed—he was not of an intrusive or interfering nature. He had no idea of thrusting into any man’s secrets, with the view of doing him good. And then, what influence had he, whom after twenty years absence his host would not come to meet. So he went across the hall, stooping his lofty grizzled head, and with a great confusion of grieved thoughts in his mind—while Susan, left behind, went to the window to look for Horace, and stirred the fire into a flame, and placed the tray and the arm-chair in the most comfortable position possible, and trembled a little, in a vague idea that Uncle Edward might somehow dissolve in that awful study, or come out a different man.

In the study, just risen up from his chair, Mr. Scarsdale received his visitor; he scarcely made a step forward to meet him, but he shook him coldly by the hand. They stood there together, two strangely different men—the recluse standing bolt upright, with his wide dressing gown falling off from his spare figure, and his book open on the table—cold, self-absorbed, in a passion of unnatural stillness; the soldier, with his tall stooping figure, his deaf ear bending with that benign and kind humility which made the infirmity a grace, and his anxious countenance afraid to lose a word of anything that might be said to him. Mr. Scarsdale’s greetings were few and hurried; he asked when he returned, and how he had travelled, and then, reaching a chair which happened to be within arm’s length, begged that Colonel Sutherland would sit down, in a tone which plainly signified that the request itself was a favour. Colonel Sutherland did so, looking at him with a strange wistfulness—and then, reseating himself, his host spoke.

“Since you have come to Marchmain, I have something to say to you at the commencement of what I suppose you will call our renewed intercourse. I will deal with you frankly. I should not have ventured to invite, if you had left it to me, a man of your tastes and feelings here.”

“I can guess as much,” said Colonel Sutherland, with a passing, angry blush.

“I should not,” said Mr. Scarsdale, coldly; “because my establishment is very limited. I live in great seclusion, and I remember that you are a lover of society, and what is called cheerfulness. But you have come, and yours is the responsibility if our life oppresses you. And one thing I would say; I do not fear your discretion, having warned you. You are aware of the very peculiar circumstances under which I stand—you know, in short, the blight of my life. Pshaw! why speak of it, or give it a name?—you know, of course, thanks to your sister’s frankness, exactly what I mean. Now this, I beg you to observe, is totally unknown to my children: my son is not aware of his advantage over his father. I do not mean that he shall be, until,” added Mr. Scarsdale, with a

ghastly smile, “until the time of his triumph approaches; but, in the meantime, I have to request that you will not think of extending to these young people a confidence which I do not wish them to possess.”

A flood of painful feelings rose during this speech over the Colonel’s face, of which kindness misconstrued and personal dignity wounded were the least and lightest. He looked with an amazed, grieved, uncomprehending wonder in the face of his brother-in-law, and was silent for a few minutes, while the first pangs of indignant pain were subsiding, though he involuntarily rose to his feet, an action which Mr. Scarsdale followed. Perhaps this last rudeness might have roused the warlike blood of the old soldier, had not his eye at the moment lighted upon that portrait in the shadow of the curtain. That touch of old love and sorrow moved him in the midst of his resentment almost to tears. He had to pause before he could speak as calmly as he wished to speak. “I have never thought it my duty,” said Colonel Sutherland, “to interfere in any man’s house: I will not begin in yours—nor would I remain in it even for a night, but for recollections which neither you nor I can efface by any measure of hard words. But, for heaven’s sake, Robert Scarsdale, why is all this?—why do you meet me after this extraordinary fashion?—why do you shut yourself out from human sympathy?—why refuse yourself the comfort of your own children? As for myself, I am neither an enemy nor a stranger. Old ties and kindness have never died out of my recollection through all the sorrows and labours of my life, which have not been few. Why have they passed out of yours? We are relations—not antagonists.”

“We were relatives,” said Mr. Scarsdale, stiffly.

“Were! And my dear sister—your good wife—do you count her, then, only among the things that were?”

“I beg your pardon: a man is generally the best judge of the goodness of his wife; but there is no question at present of the virtues of the late Mrs. Scarsdale,” said the recluse. “I can see no benefit to result from discussing past circumstances. You are welcome to my house, such as it is; but, knowing my position as you do, I think myself quite justified in requesting your silence on this matter. It was not my will, certainly, which made you aware of it at first.”

Colonel Sutherland stood before his brother-in-law in a flush of unusual and inexpressible passion. He could not give utterance to the indignant, mortified, impatient surprise with which he heard these words. But what can any one say? It is hard for the voice of kindred to praise a poor woman—even when she is dead—while her husband looks on blankly, and is the best judge whether his wife has been a good wife or not. So he is, of course: therefore, be silent, brother of the dead—say nothing about her—she is judged elsewhere, and beyond human criticism now. But the old soldier stood listening, with the

pang of wonder, almost stronger than that of anger and indignation, at his heart. He was so much surprised, that he was speechless. This unexpected sentiment shook him suddenly in his supposed position, and turned all his previous ideas into folly. He was not the brother of a wife beloved, the uncle of children who cherished their mother's memory, but an intruder, presuming upon a past relationship. A flush of deep mortification came upon his face: he made a stately, ceremonious bow to his ungracious host—

"In that case—as things are," stammered the Colonel, "I will make no encroachments upon your hospitality. Pray, don't say anything—it is unnecessary. I—I shall take care to pay due respect to your desires so far as your children are concerned. In short, I beg you to understand that your secret is, and has always been, with me as though I knew it not; but," said Colonel Sutherland, pausing in his haste, and steadying his voice, "it was, as you are well enough aware, known to half, at least, of your former friends, and that by no—no indiscretion on the part of—my sister—and it is open at this day, or any day, to the most indifferent stranger who chooses to pay a fee at Doctors' Commons. What you can mean, in these circumstances, by a precaution so—by such precautions, I cannot tell. Is it not better your son should learn this from his father, than from any ill-disposed companion whom the young man may pick up? But that is certainly not my business. I presume that I may, without objection on your part, see my niece and nephew sometimes during the few days I remain in the nearest village? The children must acknowledge a certain relationship with their mother's brother."

"Oh!" said Mr. Scarsdale, with a slight blush of shame on his cheek, "I shall be glad to have you remain here."

Glad! the word was out of keeping entirely with his aspect and that of the scene; it looked like a piece of mockery. Colonel Sutherland bowed again with still more ceremony.

"It is too late," he said, quietly.

"Your room is prepared—you have been expected," said Scarsdale, awaking, not only to the reproach of sending a stranger away, which, distant as he was from the opinions of the world, touched him still, but to the vexation of being resisted. "My daughter, so far as looks can express it, has been expecting you eagerly. I beg you to reconsider your decision—nay, I entreat, I insist that you should remain."

"Too late for that," said the Colonel, with a smile and a bow; "but I will not detain you from your studies. Susan, I believe, has some refreshment ready for her old uncle. I will not carry a punctilio of welcome so far as not to break bread in your house; but I will bid you now, and finally, good-bye."

So saying, the old soldier made a superb bow, and, without lifting his eyes

again to his churlish host to see how he took it, turned round on his heel and left the room.

In the hall he encountered Peggy waiting for him, who, familiar in her anxiety, laid her hand upon his sleeve, and stretched up on tiptoe to whisper her anxious interrogation into the Colonel's deaf ear. He waved his hand to her with an assumed carelessness, which he was far from feeling.

"We should not 'gree, Peggy, if I stayed a day," he said, familiarly, and with a smile. "You must direct me to the next village, where I can get a bed and a dinner—for I will not leave the quarter till I know my sister's bairns."

"But ye'll not forsake them; say you'll never go away till he promises their rights," cried Peggy, in a whispered shriek.

The Colonel shook his head, and put her aside with his hand.

"If I can do anything for them, I will," he said briefly; and so went into the dining-room, where Susan waited, trembling for the issue of this scene: while Peggy, retiring to her kitchen in fierce disappointment and mortification, threw her apron over her head and wept a sudden torrent of hot tears; then comforting herself, repeated over his words, wiped her tears, and carried in the luncheon. She would not lose faith in her favourite with so short a trial. Daylight, good sense, common affection did but need to breathe into this morbid house, and all might yet be right.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Peggy re-entered the dining-room, she found poor Susan struggling to restrain the sudden sobs of her distress and disappointment in finding that her uncle was not to remain at Marchmain. He had not meant to tell her at once, and even now he told her cheerfully, and without offence, as if he had changed his intention for his own convenience solely. He had just opened the carpet-bag, of which he had been so careful on the journey, and was taking out a parcel very carefully and elaborately packed up, which he proceeded at once to uncover. Susan looked on, a little curious, but not much interested; she had no conception what it was, or that she had any connection with it; and when at last it was all unfolded, and spread out before her, she looked on rather more interested, but no less wondering. What might Uncle Edward be going to do with those snowy lengths of India muslin, the fragile foundation of which was scarcely sufficient to bear the wreaths of embroidery, which Susan had never seen anything like in her life, and instantly longed, with a girlish instinct, to copy and emulate—pretty collars, too, and cuffs, feminine articles which the Colonel could have no possible use for; and wrapped up with these one or two

unknown articles, rich with that wonderful tiny mosaic work which embellishes the card-cases and blotting-books of people who are fortunate enough to have friends in India. Susan had a vague idea that one of these was a card-case; it certainly was like something of her mother's which Peggy preserved as a relic, and had promised to make over to her young mistress when she was old enough to pay visits—an impossible age, which Susan laughed to think of ever attaining at Marchmain. When he had opened them all out upon the shining uncovered table, which reflected the spotless whiteness of the muslin, the Colonel looked down at Susan with a smile, bending his ear towards her, and looking for gratification and pleasure in a face which was only admiring and puzzled. "Are you pleased with them?" said Uncle Edward. "I puzzled my old brains to think what you would like, and there you have the results of my cogitations—not anything very extraordinary, but bought a good many thousand miles off for you, when the only recollection I had of you was that of a baby. I had to count the years very carefully, I assure you, and was near committing myself, and losing credit for ever by bringing you a little frock."

"But, uncle, do you mean they are for me?" cried Susan, in amazement.

"Eh? Precisely—for you," said the Colonel, who had not quite heard her question, but understood her look. "There is but one woman in the family, my dear child: you don't suppose that my boy Ned could wear muslin, or that Tom knows how to use a fan? But eh?—what's happened? Have I vexed you without knowing it, for a blundering old blockhead? What's the matter, Susan? I'll toss them all into the fire rather than make you cry."

"Oh, uncle, I can't help crying—then, I like to cry!" exclaimed Susan, finding the old Colonel really concerned, and disposed to carry out his threat. "To think they should be for me—to think you should have thought of me in India! Do you suppose I could just say, 'Thank you?' Nobody ever gave me anything all my life before—and oh, uncle, to take the trouble of thinking of me!"

"If that is a troublesome operation, I have taken a great deal of trouble about you, one time and another, Susan," said Colonel Sutherland. "Now, dry your eyes, my love, and tell me if you approve of my taste. They are nothing extraordinary, you little goose—you will make me ashamed of my bundle. Why, everybody brings such things from India, and bring them very often to people they care much less about than I do about my little niece. If I had been richer, you should have seen what we can do in the East; but I just managed, you perceive, to get you one shawl."

Which shawl the Colonel extricated accordingly, as he spoke. Poor Susan, afraid he might think her foolish, managed to stop her crying, and gazed—half with dismay, half with admiration—at all the pretty things before her. What could she do with them? Colonel Sutherland, it was true, knew that she never

was allowed to see anybody, or to make any friends, but a fact which is alien to nature makes no impression upon a natural mind. He could not remember or suppose that a young girl had no possible use for the pretty, simple dress he had brought, and looked on with a pleased face to see the effect of his gifts, as Susan began to examine them. Peggy, going backward and forward, saw it was now time enough for her to interpose, and, with a genuine woman's interest, plunged into the delightful investigation, which Susan—flushed and agitated quite out of her wont, and tremulous with many new sensations—had just concluded, when Horace entered the room.

That room, all its life, had never looked so homelike, and the reason was not explainable; for, except in the heap of litter at one end of the table, and the old man eating his luncheon hard by, there was absolutely no change upon the apartment. That soldier's face, weatherworn and brown, full of command yet full of tenderness, with grizzled hair and moustache, and erect soldierly pose, was not by any means a common-place countenance, or one which could have passed unnoted anywhere; but it was not even that which made the charm. It was the bright, pleased look which the Colonel, as he sat, lifted upon the girl before him—the amused, kind, tender smile which went over all his face like sunshine—the kindly, homely inclination towards her of that deaf ear—the care he took to hear all she said—the interest and indulgent regard with which he followed her movements and listened to her words. There was no criticism in those kind eyes—they were eyes accustomed to give a genial interpretation of everything—and the light of them changed the aspect of this dismal room. It did not even look so dark or so stifling—the very mahogany brightened, and hearty blazes awoke in the once-smouldering fire. Everything seemed to have become aware, somehow, that living human love and kindness, indulgence, tenderness were there.

Yes, indulgence—though, to be sure, it is very bad to spoil our children; but what would not one give, when one grows old, for that dear, lost indulgence of our youth, which will never come back to us—that consciousness that there is one at least who will see everything we do in the best light, and put the kindest construction upon our failings, and think us cleverer and better, and fairer and pleasanter, than we are and can be! Youth cannot thrive at all without this sunshine; but heaven help us, how it dies and disappears out of the noon of life! Susan had never once felt it before—the feeling came upon her, as she met her uncle's eyes, that she had never really lived before—that she was only awaking to find out what she herself was, and what were the people around her. Somehow the dawning of a happiness unthought of brought with it the sudden revelation of miseries which had not struck her in all her past experience. Fathers, it became visible to her in a moment, were not all like her father—homes were different from this home—even Uncle Edward's presents helped that enlightenment. These pretty things were common to girls of her

own age, and in ordinary use among them. Her uncle was even puzzled that she should look at them as she did, and think them so beautiful, so wonderful, so much “too fine for me!” And as Susan came to comprehend this, between the pleasure and the pain, her cheeks flushed, her young limbs trembled, her heart beat loud with strange emotion. Even that excitement helped the effect of Uncle Edward’s kind face in the room. This very confusion and commotion was life.

When Horace appeared, wet as Susan had predicted he would be, and sulky as he always was, the sudden gleam of warmth in the familiar apartment penetrated even into his sullen heart. Its first result was the natural one of making him feel more unhappy; but in another moment, and with reflection, a change came upon Horace. He did not desire or care for the kindness of his uncle. He was not a domestic creature!—he longed to escape from home, and was exceedingly indifferent as to what he should have there, if he could but attain that desirable end. And Colonel Sutherland appeared a very likely assistant to Horace—as, his deaf uncle not having heard him enter, he stood for a moment looking at him before he advanced. The young man, in his hard wisdom, perceived the simplicity of the old man who sat unconscious before him. As far as he could comprehend a spirit so different from his own, he read his nature in the Colonel’s face, and took up his part accordingly with cleverness and dexterity. He advanced quickly to his uncle and held out his hand, Susan watching him with an unusual anxiety which she could not explain to herself.

“Uncle!—I need not ask who it is—uncle, welcome!” cried Horace, with a heartiness unknown to him heretofore, and perhaps more reality in the expression than he himself could have thought possible.

The Colonel rose with a little stumble of haste, putting his hand to his ear. For the moment he was perplexed, and thought it a stranger; but catching the sound of uncle, hailed his nephew with all the affectionate sincerity of his unsuspicious heart. He shook both his hands as Horace’s hands had never been touched before; he looked in his face, too, as in Susan’s, to trace the lineaments of their mother, and called him “my dear boy;” and shook his hands again with an effusion of satisfaction and kindness. For Horace, so far as features went, was somewhat like his mother, and, with his smile and his smoothed-out brow, looked a very different person from the Horace of every-day use and wont. “But will he persevere?” said Susan to herself, with an ache of delight in her heart; and “How to keep it up?” said Horace within his own saturnine spirit. The uncle knew nothing of these secret questions—did not suspect for a moment that the young man who met him so joyfully had changed his manners for the occasion, and congratulated himself in his simple heart that both the children had kept their hearts and feelings warm in their

solitude. The old man grew quite radiant and talkative. He who had intended to leave Marchmain directly, sat still, opening out his honest heart to the young people like a long absent father. He told them first and principally about his boys, their cousins, whom they must know—about the house he had got, which was exactly what he wanted, and where he only wished he could have Susan to be “mistress and mair!” as he broke out joyfully in his Scotch—about India, where almost all his life had been spent, and which, with Edinburgh, and a peep of London, made up the world to the veteran. And the light had actually begun to wane in the short afternoon, when it suddenly occurred to Uncle Edward that he was forgetting himself, and that he must face the blast again to find his inn. A momentary austerity came into his face as he recollected this, and, rising hastily, begged of Horace to show him or to tell him the way to the nearest village. The nearest village worthy the name was five miles off; there was a miserable little hamlet nearer, with a miserable little public house, but that Uncle Edward shrugged his shoulders at.

“Can Susan walk five miles in a good day?” said the Colonel, smiling. “Then come along, my boy—we’ll go there.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A WALK of five miles on that dismal February afternoon was not a pleasure excursion; nor was it pleasant to look back upon poor Susan’s face at the window—flushed, tearful, ashamed, mortified, Susan had not experienced an equal vexation in the whole course of her life. To think of Uncle Edward having to go away through the damp and twilight five miles off to find a lodging! Uncle Edward, who had come closer to Susan’s heart in half-an-hour than all the rest of the world in all her life! When they were out of sight she subsided into the arm-chair and had a good cry over it, and then went to talk to Peggy, who was actively furious, relieving herself by incomprehensible ejaculations. Still somehow, mortified and vexed as she was, there was all the promise of a new life remaining for Susan. Uncle Edward would return to-morrow; so long as he stayed he would see them every day—and the idea disturbed the stagnant atmosphere, and diffused an indescribable cheerfulness through the house. Even Peggy, though she fumed, was exhilarated by the thought—perhaps on the whole, it was even better that the Colonel’s tender, honest heart should not be grieved by the sight of the ghost of family life existing here. So long as he did not see it to make himself wretched with the view, Uncle Edward’s sweet and healthful imagination could conceive of no such scene as Mr. Scarsdale’s dinner, or the evening hours which followed it. And then he was coming back to-morrow!

So Susan took her presents upstairs, and fell wondering and dreaming over them, making impossible fancy scenes of cheerful rooms and pleasant people, and smiles, and flowers, and kindness unknown. Somehow whispers of all these delightful things seemed to breathe out of that pretty muslin, with its graceful wreaths of embroidery. The horizon opened to her awakened girlish fancy, far off, and almost inconceivable, yet with a vague brightness of possibility—and Susan spent an hour arranging her new riches in the drawer, which was the only scene they were likely to enlighten at present, and making herself happy with her novel thoughts.

While in the meantime the Colonel and his nephew trudged onward across the moor. The rain had ceased, but the sky was low and the air damp—and evening darkened round the vast blurred circle of the horizon, dropping down among the hills. The scene was dismal enough for anything: the exposed path across the moor—the black furze bushes and withered crackling heather—the slender saplings cowering together here and there in a little circle, where attempts had been made to naturalize them—and the great, monotonous, unbroken stretch of desert soil around, inspected from the lower heights by gaunt clumps of fir-trees, savage and melancholy anchorites, debarred from the change and variety, the autumn and the spring of common nature. Colonel Sutherland threw a shivering glance round him, and drew his cloak close about his throat. We will not say that even at that moment, when his thoughts were occupied with more important things, an involuntary patriotic comparison did not occur to the old soldier, who was native to the rich fields of Lothian, and might be disposed to wonder complacently whether this were indeed the sunnier south. He had, however, a more immediate subject of observation in Horace, who trudged beside him with the stoop and slouch, and heavy irregular step, of a neglected and moody youth. He was well-looking enough, and not deficient in any bodily quality, but the lad’s physique had been totally unattended to, and he had never been in circumstances which could have led himself to perceive his faults of bearing and carriage. The Colonel’s soldierly eye could not help regarding him with manifest dissatisfaction. We will not take it upon us to affirm that Colonel Sutherland at the head of his regiment might not be something of a martinet, or the least thing in the world particular about stocks and cross-belts. He looked at Horace, and could not help looking at him as he might have done at an awkward recruit. How he held his sullen head down against the wind, as if he butted at an invisible enemy; how he swung his hands in the pockets of his shooting-coat; how he dragged his heavy feet as if there was a clod at each heel. The Colonel did not quite understand how it was that his nephew’s person inspired him with a vague distrust, and, somehow, contradicted his nephew’s face; but the fact was that Horace could change the expression of his countenance when he had sufficient motive, but could not alter the habits into which neglect, and indolence, and sullen temper

had thrown his outer man. And he himself was entirely unconscious of the clownish walk and ungracious demeanour which gave the old officer so much annoyance. Colonel Sutherland respected everybody'samour propre. He could scarcely find it in his heart to wound any one, on the virtuous principle of doing them good; but, between professional sentiment, and that family pride which is wounded by being obliged to admit the imperfections of those it is interested in, he never exercised more self-denial in his life than that which he showed during this walk, in restraining an exhortation to his nephew in respect to his bearing and deportment; while his kind imagination went to work directly, to contrive expedients, and inducements, and hints for Horace's benefit, to lead him to perceive his own deficiencies and adopt means to correct them, without wounding his feelings or his pride.

While Colonel Sutherland occupied himself with these reflections, Horace, totally unconscious of criticisms upon himself, which would have stung his self-love deeply, pondered, in his turn, the best means of bringing his uncle over to the length of helping him, by any means or in any way, to escape from Marchmain. The most palpable mode of entering on the subject—that of lamenting his father's want of hospitality—had been made impracticable by Colonel Sutherland, who laid all the weight of the arrangement upon his own convenience; and his simplicity and straightforwardness made a sidelong approach to it equally out of the question. Horace was compelled, accordingly, to bring in his subject all at once, and without introduction. Colonel Sutherland, without meaning it, said something half consciously about the dreary country, and his nephew seized upon the chance.

"Dreary, indeed!—and nothing else do we see, uncle, from year's end to year's end!" cried Horace. "Is it not enough to kill a man?—without a human face to break it, either; and here am I, strong and young, condemned to this life, and kept from any information—any advice—which can direct me what to do. Uncle, you are the only friend I have been able to see with freedom and confidence, and I am almost glad you don't stay at Marchmain—for there is no freedom there. Tell me, I beg of you, what can I do?"

"My dear boy!" cried the Colonel, grasping his nephew's hand in sudden sympathy, and with a little gasp of earnest attention—"you take away my breath. Solitude has not diminished your energy, at all events. Do? Why, to be sure, a boy like you can do anything. We must look for an opening, that is all—but you should have begun before now."

"My father," said Horace, with unconscious bitterness, "has stopped that. I don't know anything about the world, except this paltry little world here, of gamekeepers and poachers, and sporting farmers' sons—for gentlemen, of course, don't associate with me. What are we, uncle?—nobodies? I can't tell—my father keeps up habits which look like the relics of a better time—and at

the same time I know we're poor; but he throws no light upon our unhappy circumstances. Hekeeps me shut up in this horrible house, till I think all sorts of horrors: that he's a returned convict, or something like that—that our name's a disgrace. What is it?—of course there must be some cause for this seclusion—and you must know."

Colonel Sutherland was much embarrassed. He fumbled with his cloak in the first place to gain time, and then, finding no other resource, fell back upon the shelter of his deafness.

"I'm a little hard of hearing," said the Colonel. "I partly lost your last observation—but what's that about the poachers and gamekeepers? Bad company, Horace!—unfit associates, except in the way of sport, for any gentleman. I've known lads of good family ruined just by an inclination that way. Not that they meant ill to begin with; but what's mere fun at first comes to be liking before long—and a gentleman's son of course is flattered and courted among them. It's a pernicious thing, Horace—attend to me!—it's been the ruin of many a man."

"What is ruin, uncle?" shouted Horace, with a wild and bitter smile, which somehow mingling congenially with the wind and the chill, carried into the Colonel's mind a singular identification of that landscape and scene which gained their climax in this moment. He was startled, he could not explain how. He turned round to look into his nephew's face, with a sudden consciousness of depths in the heart and in the life of Horace undecipherable and mysterious to himself.

"My dear boy," he said, with a little tremble in his voice, "ruin is such a destruction as can be accomplished only by a man himself."

Horace made no answer. His face subsided gradually, out of that self-revelation, into the assumed good-humour which he had put on for his uncle's benefit. Colonel Sutherland, however, continued to regard him with concern and apprehension. The Colonel's mind was not enlightened up to the pitch of modern times. When his imagination uncomfortably pictured Horace seated, perhaps, in the alehouse they had passed, with the gamekeeper or sporting men of the village, it was not the knowledge of life which the young man might acquire, but the old-fashioned horror of "bad society," which moved the thoughts of the uncle, who secretly in his own mind began to attribute something of the slouching gait and unsatisfactory bearing of his nephew to his unsuitable companions. He could not give up the subject, but partly in natural anxiety, and partly to evade the youth's troublesome questions, recurred to it immediately again.

"I am your oldest relation except your father, Horace," said the Colonel. "I have some experience in life. You know what the proverb says: 'A man is

known by the company he keeps.’ ”

“Had he better keep no company?” said Horace; “very possibly; but then I can’t help being young, poor devil that I am. I can’t make a woman of myself, or be a child all my life. I must have something out of my prison—and you are not the man to blame me, uncle. The fellows you blame are those who have society in their favour. As for those country blockheads, whom I see in the woods or in the alehouses, do you think I care for them? Do you care for a set of dancing dogs or a wandering monkey? You laugh at them. If you have nothing else to think of, they amuse you for the moment. I despise the louts!—they are no more than bears on exhibition to me!”

Once more Colonel Sutherland looked at his young companion. It was not in his kindly human heart, which despised nobody, to like this manner of expression; but somehow the force with which it was uttered, and the implied superiority of tone, had a certain effect on the simple-hearted old man. He still retained his uneasiness, his want of comprehension; but he began to change his ideas of Horace, and to think him intellectual and clever—not a youth dangerously falling into “bad company,” but a man whose talents were lost to the world for want of “opportunities.” He fixed his gaze anxiously upon his nephew, and longed for the candid eyes which told all Susan’s sentiments and emotions; but that doubtful face said nothing of itself. There might be “talent,” but there was no candour in the countenance of Horace—what the lips might say, was the only index to what the head conceived or the heart felt. Colonel Sutherland turned away from him again with a little sigh. He was interested, his curiosity was awakened, and his paternal anxieties in full exercise; but somehow under all his heart whispered hesitations and inarticulate warnings to him. He had no experience in this unknown development of human nature. His own instincts said as much. But a man does not always give attention to those instinctive intimations. Colonel Sutherland was accustomed to believe that he had rather a natural gift for the guidance of young men—his sympathies with youth were warm—his heart young—his kindness unbounded. Many a youth ere now, charmed by the natural benignity and freshness of his character, had opened his soul to the old Colonel, and given to him that full, youthful confidence seldom bestowed by halves, which harsher fathers had failed to gain—with great advantage to themselves; for the old man was wise, as old men come to be who are not clever, but only humble, candid, religious, fearing God, and slow to make themselves judges of men. The habit of counsel, of assistance, of kindly attention, and regard to the self-revelations of his young companions, was accordingly strong upon Colonel Sutherland—yet, though he would scarcely acknowledge it to himself, a certain conviction of being out of his depths, and in a world altogether new to him—among elements which he was unable to handle—was present with him now.

“I am glad you have no inclination towards such society,” he said, in his perplexed tone; “but, Horace, my boy, even for sport you must not continue it. It sticks to a man in spite of himself; and, indeed, the young fellows now are very different from what they were in my time. I don’t bid you despise your fellow-creatures—there’s a long distance between despising them and preferring their society—a man of your condition should do neither the one nor the other, as you will learn when you come to know life.”

“What is my condition, uncle?” asked Horace, suddenly, interrupting the slow and hesitating general sentiments, which were the only things which the perplexed Colonel could find ready to his hand in this embarrassing case. It is to be feared that Colonel Sutherland heard this question, which was asked in a high tone, for his face became gradually flushed over with a painful heat and colour; but once more he put his hand to his ear.

“Yes; what are your own inclinations?—that is really the question, Horace—if we knew that, we could look out for you. There are many openings now to honourable ambition; but what do you wish yourself for your manner of life?”

“Uncle,” said Horace, with a force which would be heard, “I have no inclinations, thanks to my manner of life hitherto—I have only one wish, and that is, to escape from Marchmain. Get me away from that wretched house. I don’t care if I turn a shoe-black or a scavenger—get me away from here!”

The Colonel once more looked at his nephew, but with less respect—“On these terms, could you not get yourself away? You are not confined by locks and bars,” said Colonel Sutherland, disapprovingly; “why have you no inclinations? That dear child yonder, who has nobody in the world to speak to, has kept her heart as fresh as a May flower.”

“Susan?” said Horace, growing red; “you don’t compare me with Susan?—Susan’s a girl—she’s content—she’s very well off, so far as I can see—she’s in her natural vocation. Would you have me put on petticoats and sit down to patchwork?—As well do that as compare a man with a girl!”

“Susan,” said the Colonel, with a little hauteur and heat which became him, “is the only woman of the family. You are not aware, I daresay, of the indulgences and pleasures that are natural to girls of her years. I don’t wonder so much either that you think of yourself first—but why have you no inclinations?—she has, and you think yourself her superior, I perceive.”

“Don’t be displeased, uncle,” said Horace, changing his tone, and suffering only a little impatience, to testify to the fury with which he heard himself reproved. “You know better than I do, that women are tame creatures, and content themselves easily in their own sphere, when they don’t know any better. Susan has leisure to form little plans and fancies, I believe. I have no such thing—the pain of years has brought me to one point of desperation. I

know nothing of the world: I don't know what I am—my position—my prospects—my birth, are all a mist to me. My mind is not sufficiently disengaged to form projects; therefore I say I have no inclinations—the air stifles me—I must get out into the world, where there is room to breathe!"

"Then, why," said the Colonel, "have you not gone away before?"

Horace was silenced—he fumed with silent rage within himself, wounded in the tenderest point of his self-love and pride—it was, perhaps, the only suggestion which could have made him feel a pang of humiliation. It was one which Susan herself, in her simple and practical intelligence, had made more than once. Why had he borne and brooded over his wretchedness? Why had he not gone away?

"Many young men," said Colonel Sutherland, "have left home of their own accord on a less argument than that of desperation. I don't mean to say I approve of it—but—there are some things that one could not advise, which, at the same time, being done, cut a difficulty which might be hard to solve. I say all this, my dear boy," added the Colonel, moved by Horace's gloomy face, "to show you that it is foolish to use such strong expressions: if your desperation had been so great as to deprive you of all choice or inclination, depend upon it you would have gone away."

And having delivered himself of this kindly bit of logic, totally inapplicable as it was to the person whom he addressed, and attributing the silence of his nephew to the natural confusion of a young man detected in the use of undue heroical expressions, the Colonel was himself again.

"And this, I suppose, is my resting-place for the night," he said, as a church-spire and the roofs of a village became dimly visible before them at the end of the road. "I will remain here three or four days, and during that time, Horace, you must find out your inclinations, my boy, and let us discuss them and see what is to be done. You must stay and dine with me in the first place, and be with me as much as possible while I am here—that is to say, unless your father makes any positive claim upon you during the time."

"Positive claim! I wish you had dined with us one day, uncle, to see what these claims are!" cried Horace, with a laugh of bitterness; but the Colonel, who had been thinking of something else for the moment, inclined his ear towards him with a little start and a smile, before which bitterness fled. Horace could no more comprehend his uncle than his uncle could understand him. This smile discomforted him strangely—he could not stand against that kind prompt attention, the ear so solicitous to catch what he said, and the face so guileless and benign. The young man was of a crafty intelligence, and could have detected wiles—but this sunshiny simplicity put him out. It went deep into the primitive truth, sincerity, and honesty of nature—things which Horace

Scarsdale had small acquaintance with in the secret spring and fountain of his life.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT evening was an epoch in the life of Horace. The people in the little country inn to which he took his uncle were not unacquainted with the young man. For a year or two past, ever since the bitter independence of manhood had begun to possess him, he had spent much of his waste unoccupied time in this and the other humble houses of entertainment of the district. With a sensation of superiority, which he owed principally to his natural temper—for there was in reality very little distinction of breeding or character between himself and the society he frequented—he held a scornful dictatorial place among the humbler convives of the villages, and observed and amused himself with the peculiarities he saw, very much as if he had been a man of the world, trained to that odious criticism which is dignified by being called “the study of mankind.” The coarse enjoyments of the public-house company did not tempt him—he threw his violent decisions into the hum of drowsy talk when it suited him, and at other times looked on, noting, with contemptuous amusement, the dull jollity of the place. His father’s singular solitude imposed a certain respect upon the imagination of the district; and between Horace and the country lads around there remained always that inexplainable, undefinable difference which, independent of education, wealth, and every tangible advantage, separates those who are born in different classes of society, especially in rural places. He had accordingly a strange kind of popularity in the district—not the popularity of common love and esteem, but an attraction perhaps more remarkable; his careless rudeness, his bitter humour, the harsh philosophy which contrasted with his youth and inexperience, gave him a certain singular hold upon the imagination of his companions. The very certainty that he did not care a single straw for them attached the little crowd to his footsteps. Dominant and imperious self-regard, like all other regnant qualities, has a wonderful influence upon the common mind. No other person within the immediate knowledge of this rural community assumed the same tone, or showed the same spirit—and the vehement and forcible language, more refined than their own, the utterance of a gentleman, which Horace had acquired involuntarily, the arrogant sentiments he expressed, the unconcealed consciousness of superiority which belonged to him, united to impose a certain allegiance upon the inexperienced minds, which found him unique and singular, the sole development known to them of a kind of intelligence and a manner of man widely differing from their own.

But this night everything was changed. The landlady of the inn, amazed into a flutter of perturbation, appeared herself, at the astounding information that young Mr. Horry, as he was called, had arrived with a gentleman. The good woman supposed it must be his mysterious father, and hastened with all the speed of curiosity to receive them—but lost in amazement to find "the gentleman" a stranger, who required the best accommodation of her house for a few days, and desired to dine as soon as that was practicable—found it only possible to curtsey and retire, more curious than ever, without being able to show her previous acquaintance and familiarity with Mr. Horry, who turned his face with an arrogant blank of unrecognition full upon her, and added to his uncle's orders a request that some one might be sent to Marchmain immediately for the carpet-bag.

"Something's agoing to happen," said the landlady, as she returned to her own domain. "A strange gentleman as wants the best o' everything—an ould sodger lord with musstaches—egh, lad!—a lord I'll warrant, at the very least o' him—and I'll lay you a sixpence he's coom to set a' things straight; for yonder's Mr. Horry, he looks me in the face as broad as I look at you, and says, says he, 'Send a man to Marchmain for a carpet-bag immediantly,' as if he never set eyes on me in his born days afore. Like him! I would ne'er goo starving to his door in hopes o' meat."

Great preparations ensued for the hasty dinner, which was to be ready in an hour; but even the landlady's conviction that her guest could not be less than a lord was not sufficient to work impossibilities. While it was getting ready, Colonel Sutherland and Horace sat together over the new kindled fire. The best room of the inn, which did not receive a guest twice in a year, was a dingy parlour hung with old portraits of famous horses, winners of the cups of antiquity, with a county map, and a print of George IV. to vary the embellishments, and two small windows looking out upon the village street. The Colonel placed himself as close as possible to the fire, not without dreadful apprehensions of the rheumatism, which already sent flying twinges into his spare limbs, and made him wince; and thought with a little natural indignation of his repelled kindness, and the cold reception which had forced him to seek this place, and substituted the accommodation of a poor little country inn for the hospitality he had expected. Silence and these recollections, and the startling twinges of his rheumatism, changed the expression of his face almost into sternness, and seemed to develop in him another phase of character. Horace watched him in the doubtful light, more and more puzzled. The indulgent, tender kindness and forbearance of the fatherly old man had disappeared with the animation of their talk and intercourse—the whole face had a loftier and more rigid expression. Horace, drawing back his chair out of the firelight, gazed and pondered with knitted brows. He began to think more elaborate approaches were necessary, and

plans better laid. He had not found it possible hitherto to get much information from this kind old uncle touching the family secret, if there was one. Was Colonel Sutherland a kind old uncle merely? Horace began to suspect he must be something more, and that the task of persuading him and winning him over to his own interests might not be so very easy after all.

The Colonel sat long in meditation, as if he were in full consideration of the whole knotty subject; when he made a little stir in his chair as if about to speak, a sudden burst of anxiety ran over Horace. “I wonder,” said the Colonel, with the gravest face, “how long it is since a fire was lighted in this room before. Speak of England, Horace! I don’t believe there is anything so dismal from Berwick to John o’ Groats as that moor of yours, and no attempt at cultivation or improvement, so far as I can perceive. You should see our high farming in Lothian! I have not felt the cold so severe since I came home.”

Horace had almost laughed aloud in his sudden relief and contempt. These were the thoughts, so deeply ruminated, which had brought gravity to Colonel Sutherland’s face. The young man, who now less than ever comprehended the old man, went to stand at the window, not without a certain satisfaction in being seen there by the evening frequenters of the place, who were sure to hear of his companion, and of the different position he occupied for this night at least; and passed another half hour of waiting before the dinner appeared, in strange calculations, at once cunning and foolish—the wiles of a subtle mind, and the inexperience of a young one—thinking with himself how long his uncle’s simplicity could withstand his attacks—how soon he should be able to worm all the secrets of the family out of him, and how easily he could work the old man to do what he would. Then, if such a man as Colonel Sutherland had reached to a respectable position and command, what might not such a man as Horace Scarsdale do? The young man’s spirits rose—he imagined himself making a stepping-stone of his uncle, to push his way into the arena—and then——.

Considering the height and imaginative character of this ambition, which at the outset gave it a certain refinement, it was astonishing, notwithstanding, to perceive into what almost vulgar elation his spirits rose during that dinner. It was no great things of a dinner, being too ambitious by far for the occasion; but it was perhaps the very first meal in his life, at least since he came to years of self-knowledge, which Horace had eaten with freedom and pleasure. He thought of Marchmain, and the scene in the dining-room at that moment, where Peggy, in the ordinary course of events, would be about removing the cloth and setting on the table his father’s solitary glass and jug of claret, and smiled to think of Mr. Scarsdale’s silent rage at seeing his vacant place. He was pleased and flattered by the respectful manner of the landlord who waited on them, and could not refrain from talking rather big to his uncle, and

assuming a confidence and frankness quite unusual to him, and foreign to his nature, for the advantage of that individual. He was too young to conceal this first gratification, and betrayed himself unawares. Simple and unsuspecting though the Colonel was, he perceived this. However, it was natural, and instead of a hard laugh at it, Uncle Edward smiled and grew kinder, and loved Horace better and trusted him the more for his weakness' sake. They seemed growing friends gradually and surely—the old man believed they were, and rejoiced in it, and could not have believed, had anybody told him that the cold passion of self-regard, to the entire exclusion of warmer feelings, filled his nephew's heart.

When they were left alone, Horace, a little stimulated by the wine he had taken, commenced his attack with boldness:—

"Uncle," he said, "you must think of me—you must help me. I have never been able to speak my mind before to a single individual who could comprehend or assist me. I must know what are our circumstances. It is needless to say that my father's past life does not affect me. It does affect me—everything affects me that I am kept in ignorance of. What are we?—what is he?—why are we here?"

Horace had hit by chance and unawares upon the means really most likely to attain his end. Colonel Sutherland could not return anything but a true answer to a plain and straightforward question; and evasion was so strange to him that he managed it in the clumsiest manner. He retired on his deafness in the first place—a defence from which Horace drove him out triumphantly by a repetition of the question in tones that could not be mistaken. Then he faltered over it a little, with common-places of hesitation too palpable to deceive anybody.

"Your true circumstances—your father's past life? Your father's past life has always been virtuous and honourable," said the Colonel. "What is he? You ought surely to know better than I do, who have not seen him for fifteen years. He is, if you wish my opinion, a man of very peculiar temper. Horace, I do not wonder that you find him rather hard to get on with sometimes, but he is your father; and therefore, my dear boy, whatever others may do, impatience and a harsh judgment do not become you."

Horace shook his head.

"This is not what I want to know. You know it is not," he said, with a rising colour. "Say no, if you will, but don't treat me like a child. Look here, uncle: I am assured there is a secret—I know it, no matter how—tell me what it is."

Horace put the whole force of his voice and mind into the question. He made it not as one who asks, but as one who demands what he has a right to know, feeling convinced that his gentle relative could not now evade him, and had no

strength to resist; and with this conviction strong upon him, the young man stared into the Colonel's eyes, with the thought of overawing him and compelling his answer thus.

Colonel Sutherland looked at him steadily, withdrew his eyes a moment, looked again, and at last spoke.

"If you think," said the Colonel, coldly, "that by this persistence and demand you can persuade any man of honour to betray to you a secret with which another has entrusted him, you show only your ignorance of gentlemen and want of belief in your fellow-creatures. If there is a secret in your family circumstances—though, mind you, I do not admit that there is—can you suppose that I will tell you anything which it is your father's desire that you should not know?"

Horace shrunk for a moment in mingled rage and amazement from the tone. It was inconceivable to him that anybody could feel even an instant's contempt for him; but the feeling was momentary.

"Then he does desire that I should not know it!" he exclaimed, with a certain triumph—and set his teeth over the admission, as if this at least was something gained.

"I did not say so," said the Colonel, with some embarrassment. "I said if—No, Horace, if you wish to investigate into all the secrets of your family, go to your father, and ask him—he is the proper judge of what should or should not be told you. At least, if you don't admit that, he is at least the most proper person to be asked; and till he has refused to satisfy you, you have no right to apply to any one else. Take my advice—be honest and straightforward—it is the shortest way and the clearest: ask himself."

"Ask himself! Do you know the terms we are on, uncle?" said Horace, with a smile.

"So much the worse for you both—and long enough that has lasted, surely," said the Colonel. "The past is no man's, the future is every man's: I say to you again, that has lasted long enough! Ask himself, and let the mystery and the strife end together. It is the only honest way to clear your difficulties up."

Once more Horace smiled—a smile of disappointment and anger—baffled and furious; while the Colonel went on with his honest, simple advice, exhorting the young man to candour and openness—he might as well have exhorted him to be Prime Minister—while Horace, for his part, kept silent, perceiving, once for all, that whether it was from mere foolishness, or some principle of character unknown to him, his uncle was impracticable, and that the only way to find anything out from him was to lie in wait for the unguarded admissions which, in spite of himself, might fall from his lips.

“After all,” said Colonel Sutherland, when he had concluded his good, honest advice to his own satisfaction, “what has all this to do with it? You are tired of inactivity and quiet, as a young man ought to be; you want to set out upon the world. Of course, your father cannot object to this; and as for me, all that I can do to forward it I will, heartily. But, Horace, setting out on the world does not mean anything vague, my lad. It means doing, or aiming at, some special thing —some onespecial thing, my dear boy. We can’t go out to conquer the world now-a-days—it must be a profession, or business, or a place, or something; so I’ll tell you what to do. Think it well over—what you said to me about having no inclinations. Sit down by yourself, and find out if there is not a special turn one way or other in some corner of your heart, and let us hear what it is. After that the way will be clear; we must look for an opening for you, and,” added Colonel Sutherland, after a little pause, and speaking with hesitation, “if you should then—wish for—my services with your father, why then, Horace—though we are not the best friends in the world—I’ll try my best.”

“Thank you,” said Horace, with sullenness, which he tried vainly to repress —“thank you, uncle. I will do as you say.”

The conversation then came to an end, Horace fuming over it secretly as a failure—and the young man had so high an idea of his own powers, that the thought galled him deeply. Then, after an unsatisfactory interval of indefinite conversation, which Horace could not keep up, and which the Colonel—tired, disheartened, and perplexed—sustained but dully, the young man got up and bade him “good night.” Colonel Sutherland went down to the door of the inn, half with a simple precaution to see him safely out of the “temptation” of that “low company” which Horace had owned to seeking, and half by suggestion of that kindness which could not bear to see any one discouraged. “Think it well over,” urged the Colonel once more, “and expect me to-morrow; and be cheerful, and keep up your heart, Horace. There’s plenty of room for you in the world, and plenty of force in yourself. Good night, my dear boy—good night.”

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Horace Scarsdale left the lights of the village behind him, and took his way through the black roads towards Marchmain, he carried with him a burden of thoughts rather different from those which accompanied him here. Though his was neither a noble nor a sweet development of youth, still youth was in him, as in others, heroical and absolute. It is impossible to reduce to description the kind of fortune he had planned for himself; for, indeed, he had planned nothing, except a general self-glorification and domination over the

world.

His uncle's advice to him, to ascertain how his likings inclined, and make choice of some profession or employment precise and definite, humiliated and offended him unawares. His fancies had not condescended to any such particularity. He had an impression on his mind, how acquired he could not tell, that his father wronged him, and that it was only necessary for him to be aware of their true circumstances to set him at once beyond the common necessities of life. This conviction, however, he had never betrayed to any one; and Colonel Sutherland's recommendation, which implied the restraints of labour and something to do, was not over-palatable to the young man brought up in idleness.

He was too old to begin the study of a profession, and when he thought of the laborious days and confined existence of men who have their own way to make in the world, secret rage and mortification took possession of Horace. Was this all that remained for him?—was this the life which he must look forward to?—was there nothing better in the future than this? He had no desire to choose his means of living, his manner of work—his thoughts eluded the subject when it was presented to him—it was easier to brood over a mysterious wrong, and dream of sudden revelations which should change everything in a moment. At the same time, his intellect was sufficiently clear to show him that contempt was likely to follow any exhibition of these feelings of his—he himself, as he reflected on it, fumed at himself with silent disgust.

Then he had failed to influence Colonel Sutherland as he expected—everything had failed in the absolute fashion—he could no longer carry matters, even to himself, with the high hand of dominant youthful unreason and disregard of things and men:—even things that pleased him took a definite, particular, and limited form, and came under conditions which made them distasteful. Already he began to perceive that the language and manner, which did very well for his alehouse companions, was not practicable in such society as that of his uncle; and unaware as yet how to acquire a more successful tone, fell into deep and angry mortification on the subject. He had not impressed upon Colonel Sutherland a high idea of his spirit, his energy, and his intellect, as Horace had intended to do; but had only conveyed the idea of a presumptuous and ignorant youth to the mind of his uncle. He felt this with a humiliation out of which he drew no humility. It was not so easy as he supposed, to see through and dominate over even so simple a character as that of Colonel Sutherland.

But it did not occur to Horace that his uncle's plain simplicity and truthfulness was, in fact, the only thing in the world which could not be dominated over by the most splendid superiority of intellect. He supposed it was only his own

ignorance, and inexperience, and want of address—deficiencies mortifying enough to acknowledge certainly, but not so mortifying as the entire incapacity either to comprehend or to influence. He had time enough to think over all these things, as he made his way through the lonely, dreary country roads, and across the moor.

This day, and this meeting, and the opening of his close heart even so far, had flashed into life the smouldering fire in the mind of Horace. He strode on with long, rapid steps, thinking it scarcely possible that he could contain himself within the miserable hermitage of Marchmain, even for a night. He went along pondering schemes to surprise the secret from his uncle, in spite of this first failure; and, intoxicated by the first realization of freedom, to imagine himself altogether free, his own master, triumphing over the world. But among these fancies there mingled neither a desire nor any attempt to ascertain, as Colonel Sutherland said, “his own inclinations,” or to decide upon what he should do. He said quite truly, when he reported of himself, that he had no inclinations which concerned labour or a profession, and even in his own thoughts he evaded that question. He could think closely, when the matter was to find out, from his uncle’s unsuspicious temper, his father’s secret; but not when the thing to determine was the needful labour of his own life.

Meanwhile, Susan sat silent in her father’s presence, longing for the return of Horace, picturing him to herself seated opposite to her uncle, free to say what he would, opening his heart under those genial looks, bringing home kind thoughts and kind messages, sunned and mellowed by that unsuspected love which had developed all the wonderful possibilities of a new life to herself. Even Susan could not sit still to-night—her patchwork had lost its attraction for her—her thoughts rose too fast, and were too numerous, to make her ordinary quiet possible. In spite of herself, and even unawares to herself, she was no longer the noiseless girl who sat hushed for hours, opposite to that rigid figure with the little reading-desk and open book. To her own amazement, she caught herself once humming an incipient tune as she sat over her work; and after a while found it impossible to sit still, and moved about with an involuntary restlessness, finding little matters to arrange in all the corners of the room, chairs to place differently, the curtains to be drawn closer, the fire to be stirred, something to keep her in motion, and express, by that only means permitted to her, the unaccustomed stir and commotion in her own heart. And what was even more remarkable, Mr. Scarsdale himself seemed to have an instinctive perception of this, and to be somehow moved in his own calm. A close observer might have perceived that he no longer travelled by mechanical accuracy from beginning to end of his page—that the leaves were tamed less regularly, and that his eyes were fixed upon the upper margin of his book, sometimes for half an hour together, while he watched, without looking at her, his daughter’s movements, and heard the faint rustle of her hushed

motion about the room. He divined the cause, and knew the emotion in her heart, with a strange and bitter certainty. He was aware by intuition that all the affection, and confidence, and filial warmth which he had never sought, had sprung up in an instant to meet the touch of another who had not the same natural claim as he; and the forlorn man grew more forlorn by the knowledge, and perhaps even once for an instant hesitated whether he should not, at this last moment, open his heart to his child, his wife's daughter, the only woman of the family. Somehow these words returned to him unawares. Mr. Scarsdale was not of the kind of man who is much influenced by women. Sympathy was an offence rather than a pleasure to him—he had none to bestow and he sought none. Consolations of affection he scarcely distinguished from intrusions of impertinence, and there was no soil on which tenderness could grow in his rocky nature. But if he had little affection, he had a perennial envy in his heart. He could not bear that another man should obtain anything which seemed by right to belong to himself. The idea that his wife's brother had already possessed himself of Susan's heart, more than he, her father, had done during her whole life, galled him bitterly; so much, that in that moment of indecision, while he held his book in his hands as though he would have closed it, the impulse had actually come upon him to put confidence in Susan, and so win her over, once for all, to his side, and shut out the less legitimate claimant on her affection.

The only woman of the family! It was his daughter whom Edward Sutherland made this claim of affection on—it was a piece of his property which the new comer appropriated; and Mr. Scarsdale had almost been moved out of himself to secure the filial heart which he cared not for, yet which it galled him to see claimed by any other. But nature conquered the sudden thought; he set his book once more steadily open upon his little desk—he made his heart bitter and hard—a forced and painful smile came upon his lip; within himself he recalled, half unawares, some of those words of contemptuous sarcasm against women, by which some men revenge themselves for some woman's misdeeds. But it made him colder, harder, more forlorn and solitary, in spite of himself. His son, whom he had always treated as an enemy, was with his brother-in-law; his daughter, though here in bodily presence, was with that intruder also in her heart. He was alone, alone—always alone; a jealous, envious, morbid rage deepened the shade upon his face; the love was nothing to him—but he gnashed his teeth to see it enjoyed by another.

When Horace returned—and they could hear his summons at the door, and Peggy's tardy opening—he did not come into the dining-room, but went upstairs at once; sending a message to Susan, to her great disappointment, that he was tired with his walk from Tillington, and was going to rest. Mr. Scarsdale did not retire till a much later hour than usual that night; and when he did, made Susan precede him by a few minutes, that he might see her shut

up in her own room, and prevent all communication with her brother. He persuaded himself that they were in a conspiracy against him, and roused his temper with the thought; he spoke more harshly to Susan than he had ever done before in her recollection, and sent her to her own room in tears. Tears!—miserable woman's play of pretended suffering!—at least he was beyond the weakness of being deceived by it; and he smiled bitterly to himself, as he went to his own comfortless rest, thinking on the smiles which would greet her uncle. Unjust fate! unnatural nature!—for these smiles were his, and belonged to him—yet he could not prevent the kind looks of a stranger from stealing this property away.

And Susan cried herself to sleep, with hopes and happy anticipations taking the bitterness out of the tears; and Horace sat in his room, where he had hastily extinguished his candle on hearing approaching footsteps—as little inclined to see Susan as his father was that he should; pondering his wiles for overcoming his uncle. Only last night the house had been undisturbed in its unchanging life; now everything was commotion, disturbance, new efforts and hopes, a changed aspect of existence: and all from the advent of that guileless old soldier, who, waking in the night with his twinges of rheumatism, his fears that his bed had not been aired, and his deeper perplexity and pain about his sister's children, mixed these different troubles altogether, with a hazy mist of oppression and distress in his mind as he turned his head towards the wall, and sank into a heavy sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

COLONEL SUTHERLAND was out of doors early next morning, as was his wont. The weather had improved, the sun was shining, the fells rose dewy and fresh through the air and distance, the whole face of the country was changed. The Colonel strayed along the country road, with his unusual burden on his mind, yet making such minute, half-conscious observations of external nature as were usual to him; pausing to examine the hedges, to pinch a bud upon a branch, and make involuntary comparison between the progress of the spring at home and here; noting the primrose-tufts which began to appear in the hedgeside herbage, soft green leaves still curled up in their downy roll; and making unconscious memorandums in his mind of the early notes of birds already to be heard among the branches. Everything was early this year, he thought to himself, as with a calm and placid pleasure he enjoyed the air, the light, and the cold yet dewy and sparkling freshness of the morning. In the calm of his age this old man had recovered the sweet sensations and susceptibilities of childhood; life with its passions and struggles was over for

him, or seemed so; all was well with his boys; and the many and sharp sorrows of his manhood had left upon him that feeling of happiness in the mere freedom from acute and immediate pain, which only those who have suffered deeply can feel. The sunshine warmed and cheered him to the heart. It was true that trouble, anxiety, and doubt were in that innocent and tender soul; a strong desire to help and deliver his young relatives, with still no perception of the means for doing so; but this was no urgent distress, enough to break in upon that sacramental morning hour. There might be difficulty, but everything was hopeful; and the Colonel wandered along the lonely rural road, where the wet grass sparkled in the sunshine, and the buds on the hawthorn-hedge basked with a secret growth and invisible expansion in the tender warmth and light; and in his age, and the quiet of his soul, was glad as they.

As he approached the corner of an intersecting road, voices came to the ear of the Colonel, or rather one voice, which seemed familiar to him. The speaker was addressing some one who made little reply; and Colonel Sutherland heard, to his great astonishment, a glowing description of the advantages and pleasures of a soldier's life in India, splendidly set forth by the odd, familiar accents of this voice, as he approached. Half amused, half amazed, he listened —the words being, evidently, not of any private importance, and delivered in a tone too loud for confidential communications. He thought to himself that it must be some old soldier beguiling the innocence of some rustic lad, whom want of employment or youthful disappointment had prompted to try the expedient of "soldiering," and went forward with a wrinkle on his forehead, but a smile on his lip—divided between sympathy for the supposed victim, and a professional reluctance to balk the voluntary recruiter, if the recruit should chance to be a promising one. But, to his surprise, when he had gained the corner of the road, instead of a young ploughman or country bumpkin, his eye fell upon a young man of extremely prepossessing appearance, with all the look of a gentleman, who listened with dilated nostrils and eyes fixed upon the distant hills—listened as a man listens whose thoughts are already too many for him, and who has but little attention to spare for what is said—but who, nevertheless, has a serious intention of hearing what is addressed to him. The Colonel was so much startled by this, that he scarcely observed the other person present, till an astonished exclamation of his own name, and the sudden motion of a military obeisance, aroused him. Then the smile returned, though with a difference, to his lip. The speaker was a sergeant of his own regiment, a veteran nearly as old as himself, who now stood before him, between joy and reluctance, eager to make himself known, yet not perfectly satisfied to be found in this exercise of his vocation; with confusion in his face, and his mouth full of excuses.

"What, Kennedy!" cried the Colonel; "my good fellow, what brings you here?"

“It’s far enough out of the way, to be sure, Cornel,” said the sergeant, rather sheepishly; “and neyther my oun place, nor like it. Sure it’s a bit of a flirt of a girl’s brought me, that’s come to be married here.”

“Married! What, you? You old blockhead!” cried the Colonel, inclining his deaf ear towards the voice, “what do you want with such nonsense at your age?”

“Na, Cornel, ne’er a bit of me—the Lord forbid!” said the old soldier; “but a daughter it is, brought up within five mile of ould Derry, but seed a lad o’ the fells as took her heart; and sure she’s all in wan, as ye may say, the whole stock o’ me familly; and according, Cornel, I’m here.”

“And at your old trade, I perceive,” said Colonel Sutherland—“hey, Kennedy?—you will never forget your cockade and bunch of ribbons; but I rather think you’re out a little here.”

“Ay, sir, ay—I said as much mysel’ wan moment afore. The young master, Cornel, he’s aboove my hand,” said the sergeant, promptly; “but youth, sir, youth will not hearken to a good advice. So I bid to tell him as he desired; he’s all for the cap and the feather, Cornel, and it’s not for an ould sodger to balk a gentleman, in especial as it was information Mr. Roger sought; and I well rec’klet, Cornel, that ye aye liked a lad of spirit yoursel’.”

“This is a mistake, however,” said the young man, hurriedly; “I’m not a gentleman seeking information. Go on, Kennedy; I want pay and bread—don’t be afraid, sir, there’s nobody belonging to me to break their hearts if I enlist. Let him say out what he has to say.”

The Colonel cast kindly eyes upon the young man, and saw his nervous haste of manner, and the impatient way in which he roused himself out of his half abstraction to deny the inferences of the sergeant—which, indeed, were entirely foreign to the address which Kennedy had just been delivering; and his benevolent heart was interested. “I also am an old soldier,” he said, with his kind stoop forward, and his smile; “perhaps I am a safer adviser for a young man of your appearance than Kennedy. Eh? Do you prefer the sergeant? Very well! But you must understand that the good fellow romances, and that rising from the ranks, even in India, is not so easy as he would have you suppose. Very true, I have nothing to do with it; but don’t be persuaded to enlist with such an idea. I wish you good morning, young gentleman. You can come to me, sergeant, at the inn in an hour or so. I am here only for a few days.”

And Colonel Sutherland had turned away, and was once more descending the road, wondering a little, perhaps, that the young fellow did not eagerly seek his offered advice on a subject which he knew so much better than the sergeant, when he heard himself called from behind, and, looking back, found

the youth following. As he came up, the Colonel remarked him more closely. He was of brown complexion and athletic form, though only about twenty—already a powerful though so young a man. He was dressed entirely in black—a somewhat formal suit, which almost suggested the clerical profession, though, in fact, it meant only mourning, and had a mingled look in his face of grief and mortification, sincere sorrow, and a certain affronted, indignant, resentful aspect, which raised a little curiosity in the mind of the Colonel. He came up with a bold, firm, straightforward step, which Colonel Sutherland could not help contrasting unawares with that of Horace, and with the colour varying on his cheek.

“I ought at least to thank you, sir, for the offer of your advice,” he said hurriedly; then came to a pause; and then, as if vainly seeking for some explanation of the reason why he rejected it; “I am, however, only a recruit for the sergeant, not for the Colonel,” he added, with sudden confusion. “It is because of this that Iappear churlish and ungrateful in declining your offer. My dress is a deception. I have no right to be treated as a gentleman.”

“These are strong words,” said the Colonel. “I presume, then, that you have done something by which you forfeit your natural rank?”

A violent colour rushed to the young man’s face—“No!—No!—twenty times No!”—he cried, with a sudden effusion of feeling, half made up of anger, and half of the grief which lay in wait for him to catch him unawares; “and will not, if I should starve or die!”

“It seems to me,” said Colonel Sutherland, looking round in vain for Kennedy, who had taken the favourable moment to escape, “that you are in a very excited condition of mind; if you will take my advice, you will not do anything in your present state of feeling, and, above all, don’t enlist. Kennedy’s story is the common recruiting fable, dressed up to suit your particular palate. The old fellow cannot forget his old successes in that way, I suppose. It is as foolish to ’list in haste as to marry in haste, my young friend. It is a thing much easier to do than to undo. Keep yourself out of temptation, and consult your friends.”

Having said so much, the Colonel gave a slight kindly bow to his companion, and was about to pass on, but, looking at him again, waited to see if he had anything to say.

“Is it better to take the plough-stilts than the shilling?” exclaimed the young man; “you know nothing about me—but you look at my distress with a kind face. You know the world and life as they really are, and not as they appear to us here, becalmed on the shores of the sea. I have no friends to consult, no one to be grieved for me whatever I do. I have not much wit, and less education; I have only what the brutes have—strength. What shall I do with it. Is it best to

be a ploughman or a soldier?—I will abide by your decision—which shall it be?”

“Walk down with me to my inn,” said Colonel Sutherland, “and tell me who you are, and how this has happened to you.”

The young man turned with an implicit, instantaneous obedience. He made no preface, no explanation. He had reached to that extreme agitation of mind in which a listener, interested and friendly, is salvation to the self-consuming spirit, when that spirit is of the kind which can disclose itself; as in this case it happened to be.

“My name is Roger Musgrave,” he said; “I have been brought up as heir to my godfather, a man supposed rich. With him I have lived most of my life—we two. He was more than a father to me: but he is dead, and died poor. There is nothing left of the supposed inheritance—worse than that; but that is all that relates to me,” he cried, suddenly pausing with a gasp of restrained grief. “The people here exhaust their kind feelings to me in reproaches upon him who has left me unprovided for. False reproaches!—insults to me as much as to him! He is gone, and all control of me, all love for me, have died in his grave. I have myself to support, and his honour to reclaim. I ask you how I am to do it best—must it be as a labourer at home, or as a soldier abroad?”

“But you have given me no reason why your choice should be limited to these two trades,” said Colonel Sutherland; “there are many things besides which such a young man as yourself can do better than either. Come, you are very young—you are arbitrary and impatient. The profession of arms can only carry a man on and forward in time of war. You are thinking of Napoleon’s soldiers, those men who might possibly carry a marshal’s baton in their knapsacks; but you forget that the first thing required is not the soldiers, but the Napoleon—and things were never so in the English army, my young friend. Even in times of war, not one man in a thousand rises from the ranks—no, not even in India—not in the Company’s service. Don’t deceive yourself. Don’t you know that even the old women in the village break their hearts when their sons enlist, and declare that anything would be better? I don’t say that. I am a soldier myself; but they are nearer the truth than you.”

“Is it then only the alternative of despair?” cried the young man.

Colonel Sutherland curved his hand over his deaf ear, and begged his pardon, and had not heard him. The excellent Colonel was at home in his capacity of adviser: he could understand this lad who came with his heart on his lips ten times better than he could understand Horace, and took up his case with lively zeal and interest. He took him to the inn with himself, and made him sit by while he breakfasted, and grew into friendship with the young stranger almost against his will. On the whole, the encounter pleased the Colonel: he made

Roger promise to come to him in the evening, when they could talk over his affairs at leisure, and warned him with fatherly kindness to do nothing rashly, and to entertain no further thought of enlistment. Perhaps it was very foolish of the Colonel to comfort the youth's heart after this rash fashion; perhaps it was "raising expectations which could never be justified." The old man never thought of that: he had kindness to give, and good counsel, and some knowledge of the world. He said to himself that this was all an old man was good for, and so shook hands with poor Roger Musgrave as if he had known him all his life, and occupied himself on the road to Marchmain with contrivances for serving him. It was his "way"; there are people who have a worse "way" to be met with in this world.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE Colonel Sutherland left the inn on his expedition to Marchmain, he had another visitor in the sergeant, who took care, however, to make sure that Musgrave was gone before making his appearance. He was not unlike the Colonel himself in his outer man; tall, spare, and brown, with a weather-beaten face and a grizzled moustache, Kennedy had at least sufficient resemblance to his old Colonel to mark their connection as comrades in arms. But the sergeant was neither deaf nor to any remarkable extent benevolent; abstract kindness did not influence him much: he flattered himself that he "knew what he was about" under all circumstances, and was somewhat pragmatical and dogmatic on most matters. His extensive experience and knowledge of the world had made him the cock of the village for a year or two past, where everybody believed his big stories, and most people were disposed to indorse his own opinion of himself. He was from the north of Ireland; a violent Protestant and Orangeman—tendencies sufficiently innocent in him; but the place of his birth, mingling a little of the fire and vehemence of the Milesian with all the obstinacy, dogmatism, and self-opinion of Scotland, had sufficient influence on his character to be noted. He was a rigid Presbyterian—one of the pillars of one of those little churches which, lingering near the border, prove that the national faith of Scotland has pushed her colonies more effectively into the sister country than England has been able to do in return; but this did not prevent Kennedy from making himself the oracle of the village ale-house, where he might be seen three or four nights a-week, sometimes in a very lofty and dignified state of haziness, freely bestowing the most grave advice upon everybody, and disposed to take rather a melancholy view of the degradation of the times, and of things in general. But this was the worst that anyone could say against him. He was fond of his little grandchildren, and was always busy with something for their amusement; good to his daughter, whom he often

helped out of his own little funds; and in general friendly and serviceable. He presented himself to his old commander with a little awkwardness, fully expecting, as it seemed, to be taken to task for his morning's exploits; and his expectations were not disappointed. Colonel Sutherland was too much given to advising youth himself to have any patience with the advice of the sergeant. It was an invasion of his own domain which he could not forgive.

"I am glad to hear you are so comfortable," said the Colonel, "and that you manage to live in peace with your son-in-law, which, I confess to you, I would have thought rather doubtful; for I know you're rather strong in your opinions —eh! is it your daughter that keeps the peace?"

"Na, Cornel, na," said the sergeant; "I'm no so onexperienced as that; faothers and moothers are best in their oun place. I have a cot to mysel', and a' my traps about me—next house to Mary, poor thing!—and she's kept a' goin' since I've come, and the childer they keep back and forard; and so far as the husband goes, it never was said, among a' slanders, that I was ought but a peaceable man—"

"Oh! a very peaceable man," said Colonel Sutherland, with a smile. "That, to be sure, is the last thing one could think of doubting; but come, you have your faults, my good fellow—what do you say to me, now, for such an account as I heard your giving, this morning, to the young man?"

"Well, Cornel!" exclaimed the culprit, keeping up his boldness, though a little abashed—

"Well! It does not appear to me to be well at all," said the Colonel; "how often have I told you, when on recruiting duty, to tell the truth? You pour a parcel of lies into a poor blockhead's head, and blow up his pride with thoughts of what's going to happen to him; and you expect, when he has found out that it's all lies, as he must do, that he will believe the rest of what you say to him! That's bad enough; but to go into it con amore—I mean for pure love of romancing—when there was neither necessity nor business in it—I admit to you that's something that beats me."

"Ay, Cornel, it's easy for the like of you," said Kennedy, "that have your pensions and commands; but what's a man to say to the poor devils? Hard service and poor wages, barracks and boiled beef, and sixpence a-day! Truth's a grand thing for the army, Cornel, but it does not bring in no recruits; and where's the harm done? If Johnny Raw is deceived wance in a way, it's soon tooken out on him. At the worst, did I ever tell a man he could rise to be Cornel but by a steedy life and doing his duty? Sure, and if he minds himself, he can come to be sergeant, and that's next best; but the biggest lot of them, Cornel, as you know as well as me, never try, and get no honour at all, at all, as may well be proved; for them that strive not, win not on, as I've told them

till I was hoarse myself, many's the day."

"You never wanted an excuse," said the Colonel, shaking his head; "however, we'll leave the general question; did you ever know a man in the 100th rise from the ranks?—did you ever hear of a sergeant sent on a political mission?—and how could you venture to begin the day, you old sinner, with such a pack of lies?"

"Well, well, Cornel—aisy, sir," said the sergeant; "sure he was a gentleman, and know'd what was what as well as me!"

Colonel Sutherland laughed in spite of himself at this original excuse, on seeing which Kennedy recovered his courage, and took a higher tone.

"And if ye'll believe me, the best thing for him yonder is just to 'list, Cornel. If he wance 'lists, friends'll come in and buy his commission; for sure they are well off and in plenty, Yorkshire ways—and the disgrace, sir, the disgrace, that's what will make them draw their purse-strings. I would not desire a prettier man, either for parade or battle-field. He's a soldier born!"

"They! who are they?" said Colonel Sutherland; "he has no friends."

"Maybe, Cornel, maybe—I say little of friends—friendship's neither here nor there," said the sergeant, waving his hand; "but the faother and moother I can speak to. Them that heeds not love, heeds shame."

"You are oracular, Sergeant Kennedy," said the Colonel, with a very little peevishness; "but I tell you the lad told me he had no friends."

"Faother and moother, Cornel, as I say," answered the persistent sergeant, with a little nod of his dogmatical head.

Colonel Sutherland got up and fell to pacing the room with great annoyance and agitation. After a little while, being somewhat obstinate himself, he seized Kennedy by the shoulder and shook him.

"You're deaf!" said the Colonel, with a whimsical, half-angry transference of his own defect to the other; "you're hard of hearing! I tell you the lad says he has no friends."

"And I tell you, Cornel, he has faother and moother, if it was my last word!" said the sergeant once again.

"Your last word!—ay, you will always have the last word," cried Colonel Sutherland, this time indeed hearing imperfectly; "there must be some mistake, I suppose. Never mind, we'll inquire into it later. You must see me again, sergeant—I am going now to my young people. Good morning to you, my friend—ask for me here to-morrow."

"Are the young gentlemen in these parts, Cornel?" said Kennedy, rising with a little reluctance; "I said to mysel' the Cornel behooved to have his own

occasions here."

"Not my boys—my niece and nephew, people you never heard of," said the Colonel, quickly. "Now, my man, good morning—I am pushed for time—you'll come again to-morrow."

Thus urged, Kennedy had no resource but to obey, which he did, however, very slowly, running over in his mind immediately all the "gentlemens' families" of the district, with which he had any acquaintance, in a vain endeavour to ascertain who could be the niece and nephew of his "old Cornel." Kennedy, as it happened, had not been at his usual post in the public room of the little inn on the previous night, and had consequently no intimation of any dawn of new fortune on Mr. Horry, whom he knew perfectly well, and at whose hands he had suffered contradiction enough to give him some interest in the young man's fate. This information, however, he would have been pretty sure to receive, but that Colonel Sutherland had already sent for the landlady to give her his orders for the day.

The Colonel was extremely frugal, almost parsimonious so far as his own manner of living was concerned, but having set himself to devise some pleasure for poor Susan, shut up all her life in Marchmain, the extremest liberality which the circumstances would allow, was not too much for his inclinations. The only vehicle possessed by the little inn at Tillington was a double gig, a very homely conveyance, which the Colonel had already ordered, and in which he proposed to take Susan "somewhere," bringing her back to lunch with him. The kind old man entered into the most minute directions about this lunch. He put elaborate leading questions, in order to ascertain what the cuisine was capable of, and consulted over puddings and tarts with the zeal of a connoisseur. A sentimental French chefwho would have entered into the sentiment of the occasion, would have delighted the Colonel. He wanted a dainty meal of pretty little dishes, sweet and savoury, as much in honour of Susan, as to please her youthful palate, and endeavoured so earnestly to impress his wishes upon the homely innkeeper, that the idea of some secret grandeur belonging to Mr. Horry and his sister impressed itself more and more deeply upon that good woman's mind. She promised to do her very best; with the greatest awe and impressment she left the innocent and too trustful Colonel to study her cookery-book with devotion, and to conceive impossible triumphs of culinary art. But art, even in the kitchen, avenges itself upon those who neglect it. Poor Mrs. Gilsland lost three or four hours of valuable time, and her temper—which was still more valuable—over trifle which sunk dead into the bottom of her dish, and cream which would not "whip;" and dratted the Colonel at the conclusion of it with hearty good will and much vexation. While the innocent Colonel, secure of having done all that man could do to procure a satisfactory collation for Susan, drove the

innkeeper’s steady old horse across the moorland road, and combated manfully the vexation which rose stronger and stronger in his mind, as he recollected the discrepancy between young Musgrave’s account of himself and that given by Kennedy.

The Colonel had a little pride in his own discernment, and could not bear to be taken in; but besides that, was grieved in his kind old heart at the thought of finding his new protegé unworthy; and yet his manner was so sincere, his face so honest and candid! Would that Horace had as clear a countenance! Colonel Sutherland touched the horse with his whip, and went forward with a little start, as if he would rather escape from that last thought, and so dismissed young Musgrave from his mind as best he could, and began to think with simple pleasure of Susan and the unusual holiday which he was bringing to her. He had ascertained that it was possible this fine morning to drive her to the little country town, where it was market-day, and where the little stir and bustle of life would be new to her. The idea of the pleasure she would have exhilarated himself, as he approached nearer to the house. He meant to buy her some books, and anything else that might amuse her in her solitude, and smiled to himself, with a tender and simple satisfaction, as he tried to anticipate her likings and wishes. Thus thinking, and thus smiling, he came in sight of the solitary house upon which at the moment the sun shone.

There it stood in its dark reserve, with the windows buried deep in the wall, sending no responsive glimmer to the light which shone full upon the blank gable, and slanted along the front of the house. There was no projecting point to make a break of shadow in the featureless brightness, nothing but the dull wall and the cold slate-roof; and all around the black moor, without a tree, intersected by long deep cuttings full of black water. Colonel Sutherland pulled up in spite of himself, both in his pace and his thoughts, and went softly over the remaining way. Could he hope to penetrate when the very sun was baffled? A chill of disgust, a throb of impatience, the intolerance of a fresh and upright nature for this unnatural mystery and gloom, possessed him in spite of himself. He said to himself that it was contemptible, that he had no patience with it. It needed all the smiles of Susan looking out from the window to restore him to his pleasanter thoughts, and to throw the least light of feasibility upon his simple expedients for softening and healing the harms of this unnatural life.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSAN had been at the window for nearly two hours, though it was still only eleven o’clock. She said to herself that Uncle Edward would not certainly

come before the middle of the day, but still could not leave the window in case she might possibly lose the first glimpse of him on the road. When she had satisfied herself, to her great disappointment, that the homely country vehicle which she saw approaching contained him, poor Susan nearly cried with vexation. There was not even anybody in the gig with him to take charge of it. It appeared that he must only mean to remain a moment, and Susan withdrew from the window in the first shock of her disappointment, feeling that Uncle Edward had deceived her, and that there was no longer anything to be depended on in the world.

At that instant Horace, who had no desire to subject himself to the inquiries of Susan, and had hitherto kept rather out of her way, entered the room abruptly.

“Here is my uncle!” he exclaimed. “What! you don’t care for him to-day, don’t you? He’s no novelty now?—that’s famous, certainly! But, do you hear, Susan, I want something of you. While he’s here, make him talk all you can; ask him about my mother; how they used to live when we were babies; what happened about the time she died; everything you can think of. I want to hear what he says, and of course all that’s very interesting to you; you want to know.”

“Don’t you want to know, Horace?” asked Susan, half alarmed by his tone, and yet half pleased with the idea that he was becoming interested about their dead mother, and the life which was connected with her. She looked at him with dubious, uncertain looks; she did not know what to make of him. She could not comprehend any secondary or evil motive which he could have, and yet he did not seem to speak quite honestly, or in good faith.

“To be sure; why else should I bid you ask?” said Horace, throwing a book down on the table and seating himself by it, as if he had been pursuing his morning studies there.

And indeed Susan had said the same thing to herself. She ran to the window again as the wheels began to approach audibly, and could no longer feel disappointed when she met Uncle Edward’s smile, and saw him uncover his grey head in the sunshine, in his antique affectionate gallantry. Susan was quite unaccustomed to the common tokens of respect which belonged to her womanhood. The salutation made her blush, and yet pleased her wonderfully; she could no longer believe that her uncle was coming only to call as if they had been strangers. She stood smiling and waving her hand to him till he was quite near, and then ran to the door. John Gilsland’s mare was the soberest beast in the district—she stood still as a statue when the Colonel descended, and looked so perfectly trustworthy, that he did not hesitate to leave her to herself for a few minutes. He took both Susan’s hands in his and kissed her forehead with a fatherly grace, then drew her arm into his own to lead her back to the dining-room. His whole manner, with its protecting, tender, indulgent

kindness for her youth, and its chivalrous respect for her womanhood, had in it the most exquisite sensation of novelty for Susan. She laughed to herself secretly, yet with tears coming to her eyes—she felt a new pride, a tender humility in her own heart. She was flattered, and touched, and stimulated at the same moment. Wonderful was this love, this new influence, this unknown soul of life; it might have been more romantic had it dawned upon her through a young man instead of an old one—a lover rather than an uncle; but in that case the revelation would have been very different, and perhaps the revolution scarcely so complete.

"Call Peggy, my dear child," said Uncle Edward, "and put on your bonnet, I want you to go with me as far as Kenlisle—not too far for a drive this fine morning; it is cold to be sure, but bright and pleasant; tell Peggy you must have on your warmest wraps; tell her I want you to see something else than the moor, for one day at least—tell her—ah, here she is herself! Peggy, I want my niece to drive with me to-day to Kenlisle—will there be any objections, do you think?"

"The master never sets eyes on Miss Susan, from ten o'clock in the day till six at night," said Peggy. "He can scarce complain, and as for me I give my consent willing. Ay, honey! you may look, with your eyes dancing in your head—I said new times was coming. Would you keep the Colonel waiting? and the mare at the door like a douse wife, taking great notice on the bits of green grass agrowing amidst of the stones. There, Colonel, she's off like a hare athwart the moor—the poor child! from a baby, she's ne'er had a holiday before."

And Peggy hastened upstairs after Susan, who, gazing from one to another for a moment of bewildered and doubtful delight, had at last burst from the room, seeing that nobody opposed the extraordinary, delightful suggestion, to get ready for her drive. When the old woman disappeared following her, the Colonel turned to Horace, who had listened with a good deal of discomfiture, resentment, and contempt, unable to comprehend the bad taste which could contrive pleasures for Susan, to the neglect of himself. It gave Horace a worse opinion of his uncle than he had yet entertained. He could scarcely help sneering at him, and calling him an old woman to his face.

"Will you walk over to Tillington and meet us, Horace?" said Colonel Sutherland, who, for his part, exhilarated by the sight of Susan's delight and wonder, was now full of smiles and satisfaction; "I have ordered some luncheon between two and three, which will leave you time to bring your sister home. You will come?—you look a little pale, my boy—you have been thinking too much over-night!"

"It is possible—I have not slept since I saw you, uncle," said the young man.

“Too much—too much,” said Colonel Sutherland, resting his hand kindly upon his nephew’s shoulder. “Important as the question is, I am sorry you lost your sleep—it is only old people who can do that with safety. And you have come to a good conclusion, Horace?—that is right! Already, I am sure you feel the pleasure of decision. But I will not ask you what you have resolved on now. Eh, Susan?—what, not dressed yet, you fairy?—what is it now?”

“Oh, uncle!—I only wanted to ask, if you won’t be angry,” cried Susan, out of breath, “whether I should be too grand if I wore my shawl?”

The old man’s face brightened, and expanded all over with the simplest pleasure.

“Too grand!—you don’t drive with me every day, do you?” he said with a laugh, as he patted her cheek. “No—I should be quite mortified if I did not see you in your shawl; but make haste—think of the mare, and in a winter’s day remember there is no daylight to lose.”

Susan ran off again with flying feet, and the Colonel turned once more to his nephew. He could not help recognizing then something of the amazement, contempt, and derision which filled the mind of Horace. Uncle Edward was a little struck by his look—perhaps, even a little offended. He paused unconsciously to defend himself.

“You think that very trivial—eh, Horace?” said the Colonel. “Ah, my boy! one is heroical when one is young—one feels it grand to be superior, and despise the smaller matters of life; but at my age one learns that happiness itself is made up of trivial things.”

Horace’s eyes fell under his uncle’s look; he was half ashamed—not of his sentiments, but of having betrayed them.

“I am sure it is very good of you to take so much trouble for Susan,” he said, with his uncomprehending, half-resentful voice.

Colonel Sutherland supposed Horace to be jealous, and was a little pained, but yet acknowledged a certain amount of nature in the feeling. He had no conception of the true state of the case—of the entire contempt his nephew felt for himself, and the angry and derisive wonder with which he perceived the importance given to Susan. It was not jealousy: Horace only could not comprehend how any man in his senses could resign his conversation and society for that of his sister—Susan! a girl! who knew nothing, hoped nothing, desired nothing—a tame, contented woman! He found it hard to restrain himself under these circumstances, and called his uncle an old fool and an old trifler in his secret heart. Then Susan came downstairs, smiling and happy—her India shawl contrasting, perhaps, rather too strongly with her simple bonnet and dark merino gown, standing before her uncle to be admired, and turning round that he might see his present in all possible aspects. What

trifling! what folly! what miserable vanity! But it pleased the two wonderfully, who stood there making a little sun-bright group of their own, the old man stooping over the girl, with his tender, indulgent smile, and the girl looking up to him in her unusual flutter of happy spirits. Perhaps it is true, after all, that common, every-day happiness—that dear solace of common life, which comes, when it does come, without asking—is made up of very trivial things; at all events, it was much more agreeable to look at them than at Horace, who loured behind them like a dark cloud, and turned away his head in disgust, and felt that it was all he could do to keep the sneer of scorn from his lip. In much the same condition he attended them to the door, and saw them drive away. Susan, wrapped up and covered over with shawls and cloaks of every description by her uncle's careful hands, and with Peggy's great black veil, embroidered with great flowers, like gigantic beetles, fastened over her bonnet; from the midst of all which unusual coverings the pretty face, smiling and blushing, radiant with pleasure and gratitude, looked out in its sweet colour and expression, with a simplicity of happiness quite beyond Horace's frown to stifle or prevent. Somehow his sister's face disgusted him that day: he stood looking after them, suffering his sneer to take form and remain, long after they were out of sight. He rose over them in his own mind with a contemptuous superiority, yet felt himself humbled and envious at sight of the happiness with which he had no sympathy, and which he did not understand. He did not wish to share it—it was something beneath his level. Yet the very power of being exhilarated by such trifles, and finding pleasure so independent of reasonable grounds, filled the young man with a certain envy, and humiliated his pride. Susan's happiness did not give him a single throb of pleasure, yet it brightened his uncle's face into quite a kindred light: it was altogether incomprehensible to Horace. He took refuge in silent contempt and sneers of unacknowledged mortification, disdaining the pleasure, yet galled in himself not to comprehend how it was.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEANWHILE Colonel Sutherland and his niece drove along the bare and exposed moorland road with very different sentiments. Susan could not feel any cold, could not allow herself to suppose that any landscape more delightful or weather more entirely satisfactory was to be found anywhere in the world. She pitied the poor people shut up in a close carriage, whom they passed at a little distance from Marchmain. She appealed to her uncle if a gig was not of all other kinds of conveyance the most delightful. She listened to his stories of travel in India, with all its elephants and camels, and of the still more miraculous railway at home, with equal admiration and wonder, as

things equally unlikely to come under her own observation, and enjoyed her present extraordinary felicity all the more from thinking how unlikely it was to occur again.

Everything concurred to put Susan in the highest spirits—her freedom, her kind protector, the novelty of her position, the wondering looks cast at her from the cottages they passed, the involuntary respect excited by her companion, the air, the sunshine—even the fine shawl, though it was entirely covered by her other wrappings and nobody could see it—all contributed towards the full and joyous satisfaction of her young mind. She put Peggy's great old-fashioned veil, with its big beetles, up from her face—she was not afraid of the wind, or of taking cold, or of anything else in the world; and as the horizon gradually widened, and the road extended out of the immediate vicinity of her home, Susan's delight increased. She declared the hills went faster than they did, and kept continually receding, and every new opening of the landscape increased her pleasure. The Colonel listened to all her admiring exclamations with a smiling face; he told her of his own neighbourhood, a fairer and richer country. He spoke of the visit she must make him shortly, and of all the places he should take her to. The wind blew cold in their faces, with by no means a balmy or genial breath; but then their hearts were so fortified with warm affections and honest happiness, that the cold did not hurt them. Little by little they fell into more particular conversation. Colonel Sutherland was interested and concerned about Horace, anxious to know how to help him; but he was not and could not be confidential with his nephew, whereas his heart flew open to Susan as at a touch of magic. He could not help speaking of everything which moved when he had gained her ear, and had her to himself alone. He had told her all about young Roger Musgrave before he was aware, and about Kennedy's story, and his own vexation and annoyance to find that the young stranger had not dealt quite truly by him.

"But, uncle!—oh, Peggy knows all about him," said Susan; "Peggy did not know he had any friends till just the other day. Perhaps he did not know himself—perhaps—I think, Uncle Edward, I would not believe he was wrong till he told you of it himself."

"But if he is in the wrong, Susan, will he tell me of it himself?"

"Some people would not," said Susan, gravely, "I know that; but yes, uncle, oh, yes, I am not afraid."

"Perhaps you know him better than I do, my love," said Uncle Edward, observing with a little curiosity the expression of Susan's face.

"Yes, I think I saw him once," said Susan. Then she added, with a little laugh —"I was very much frightened—I am afraid it was very wrong of him—he was actually fighting, uncle."

“Fighting?—it was certainly very wrong,” said the Colonel; “but you laugh, you wicked little fairy—what was it about?”

“It was not so much fighting either,” said Susan—“it was punishing. It was gipsies, uncle—what the people here call muggers, you know. One of them was driving his little cart along the road with a poor wretched donkey, lashing it like a savage, and his poor wife came trudging after him, with her baby tied in a shawl on her back—and twice over he gave her a cut with his whip, to make her go faster. I could have beaten him myself—the great beast!” cried Susan. “Roger Musgrave was coming down the road; and, just as he met the muggers, that fellow pushed his wife out of the way so rudely, that she fell down, poor creature, and hurt herself. Mr. Roger had been watching them like me—he came up just then with a spring, and caught the mugger by his collar and his waist like this; and, before he had time to say a word, tossed him over the hedge—right over—where he rolled head-over-heels on the grass. You should have seen his face when he got up! I clapped my hands—I was so pleased. And Mr. Roger took off his hat to me,” said Susan, after a little pause, with a rising colour, “as you did, uncle, to-day.”

“It was very well done, I don’t doubt,” said Colonel Sutherland; “but, my dear child, that was not fighting.”

“Oh, no—not that!—but I liked it better than what came after,” said Susan. “The mugger scrambled through the hedge, and swore at Mr. Roger; and he took off his coat in a moment, and told him not to be a coward, to flog women and beasts, but to come on—and I was very much frightened; then the mugger’s wife, shecame forward and swore too, and it was all very dreadful. I did not want to see them fight, and ran into a cottage—I rather think they did not fight at all, for the mugger was frightened too; but, however, that was the only time I ever saw Roger Musgrave; the people in the cottage told me who he was, and I liked him for punishing the man.”

“I daresay the fellow punished his wife and the donkey all the more, when they were out of sight,” said the Colonel; “but I confess I should have done it myself. Very well! I will put down in my books—my little Susan in favour of young Musgrave versus Sergeant Kennedy against. And so you only saw him that one time? Do you know anybody at all, you poor child?—have you ever had a companion in your life?”

“Not a companion,” said Susan; “but”—and she looked up in her uncle’s face—“you won’t be angry, I know, uncle. Peggy goes to the meeting, and sometimes in the morning, when papa does not go out, I go with her. It is dreary to go to church all alone.”

“So it is,” said the sympathetic uncle; “and what then?”

“Then,” said Susan, blushing a little more, and looking up shyly in his face

—“I am sure I do not know how we got acquainted. We used to look at each other, and then we nodded, and then, at last, one day we spoke; and now, sometimes, we meet when we are out walking, uncle—and once I have been in their house—only once. I did not mean it—I was there before I knew what I was about.”

“But you have not told me yet who this mysterious person is,” said the Colonel, a little disappointed and troubled, if the truth must be told, at the thought of some young and no doubt perfectly unsuitable lover who met his little girl in clandestine walks, and whose house even, the inexperience of Susan had been persuaded into visiting. He said the words rather coldly, in spite of himself—he was mortified to find the virginal quiet of her mind already thus disturbed.

“Uncle, are you displeased?” said Susan, with a little fright and surprise. “Oh, I never thought you would be angry; for even Peggy said that to be friends with Letty would be for my good. She is the minister’s daughter at the meeting, and the only child; and she has learned so much, and knows a hundred things that I know nothing of; and, uncle, sometimes I want somebody to speak to—oh, so much!”

“My dear child, forgive me! I wish you knew a dozen Letties,” cried the repentant Colonel; “that you should have to blush over an innocent friendship, my poor dear little girl; but your confusion, Susan, made me think it something very different. Why should you be ashamed of knowing Letty? I am very glad to hear it, for my part.”

Susan did not answer just immediately. She said to herself, with a little quickening of her breath:—

“I wonder what was the something very different that Uncle Edward thought of,” and a little inclination to laughter seized the little girl. Who could tell why? She did not know herself, but felt it all the same.

“Does Horace spend much of his time with you, Susan?” said Uncle Edward; “does he tell you what he is thinking about? Do you know that your brother is tired of an idle life, and wants to be employed, and to make his own way in the world?”

With that question Susan was brought back to her home, and separated as if by magic in a moment from all her individual involuntary girlish happinesses; she shrank a little into herself and felt chilled and contracted, without knowing how. She could not even be so frank as she would have been a little while ago—Uncle Edward’s love had opened the eyes of the neglected girl, and developed all at once in her heart the natural instincts of “the only woman in the family.” She could not bear to convey an unfavourable impression of Horace to her uncle; but, unskilled in her new craft, she betrayed herself even

by her reticences and reserves.

“I know he wants to go away,” she said, faltering a little; “and I am sure you would not be surprised, if you lived with us only for a day;—for,” added Susan, blushing and correcting herself, “it is very dull at Marchmain, and boys cannot put up with that as we can. Horace has always felt it a great deal more than I have.”

“I am not surprised,” said Colonel Sutherland; “if Marchmain was the happiest home in the world, still the young man must go away—it is in his nature. He must make his own way in the world.”

“Must he, uncle?” said Susan, looking up with a little surprise into his face.

“I was only sixteen, my love, when I first went to India,” said the Colonel; “the boys, as you call them, must not stay at home all their lives—they must do something. My Ned will be on his way to India, if all is well, in a year or two. The sooner a young man gets into his work the better—and now Horace would set about it too.”

“But he cannot do anything, uncle,” said Susan, seriously; “what is he going to do?”

“Has he never told you?” asked Uncle Edward.

The question seemed to imply blame, and Susan was troubled.

“Horace is not like you, uncle,” she said, recovering a little boldness; “he does not tell me things; he knows a great deal more than I do—he has almost learned German—and he thinks a great deal more. I am afraid I do not always understand him when he does speak to me. It is my fault; so he thinks over everything all the more, and I am afraid sometimes gets angry in his heart, because no one can understand him at Marchmain!”

Colonel Sutherland shook his head, but did not say anything. He began to tell Susan what he did when he was a lad.

“There were a great many of us at home, to be sure,” said the Colonel; “but we were all scattered before the youngest was fifteen—the sisters married, and the brothers making their own career. They are all dead, Susan, every one—but you have quantities of cousins, my dear, in India and elsewhere, whom you never heard of, I daresay. Your Uncle William was puisne Judge of the Saraflat, John was Resident at Cangalore, both of them very much respected. I was the youngest but one. I could not bear the thought that all my brothers were independent but myself. I gave them no peace at home till I got my cadetship. Unless one has the good fortune to get an appointment, it is quite as hard work getting on in India as at home, my dear; and all our influence had been used up for my elder brothers, and exhausted before it came to my turn. I was but a subaltern when I married, Susan. Your aunt was—ah, I can’t

describe her, my love. I am very happy on the whole and contented, but sometimes I think on what might have been, and make myself wretched, which is very sinful, considering how much I have to thank God for. Yes, Susan, I was a rich man once. I had wife and daughters, and my house full. We had not very much money, but we were very happy; and now, my dear child, you are the only woman of the family—that is, here."

Susan could not have spoken a word to save her life—she sobbed silently under her heap of warm wrappings, looking with a wistful, youthful sympathy into the grave face beside her. The Colonel shed no tears;—he guided his horse with the same quiet caution as before, turning the animal aside from a sudden obstacle in the way, with a steady promptitude, which showed his perfect attention to what he was about, even in the midst of these recollections; yet he was not looking at the road, nor at her, nor at anything; but had his eyes fixed on the far-away horizon, which yet he did not see. Susan sat beside him in silence, wondering with youthful awe and reverence over the indescribable yearning, with which some instinct told her this brave old heart longed for the heaven which held his departed; but she could not say anything—she would have felt it sacrilege.

However, they shortly approached the town, which recalled Colonel Sutherland from his graver thoughts. It was a comfortable country town, pleasantly placed at the opening of a valley, with the gray fells ranging themselves on either side, and the great gray tower of the old Abbey church reigning over the little crowd of houses. The market-place was still busy and bright, though the more serious merchandize of the morning was over; cosy country-women, in cloth pelisses, made promenades round the open square, where the best shops in the town displayed their riches, to see "how things were wore," and make stray purchase of a kerchief or ribbon; and still the notable housewives of the town bought vegetables, and rabbits, and country eggs, and chickens, from the remaining stalls in the market-place. And still heaps of dark-green vegetables—winter greens and savoys, purple flowers of broccoli, and tiny red lines of carrots, illustrated some boards, close to the white eggs and yellow butter, the hapless decapitated poultry, and butter-milk pails of the others. Susan and her uncle walked through the throng, attracting no small degree of observation; for there were not many such cavaliers as Colonel Sutherland in Kenlisle, and very few such shawls as that one which, relieved of all her other wraps, Susan displayed upon her shoulders with no small degree of pride. The scene was quite extraordinary in its animation to her eyes. She looked at the ruddy winter apples and crisp greens with the most perfect interest. She longed, with a natural housewifely instinct, to make purchases herself, to the confusion and amazement of Peggy. She could scarcely conceal her unbecoming curiosity about the booths of toys and sweetmeats, the cases of coarse ornaments, brooches, and rings, and ear-rings,

which Susan could not believe to be paltry and worthless. The glamour of her ignorance brightened everything; and when her eyes, as she looked up unconsciously, fell upon the gray mass of the Abbey tower withdrawn into a street which led off from this busy space, Susan felt awed and ashamed to think of her own vanity and extreme regard for “the things of this world.” But she could not school herself into righteous indifference; above all, when Uncle Edward, indifferent to her morals, took her into shop after shop, buying a little parcel of books in one place, some pretty ribbons in another, a cap for Peggy, which captivated the old man in a window; and, last of all, patterns and materials for work of various kinds, canvas and Berlin wool, and an embroidery-frame. This last purchase raised Susan into a paradisiacal condition, for which it is to be hoped nobody will despise her. She was not very intellectual, it is true—it might very well happen that she preferred her needlework to her book sometimes. She saw herself rendered completely independent, as she supposed, of ennui and domestic weariness by that ecstatic parcel. She longed to take it in her arms, and run all the way home with it, that Peggy might see, and half regretted for a moment the luncheon at Tillington, which, however, would give her still another hour or two of her uncle’s company. Then Susan looked at that uncle with a great compunction, thinking of what he had told her; but Colonel Sutherland was happy in her happiness, delighted to see her so delighted, and entered with fresh, natural pleasure into the scene for his own part. It was quite a work of art to pack the gig with all the parcels, and wrap Susan up again into all her cloaks. Then they went off at a great pace to Tillington. So far it had been a most successful day.

CHAPTER XV.

HORACE had been waiting sometime in the little inn before Colonel Sutherland and Susan arrived. This had not much improved the young man’s temper; but the result of his cogitations on the way here, and while he waited, had been, that it was necessary to be no longer critical, but that he must assume the virtue which he had not, and secure his uncle’s assistance in his own way. Horace had settled at last to his own satisfaction upon his version of his uncle’s character. He concluded the Colonel to be a well-meaning, superficial old man, most at home among women and children, finding pleasure in trifles, strongly prejudiced in favour of some old-fashioned virtues, which he recommended not so much from conviction as from custom. Industry and honesty, and straightforwardness, a homespun and sober interpretation of all human laws—Horace decided that his uncle lauded and urged these virtues on others just as he might recommend cod-liver oil or Morison’s pills, and that he was unable to comprehend anything higher than that old code of

respectability. But granting this, it was all the more wise to humour and yield to the old man, and permit him to maunder on in his own way. Horace resolved to profess himself ready and anxious for employment, the choice of which he meant dutifully to leave to his uncle; and having thus settled summarily the more important issue, set himself with all his might to observe and entrap the unsuspicious Colonel in his confidential and unguarded talk. It suited him a great deal better to do this, than to consider honestly how he should provide for his own life, and establish his individual position in the world; and it was significant of his character that he dismissed the former question at once, but lingered with inclination and zeal upon the crafts of the other, laying his ambuscade with all the cunning and precaution possible.

He sat by the fire in the inn parlour, while the maid and mistress bustled in and out laying the cloth and preparing for the Colonel's arrival. Mrs. Gilsland having recovered her temper, and remembering the embellishments of her master's table, in the days when she professed herself a cook, had been at pains to gather a handful of laurustinus, with dim, pinky, half-opened blossoms, to adorn the table, upon which sparkled the best glass and whitest linen of the establishment. The worthy woman would fain have insinuated herself into the confidence of Horace as he sat by the fire, and wanted only the very smallest encouragement to break forth in praises of the Colonel, and to hint her fear that they would not see much of the young gentleman at Tillington now that "his grand friends had turned up at last, and he was nigh coom to his fortune." But Horace did not give the slightest opening to any such familiarity. He kept possession of the room with an insolent unconsciousness of the landlady's presence and her hesitating glances at him, which enraged and yet awed her. It was Mr. Horry's "way," and this arrogance imposed upon the village people even while it offended them; but it was very different from "the Cornel." Mrs. Gilsland, who had been much disappointed at first to learn that her guest was no lord, and had not the shadow of a title, was by this time entirely captivated by the old man, and zealous to serve him; but still she turned to Mr. Horry with the interest which attaches to mystery. He took no more notice of her than if she had been a piece of furniture. She was angry but reverential—there was "a power o' thought" in the young man.

When the gig arrived with the two travellers, Horace hastened to the door to meet them with a novel amiability. He lifted Susan down, and gathered her parcels together with a good-nature that astounded her. They were all equally pleased, it seemed, as they went in together and met Mrs. Gilsland, curtseying and cordial, ready—half from goodwill and half from curiosity—to attend Susan herself, and help her to take off her bonnet. Then Susan carried a passport to respect wherever she went in that wonderful shawl; the landlady touched it with reverential ignorance, knowing only that it was "Indae," and ready to believe in any fabulous estimate of its value. Then, for the first time,

Mrs. Gilsland remembered her unlucky trifle, with, not anger, but a pang of mortification. The wearer of such a shawl did certainly deserve something better than apples and custards, to which familiar dainties she had fallen back in despair. However, the luncheon was so far satisfactory, that it was eaten in perfect freedom, with a lively flow of conversation on all sides, which exhilarated even Horace, and raised Susan into a little paradise. What a difference it made to the common table, when Uncle Edward sat at the head instead of papa!—what an extraordinary revolution life would undergo, if the bread of every day were sweetened by such domestic intercourse as this! While her brother rose into a certain glow of personal exultation in the freedom he experienced, Susan, thinking less of herself, and feeling more deeply, found herself, unawares, surprised by the sudden mortification of a comparison. Involuntarily tears came into her eyes, and as she grew more grateful and affectionate towards her uncle, her heart ached more and more for her father. She saw now all the unnatural misery of their life. Why was it? But these thoughts did not take possession of the girl—they only came over her mind in a sudden, painful overflow as the tears came to her eyes; and then she thought of Horace's instructions to her; and, moved by strong curiosity and anxiety of her own—of a very different kind from her brother's—proceeded to obey him.

"Uncle," said Susan, with an honest, enquiring look, "did you see very much of mamma after she was married? But ah, I forgot—you went to India so soon."

"I saw her only when I returned, my love," said Uncle Edward—"when you were a baby, and Horace a bold boy of five—yes, and before that, when I had to come home on business, when your other uncles in India made me their commissioner to look after the family affairs. At that time I lived with my sister; that is five-and-twenty years ago."

"And where did we live then, uncle?" asked Susan. Horace did not say a word; he did not look at his uncle, but preserved such a total stillness from all motion, almost from breath, that a suspicious observer must have been alarmed by it. He was listening not for words only, but for tones, inflections—all those unconscious betrayals by which people, who do not suppose themselves watched, naturally disclose a certain amount of feeling with the facts they tell.

But Uncle Edward did not hear—he stooped over towards his niece, and put his hand to his ear. Then he laughed, and patted her hand upon the table. "Nowhere, so far as I am aware," said the Colonel; "there was no word of you, in those days, for all such important grown-up people as you are. My sister was little more than a bride; a gay young wife, full of spirits, pretty, much sought after, and loved everywhere. We were a large family, you know, and

had been accustomed to a good deal of society at home. She was a happy young creature, and did not deny herself natural pleasures. Poor Mary!—it did not last very long!”

“Why did it not last very long, uncle?” cried Susan.

“Did you say it never lasts very long, my dear?” said Colonel Sutherland, who perhaps did not hear exactly what she said. “That is a very wise observation for you, Susan; and it is quite true to be sure, for when one begins to have a family, you know, one prefers happiness to pleasure—so that, after all, what the wiseacres say about the change from youth to sober age is true; and it isn’t true like most things in this world, for it is by no means a melancholy change. When I came back fifteen years ago there was a great difference. I think she must have been ill of her last illness then, though we did not know of it. She had lost her pleasant spirits, and her pretty colour, and was anxious and desponding, as sick people grow. That made all the house melancholy. I daresay Peggy has told you as much as that.”

“Oh! Uncle,” said Susan, “when Peggy has told me there has always seemed to be something which she did not tell me. I always fancy something dreadful had just happened—some misfortune, or something wrong, or—I cannot tell what—but she never would say any more. Did mamma break her heart?”

The colour rose in Colonel Sutherland’s cheek in spite of himself. Horace watching him, though he never looked at him, and though at this present moment he seemed intent on balancing a fork upon his finger, to the exclusion of all other concerns, found, or fancied he found, a certain irrepressible resentment mingled with his reluctance to answer. The Colonel spoke shortly, and with an embarrassed tone:—

“She was leaving her children young, without a mother; she did not know what might happen to you; she died anxious, troubled about you. I don’t know this for certain, Susan, but I can believe it. It is hard to die in the middle of life, my dear child—yes, harder than in youth, for one’s children seem to have so much need of one. I have no doubt, before all was over, the Lord showed her something of his purpose in it, and comforted her soul; but I don’t wonder she seemed heart-broken. We will not speak any more of this, Susan. Horace is silent, you see, and is not interested, like you. He is thinking of his own concerns, as is natural to a young man—and all that is far and long past.”

“On the contrary, I am very much interested, uncle,” said Horace.

“I have no doubt of it, my dear boy, at a more suitable time. Of course I don’t suppose you to be indifferent about your mother,” said the Colonel; “but I understand your feelings perfectly. It is not selfish nor egotistic, as you fear, but simply natural; you must think of your own plans and intentions; you would be to blame if you did not.”

If the Colonel could have known how far astray he was! If anything could have made him comprehend how little place in Horace's thoughts these same plans and intentions bore, and with what a stealthy watchfulness his nephew had been "interested" in his own recollections! But Uncle Edward comprehended his nephew quite as little as his nephew comprehended him; and the old soldier was not without a little strategical talent of his own; he found himself getting on dangerous ground; he feared saying too much, a thing which, if he allowed himself to get excited, he was only too likely to do —and Horace's plans were a famous diversion. Disappointed thus again, just at the very point of the story which seemed most likely to elicit something, Horace could scarcely be otherwise than sulky; but once more he put force on himself.

"I have decided, uncle," he said—"but only that it is you who must decide. You know the world, you know life. I am unacquainted with everything that could guide me. I have made up my mind to leave it in your hands. I must provide for myself, it appears," said Horace, sliding into these two words an involuntary interjection of bitterness, in a tone too low for his uncle to hear. "Take it into your consideration, and I will adopt whatever you decide upon. You know a hundred times better than I."

Colonel Sutherland was partly gratified, partly annoyed, for this was not at all what he wished. When at that moment the landlord came in to announce that the gig was at the door again, ready to take the young people home. Susan went away immediately to get her bonnet: then Uncle Edward had leisure to express his sentiments:—

"I daresay it is very probable that I know life better than you do," he said; "but, my boy, I don't know your inclinations, nor your tastes, nor your particular abilities, half, or a hundred part, so well. I'll consider the matter as long as you like, but how shall I be able to determine what you will like best?"

"Uncle, don't be annoyed," cried Horace, starting up—"can I have inclinations?—do you think it is possible? Do you suppose I don't understand what it means, all that you have said, and all that you have not said, about my mother? I would not grieve Susan with such words, but I know, as well as if you had spoken it, that it was my father who broke her heart."

"No, no, no!" cried the Colonel, rising likewise, and lifting his hand in earnest deprecation. "No, it is a mistake—no, you are unjust to him, Horace! I cannot excuse him to you as I might, but beware how you think ill of him. There are excuses—there are reasons. Listen to me, Horace Scarsdale: your father is a man as much to be pitied as blamed."

"And why?" said Horace, with a sceptical smile.

"My dear boy, sometime you will see all these circumstances more clearly,"

said the Colonel, a little agitated; “take it for granted in the meantime, and remember that he is your father—and really this has little to do with the question after all. You must like something: he has not been kind, I grant; but even where the most perfect love exists between parents and children, a father is never all in all, either for good or evil, to his son.”

“No, uncle, but constant hate and enmity may kill the heart out of a man,” said Horace. “I am not a fool; I could learn anything if I set myself to it: do you decide for me.”

“I will then, my dear boy; and you will come to me to-morrow?” said the Colonel, faltering a little. “Come early, and I will walk back to Marchmain with you. Here is Susan ready. Are all the parcels safe? And you have spent a pleasant day, you fairy? Take care, Horace, that she does not catch cold.”

“Pleasant day? Oh, uncle, the very happiest day of all my life!” said Susan.

The old man led her out well pleased, involuntarily solacing himself, after her troublesome brother, with the sight of her fresh face. And Susan’s happiest day was quite over when she caught the last glimpse of his gray, uncovered head bowing to her from the inn-door. Horace had no kind talk or affectionate cares for his sister. The wind blew cold, and the evening began to gather damp over the fells. The two young people fell into perfect silence as they pursued the monotonous road, and there was no great comfort to be had in the idea of the welcome which waited them at home.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Horace and Susan had left Tillington, the Colonel wrapt his great cloak round him, and went out to take a pondering, meditative walk, and think over all these concerns. This last conversation he felt had rather complicated his position, and changed a little the posture of affairs. It was now he who had to take the initiative—he who seemed to be sending Horace away, and deciding that it was his duty to follow a path of his own, and make his own career. This idea was the last which had occurred to him, when he met his nephew’s passionate complaints with his own good, sober, kind advice. Horace had, however, completely turned the tables upon him. He was no longer engaged to give merely a friendly assistance to the young man’s exertions, to help him by representing the case to his father, or by using such influence as he possessed to further his nephew’s wishes. Horace had skilfully managed to make it appear, even to Colonel Sutherland himself, that it was he who had suggested the necessity for leaving home—that it was he who must decide the manner of doing so, and that the whole responsibility of the matter

would lie upon his shoulders. This was far from pleasant to the Colonel; he thought over the whole matter with a very troubled brow: why should he draw upon himself all the trouble and blame of such a proceeding?—undertake the painful task of an interview with Mr. Scarsdale—most likely fail to satisfy Horace himself, and possibly meet with severer reproach hereafter, when the young man came to know that secret which he made vain inquiries after now? The Colonel did not relish his position as he thought over it. It was not of his making. He had but replied, as his kindly nature could not help doing, by offers of assistance to the outcry of Horace's impatience; and behold here was the result.

The very fact that something did exist which he knew, and which Horace did not know, embarrassed and straitened him further. But, at the same time, he had promised. Nothing but the agitation into which the young man had thrown him, by his sudden suggestion that the Colonel meant to accuse his father with breaking his mother's heart, could have led Colonel Sutherland to make so rash an engagement. He had no reason to believe that this was the cause of Mrs. Scarsdale's death. He knew she had been restrained, overruled, and chidden—but he knew also that to the end she loved, and made no complaint beside. For his own part, the circumstances of his sister's death, which followed very quietly upon a singular misfortune to her husband, had filled Edward Sutherland with the deepest compassion and sympathy for his brother-in-law; and accordingly he was more shocked than he could explain by Horace's sudden supposition, that it was Mr. Scarsdale's unkindness which had killed his wife; and in the eager anxiety with which he entreated the youth to believe that this was not the case, he consented unawares to make himself the arbitrator of Horace's fate—so far, at least, as that could be determined by its beginning. He had promised—that was indisputable; yet what right had he to take the first step in such a matter, or to urge upon a young man, in the very peculiar circumstances of Horace, the same personal labour which was necessary to his own sons? When the Colonel had come so far in his thoughts he paused with a sudden effort, and resolutely turned to the other side of the question.

"Ought I to stand by for fear of responsibility, or for the sake of my own pride, or for the risk of ingratitude, and see my sister's son sink into ignorance and debasement, and end in being the autocrat of an ale-house?" he said to himself, and did all that was possible to change the current of his own thoughts. But it was not much easier to choose a profession for Horace, or to fix on what he ought to be. Colonel Sutherland had come to perceive that he did not understand his nephew, and that not a single feature of resemblance existed between them. He marched on upon the road with his steady soldier's step, not perceiving how far he was going, nor how the night darkened—marching gradually into a more and more bewildering mist of thought. The

village lay sheltered in a shallow valley, with low slopes ascending on every side towards a higher level of country, slopes much too gentle and gradual to have much affinity with the distant fells. Colonel Sutherland had nearly reached the top of one of these banks, when the toil of the ascent, which just there was steep, awakened him to a consciousness of where he was. He might have wandered for miles over the open country, but for the failure of wind and sensation of fatigue which seized him upon that brae. When he came to himself, wheeling about suddenly, he saw the lights of the village twinkling into the twilight a long way beneath him, and perceived, for the first time, how far he had come.

“The wind being on my back all the time,” he said, with a kind of involuntary apology to himself half-aloud, as he commenced his return.

The Colonel’s ears were sharper out of doors than in. He recognized that somewhere near, somebody had made a sudden start at the sound of his voice. There was no one to be seen—the Colonel beat the hedgerows with his stick, and called “Who’s there?” with soldierly promptitude. He had no idea of being attacked from behind, in case a highwayman lurked behind those bare thorns. After a little interval, during which Colonel Sutherland continued his examination minutely, a voice gruff but subdued, answered somewhat peevishly—

“Cornel, it’s me.”

And the gaunt figure of Kennedy came crushing through a gap of the hedge to the Colonel’s side.

“You!—why, what the deuce are you after here?” said the Colonel, his extreme amazement forcing that mysterious adjuration from his lips, he could not tell how.

“Weel, Cornel, watching the sport o’ them living craetures,” said Kennedy, with a little hesitation. “I seed the rabbits whisking in and out as I took my walk, and says I to myself—they’re as diverting as childer, I’ll take a look at them. And that’s how it was—I’m rael fond of dumb craetures, Cornel, and there’s sich a spirit in thae wild things.”

“Do you mean to tell me, you old humbug, that you could see rabbits, or any other moving thing, at this time of the night?” said the Colonel. “If I did not know you to be an Orangeman I would think you were a Jesuit, Kennedy, with a dispensation for telling lies. Man, do you ever speak the truth?”

“Oh, ay, Cornel—always when it’s to any person’s advantage,” said Kennedy; “and as for the Papishers, I hate the very name to my last drop of blood, as is nat’ral for a man of Derry born. I’m none ashamed of my lodge, nor my principles nouther. When I was a young lad, Cornel, the great Castlereagh, sir, he belounged to the same—and as for my eyes, a better sight, barring for the

small print, does not beloung to a man of my years within twenty mile."

"I've seen the day," said Colonel Sutherland, softening unconsciously towards his old fellow-soldier, "when neither small print nor half-light would have bothered either you or me; but we're getting old, Kennedy, and Providence has given us both rest, and comfort, and leisure to think before our end comes—a blessing that falls to but few."

"Ay, Cornel, that's just what I say," echoed the ready sergeant; "not that I would even myself with my commanding officer, but a man that has seen the world is a great advantage to the young and onexperienced. Begging your pardon, Cornel, but I knowe your nephew, sir—I knowe Mr. Horry well."

"And what do you know of him, pray?" cried the Colonel, turning sharp round upon his companion, who, startled by the sudden movement and sharpness of the tone, swerved aside a little, and in doing so made visible for a moment a mysterious something, hitherto concealed with great skill, which he swung from his further hand.

"Eh?—what was it you were saying, Cornel?" said Kennedy, with confusion, drawing back his hand. "What do I knowe of him?—a fine young lad, sir, and very affable when he's in the humour, and a dale of judgment, and an oncommon reliance on himsel'. Many's the time, Cornel, he's said 'No' in my face, as bould as a lion, with no more knowledge of the matter, sir, nor a babe unborn. That's what I cal' courage, Cornel. Though he comes and goes in a rale friendly manner, there's ne'er a man in the village will use a freedom with Mr. Horry; but it's poor society for him, as I have seen many a day; and he said to me wance, says he, 'Sergeant, you're a wise man among a set of fools,' he says—'if it warn't for you the blockheads would have it all their own way; and as for me,' says the poor young gentleman, 'I've no business here.' I could see that, though I little thought he belounged to my honoured Cornel of the ould Hunderd, and a credit to his relations and al' his friends."

During this speech, Kennedy keeping wary eyes about him, was guarding the Colonel off with the utmost skill, and contriving that he should neither get sufficiently in advance or behind to have a chance of discovering again the burden he carried. However, the sergeant betrayed himself by a momentary impulse of vanity: he looked round in Colonel Sutherland's face to read the success of his last compliment, and in that moment of incaution the Colonel slid a step in advance, and, thrusting his stick to Kennedy's other side, caught by the feet a hare. The sergeant made the best of it, finding himself caught. He fixed his eyes on the Colonel's face after the first start of discovery with a comical half-defiance, half-deprecation, which, however, the light was too dim to show.

"You old sinner!—you romancing old humbug!—what do you call that thing

there, eh? That's what takes you behind the hedge in the gloaming, with your wisdom and your experience! What do you call that thing there?"

"Call it, Cornel?—sure and it's a bit of a leveret, sir," said the sergeant, twisting it up by the legs with pretended carelessness. "I picked the poor baste up, that was laid, with its leg broke, upon the grass."

"And so that's how you take your walks and show your love for the dumb creatures, you old leasing-maker!" cried the Colonel. "Throw it down this moment, sir—carry it back to where you got it, or I'll make an information against you the moment we get to Tillington—I will, by George!"

"Oh, ay, Cornel, at your pleasure," cried the sergeant; "I'm not the man to withstand my commanding officer when he takes to swearing. I'll put it down, lookye, sir, where we stand; or I'll take it back beyant the hedge, and the first labouring chap as comes by, he'll get the baste, and link it hoam in his clumsy hand, Cornel, and be spied upon and given up, and a snare proved to him, and clapped in jail. He'll goo in innocent, Cornel, and he'll come out wroth and ruined, and all because my own officer seed an ould sodger pick up a bit of meat that was useless to any mortal beyant a hedge, and informed on me. And it shall never be said that William Kennedy transgressed discipline. There it is, sir—I'm blythe to be quat of it; pitch it from ye furder than I can see."

The Colonel poised the hare on his stick for a moment, shaking his head, then laughed aloud, and tossed it at Kennedy's feet.

"There's reason in what you say, you poaching old sinner; keep your spoil," he said, "but march on, sergeant, and keep out of my sight till we can take different roads. I don't keep company with stolen game. There, there, that's enough. I've heard your best excuses already. Good night, my man; and I advise you, for the sake of the old Hundred, to have nothing to do after this either with hares or snares."

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL SUTHERLAND did not find much leisure that night. He had scarcely returned from his walk, a little indignant and vexed at the conduct of Kennedy, but less than ever inclined to believe him, when young Musgrave made his appearance. The Colonel was seated by the fire with his spectacles on, and the latest newspaper to be had in these regions laid on the table beside him—but he had not begun to read, having thoughts enough to keep him occupied. The room, with its dark walls and low roof and the indistinct prints hung round it, was left in comparative darkness by the little light of the two candles on the table. The Colonel himself had his back to the light, and, with

his elbows resting on the arms of the chair, rubbed his hands slowly together, and pondered in his heart. He had almost forgotten the young stranger in the closer and nearer interests which moved himself; and what with his thoughts and his deafness, and his position with his back to the door, did not perceive the entrance of Roger, who stood undecided and shy when the door had closed upon him, half inclined in sudden discouragement to turn back again, and feeling for almost the first time, with a sudden painful start of consciousness, that he had no claim upon the friendship of this old man, whose kind interest in him this morning had cheered his forlorn young heart, but whom, after all, he had seen for the first time this day. A mind which is elevated by any one of the great primitive emotions, ceases for the moment to feel those secondary impressions of surprise and singularity with which in ordinary times we regard any departure from the ordinary laws of life. Had he been happy, Roger would have wondered, perhaps would have smiled, at the interest which this stranger expressed in him; but it had not even astonished his pre-occupied mind until now: now, as he stood behind the Colonel in the dim apartment, and saw him sitting thoughtful by the fire, unconscious of the presence of any visitor, the young man's impulse was to steal softly out again, and make no claim upon a sympathy which he had no right to. Yet his heart yearned for the kind look, the paternal voice which had roused him this morning out of the quick despair of youth. He approached slowly towards the table: when he reached it the Colonel turned round with an exclamation of surprised but cordial welcome, and pointed him to the chair opposite his own, which had been placed in readiness for his young guest. This little token that he was expected cheered the young man involuntarily; it was another of those trivial things which, as Colonel Sutherland said, make up so much of the happiness of life.

When he saw Roger opposite to him, with his eager, ingenuous face, and a world of undisguised youthful anxieties and disquietude shining in his candid eyes, the old man fell into a momentary pause of silence and embarrassment. It seemed impossible to impute any want of truthfulness to those honest looks, or even to cast upon them the momentary stain of a suspicion. And the same young eyes were quick to perceive even this pause, and remarked immediately that the Colonel was embarrassed, and did not know how to begin what he had to say. Grief in its immediate presence does not bring patience—the pride of the young man took alarm instantly—he half rose, with hasty words barring any apology, and a declaration of proud humility, that he had no right to trouble Colonel Sutherland, or to intrude upon his privacy, rising to his lips. Before he had spoken, the Colonel perceived what he meant, and stopped him. "Wait a little—hear what I am going to say—sit down," said the old soldier, laying his hand upon Musgrave's arm; "I cannot have you quarrel with me so soon—sit down, and let us talk it out."

"Nay, sir, there can be no occasion," cried Musgrave, in his disappointment

and offence, his voice faltering a little; “I have but to thank you for your kindness this morning, and beg your pardon for intruding on you now.”

“That cannot be,” said Colonel Sutherland, with a momentary smile, “because you come by my own appointment; and, besides, I am very glad to see you, and you are a very foolish youth to be so impatient. Sit down quietly—have patience a little, and listen to me.”

Roger obeyed, with some haste and reluctance. He was almost overcome by wounded pride and feeling, and yet he had nothing whatever to ground his mortification upon, but the Colonel’s pause of embarrassment and confused preliminary tone.

“You thought I hesitated, and did not speak frankly enough,” said the Colonel. “Perhaps it is true, for I had something on my mind. But now I mean to speak very frankly. My young friend, I believe I can be of but little service to you, but I can give you my best advice and such encouragement as an old man owes to a young one; while, on the other hand, you must be frank with me. After you left me this morning, I was told you had still parents alive. Is that true?”

“Did you think I had deceived you?” cried Musgrave, quickly.

Mortification and shame and sudden resentment flushed his face. “But you don’t know me, to be sure!” he exclaimed, with a passionate tone of pain; “and yet, though I don’t know you, I care for your opinion. I have not come to ask anything from you, Colonel Sutherland—I have already made up my mind what to do; but, at best, you must know that I have not deceived you. I have a mother, and yet I have not a mother—that is the only entire bond of nature remaining to me. She made a second marriage, and gave me up to my godfather so long ago, that I scarcely remember the time—her husband made my only visit to her so disagreeable, that I have never repeated it, and I believe never shall. She has a family of whom I know nothing, and has forgotten and forsaken me. I appeal to you, then, whether I was not right in saying that I had no friends?”

“I felt sure it would turn out something of the kind,” said the Colonel, heartily. “What, my boy, are you affronted with me? Come, that is foolish—sit down and forgive me. Perhaps you think a stranger like myself has no right to ask such explanations; but I am old, and you are young—that is, after all, the most primitive principle of authority. I assure you, though you may not be quite pleased with me at this moment, I am a much safer counsellor than the sergeant—the old rogue! Draw your chair to the table, take a glass of wine, and let me hear what you are going to be about. I heard of an old exploit of yours from my niece, Susan Scarsdale, to-day.”

“From whom?” asked Musgrave, with a little surprise.

“From my niece—you don’t know her, I daresay,” said the Colonel, whose object was to put his visitor at ease; “but some one told her your name, she says. An adventure of yours with a gipsy—do you recollect it—on some of the roads near Lanwoth Moor?”

“Oh!—the young lady from——” Musgrave paused only in time to prevent himself saying “the haunted house,” which was a name very commonly appropriated to Marchmain. The young man blushed a little, partly from the mistake, partly from a very distinct recollection of the flattering applause with which Susan clapped her hands at his achievement. He might not have noticed her at all but for that sign of approbation; but it is pleasant to be approved, especially in a rash and unorthodox proceeding; and it is true that Roger had taken several occasions to pass Marchmain after that occurrence, with a lingering inclination to improve his acquaintance with that face; he never had any success in his endeavour, but still, under the eyes of Susan’s uncle he blushed in spite of himself. “I recollect it very well,” he said.

The Colonel saw his colour rise, and had not the slightest inclination to pursue the subject.

“Yes, it was very natural, whether it was wise or not,” said the Colonel, with a smile, words which might refer equally well either to the encounter with the mugger, or the curiosity about Susan, and which his young companion unconsciously applied to the last. “I remember what I should have done myself at your age; but you say you have made up your mind. Will you let me ask how? for I think you might take more leisure to do that at your age.”

“The steed would starve in the meantime,” said Musgrave, with a little unnecessary vehemence. “Yes, I have made up my mind—but only as I had done before seeing you, sir, this morning. You spoke very wisely, very kindly. A man who had money, or friends, or skill, or anything in the world to fall back upon ought to have listened to you. I feel grieved that you should think, after so much kindness on your part, that I have not considered your advice. I did consider it, Colonel, believe me, but I have no alternative—I know nothing that I can be but a soldier. Don’t say anything to me, it will only increase my disgust at myself to be fit for nothing else; and then, sir,” said the young man, attempting to smile, “there is no necessity for thinking of the barracks and the sixpence a-day. I will take this other side of the question: young fellows like me, they say in novels, never did better long ago. I’ll be a defender of my country, a servant of the Queen; a general is no more.”

“My poor boy!” said the Colonel, whom this “other side of the question” had a pathetic effect upon, “you don’t know the life of a common soldier; and do you mean to tell me that in our days, with all our progress and civilization, a young man with your advantages is fit for nothing but this?”

“I might be a gamekeeper,” said the youth, with a slight tremble of his lip, “or I might be an emigrant—the last I should certainly choose if I had anything to set out upon; but I don’t care to run the risk of blacking shoes or portering at the other side of the world, as the newspapers say the penniless emigrants are reduced to often enough. No, Colonel, I should not sit here, opposite you, a poor fellow, who will never have the right to meet you on equal terms again; but I must ’list, I have no alternative—I can only be what Providence and my education have qualified me for. If I am nothing else, I can be honest, at least. This is the only thing I am good for, and can reach to, therefore I have given up grumbling about it. And if,” said Roger, with the fire blazing out of his eyes for a moment, one glance of youthful hope through the darkness, “if chance or war should ever put it in a man’s power to rise, then look for me again!”

“My brave fellow!—my excellent lad!” cried the Colonel, “that is the spirit for a soldier! A regiment of ye would subjugate the world! Give me your hand, and keep your seat, boy! If you had ’listed already, does that make you less a gentleman? But is there no help for it, think you? Must you carry this soul to the ranks? By my word, I grudge it sorely!—and that is much for an old soldier to say. Have you no friends—I don’t mean relatives—people that have known you in better days, that would help in this pinch? In my young days the very neighbours would have been moved to interfere, whether you would or not. Yes, I believe you’re proud; the noble spirit comes very seldom without its attending demon. But look here, man—a heart that would be quick to offer help should not be above receiving it. I am but a poor man myself, or I warrant well you should not escape me, however loth your grandeur might be. Here’s the question; I speak to you boldly, as your friend, offence or no offence. Had your godfather never a dear friend that would stand by his heir? Tut! don’t interrupt me—if you are heir to little money, all the more reason you should be heir to the love. Is there never a man in this country that for the kindness he bears your late friend, or for affection to you, would hold you his hand to mount you fair in your saddle, ere you set out on the world? Answer me plainly and truly, young man—is there no such person in country or town, within twenty miles of the place where you have lived all your days?”

Musgrave had changed colour several times during this address, and evidently hesitated much to answer. After close questioning, the Colonel at last drew from him that one such friend did exist, but not within twenty miles, in the person of a county baronet, a very dear friend of his late godfather, who had, however, been absent from the district for more than a year, and of whom, during that time, Roger had heard nothing. He could not tell where he was to be found, and it was with extreme reluctance that he confessed even his name, which was one unknown to Colonel Sutherland. Having gone so far, the young man set himself with all his might to combat the Colonel’s idea of asking help

from anybody. He would not—could not—accept a service which he had no prospect of ever being able to repay. He was determined not to enter the world weighed down by a burden of obligation. Was it not better to enter life a common soldier, with only himself to depend upon, he asked vehemently, than to reach a higher level by the help of another, and live with the shadow of assistance and patronage upon all his life?

“Would you choose to go through your life without assistance?” said Colonel Sutherland, calmly, making a note in his pocketbook, and going on with the conversation without looking up—“would you reject kindness and friendship, and the hand of your neighbour? Have a care, young man—the next step to receiving no help is giving none. Would you live without the charities of life, you foolish boy? And what’s to hinder you entering life with a feeling of obligation? I would like to know a nobler and a kindlier sentiment than honest manful gratitude. Can you tell me a better? And how do you know you will never be able to repay it? Do you debar yourself from ever helping another, when you accept help yourself? Go away with your nonsense. I trust I am not the man to advise any youngster against his honour. What do you say—a man is the best judge for himself? No such thing, boy. Not when the man is twenty. I will tell you what to do in the meantime—keep quiet for a week or two, and leave the affair in my hands.”

“But you do not know me. I may be deceiving you—telling you lies—working on your goodnature, for my own advantage,” exclaimed Musgrave, with a voice which, between vexation and gratitude, and the new hopes which, in spite of himself, began to gain ground upon him, was almost inaudible.

“Eh?—I’m rather hard of hearing. I did not quite catch what you said,” said Colonel Sutherland, bending towards him his deaf ear, with that look of anxious, solicitous kindness and earnest attention which nobody could resist.

The effect upon poor Roger was almost laughable in its pathos. He turned red—he turned pale—he could hardly keep the tears out of his boyish eyes; and, with a voice broken with emotion, shouted out his words so loud and harsh, that the Colonel started back in alarm and surprise.

“You don’t know me—I may be deceiving you!” cried the young man, with a hurried and abrupt conclusion, singularly like a sob; and so hid his face in his hands, unable to contain himself, disturbed out of all the self-possession which thinly veiled the quick susceptibilities of grief.

The Colonel patted him gently on the arm with his kind hand.

“That is true,” he said, with the simple wisdom of his pure heart, “very true—you might be deceiving me—but you are not.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT is possible that Colonel Sutherland might have perhaps experienced a little annoyance at himself next day, for having so completely taken up and taken charge of the fortunes of his new protegé. That, however, did not give him half so much thought and perplexity as the other question which this morning presented itself to him more immediately, and demanded a settlement—How to meet, and what to decide upon for Horace. This was a very different matter from the simple help which he could offer frankly to the straightforward Musgrave; and all his doubts of the previous night returned to him with fresh force, as he considered the subject once more. He had not still an idea upon the matter. His own thoughts as to the choice of occupations for a young man ran in rather a circumscribed channel. The first thing which occurred to him involuntarily was, of course, his own profession; and India naturally associated itself to the old Indian officer with all hopes of advancement—but there was something in Mr. Scarsdale's secret, whatever it might be, which made Colonel Sutherland shake his head. "No, that would never do," he said to himself; "he must be on the spot whatever happens."

After that the Colonel thought of the learned professions of Medicine, and the Church, which his acquaintance with Edinburgh kept foremost in his mind—and shook his head over these also, concluding his nephew to be too old to begin an elaborate course of study. Lagging a long way after these, a faint and vague idea of "business" loomed through mists upon the Colonel's mind; he was very well aware of all that it is common to say of British commerce and enterprise—the vast concerns of our trade, and the princely wealth of our merchants; but, notwithstanding, knew as little about these great realities as it is possible for a man brought up in a society innocent of trade, and occupied all his life with the duties of an exclusive profession, to know. He had not the slightest idea what it would be proper to do to introduce a young man into "business." He had no influence to rely upon, nor friend to turn to for enlightenment upon the matter. He began to turn over in his mind the long roll of his allies and acquaintance—to think who he could best apply to; when suddenly finding himself pass in that review name after name of Scotch lawyers, in all their different grades, from the "writer" to the advocate, a brilliant idea burst upon him—the law!—it was evidently of all others the profession which Horace Scarsdale was best fitted for. How strange that he should not have thought of it before!

Somewhat reassured by this idea, the Colonel sat down to breakfast with increased comfort. It was again a drizzly, uncomfortable day—by no means the kind of day which one would choose to spend away from the resources and solaces of home, in the dreary little parlour of a country inn, with the Fool of

Quality on the table, and defunct winners of the Oaks and Derby upon the walls. The Colonel stirred the fire, and returned to his pink rasher of country bacon with a sigh. He thought of his cosy sitting-room, warmly-curtained and carpeted, where all the draughts were carefully extinguished with mats, and list, and sand-bags, and from the windows of which he could see the noble Forth and the Fife coast, always bright, attractive, and full of beauty to his eyes. He thought of his books, companions of his life, and of the Times, which was one of his very few personal indulgences, and which at that very moment, all fragrant from the press in its post envelope, would be lying on his table; and the Colonel, munching his bacon with teeth which were not so perfect as they used to be, shrugged his shoulders as he glanced out of the low parlour-window upon the wet houses opposite, and the dim drizzle of rain. If it must be confessed, he thought of his proposed walk to Marchmain, through five miles of that dreary, damp, and dismal road, with a shiver, and terrible imaginations of rheumatism; yet this room and the Fool of Quality were not much more entertaining. And he could not bear the idea of disappointing Susan, who, the old man was pleased to think, would be watching for and expecting him. Then he pleased himself with the thought of carrying Susan home with him, and making her mistress and housekeeper of the house of his old age. He was glad to escape from his perplexities about Horace by thinking of Susan. There was no vexation nor doubt in the remembrance of the candid, honest, affectionate girl, who answered so warmly to his fatherly affections. Would her father give her up, even for a time, to her uncle? Colonel Sutherland, remembering his interview with Mr. Scarsdale, did not think it was likely; but he was young enough at heart, in spite of probabilities, to take pleasure in the thought.

He had just finished breakfast, and the room was beginning to brighten under the influence of a good fire, between which and the Fool of Quality the Colonel felt more drowsy than he thought it creditable to be in the morning, when Horace made his appearance. The young man came in with drops of rain shining all over his rough coat, and with muddy boots, which he had taken no pains to clean before entering, and which offended the Colonel’s professional and natural fastidiousness. The rain-drops flew over into his uncle’s face as Horace threw off his coat. The Colonel looked on with a mortified displeasure, wondering over him;—he could not understand how it happened that so near a relation of his own should have so little natural grace of manner or perception of propriety. Accordingly, he looked very grave as he shook hands with Horace. He could not enter immediately on the more important subject between them; he could not help criticizing these lesser matters, and thinking how he could manage to suggest an improvement without wounding his nephew; for the Colonel, like other people, had his weaknesses, and in his opinion a disregard of the ordinary proprieties showed a dulness of heart.

As for Horace, he on his part showed no particular anxiety about the question of the day—he was more inclined a great deal to draw his uncle into conversation on general subjects connected with his past life, his former visits to England, and the intercourse he formerly had with his sister and her husband. To this conversation Horace himself contributed a little description of their dinner-table on the previous evening, which was indeed a very dismal picture, and could scarcely be exaggerated. The Colonel shook his head over the story with pain and distress, grieved for the facts, and still more grieved to know that they rather gained than lost in bitterness by his nephew's recital. This stimulated him to introduce the real subject-matter of the present conference.

"It is natural enough, under all the circumstances, and I daresay advisable as well," said the Colonel, "that you should wish to get away as soon as possible. Then as to what you are going to do, Horace, I come to the question under great difficulties. In the first place, when you leave me to choose for you, it almost appears as if I were the person sending you away, and not your own desire; and I have no object in sending you away, you must be aware."

"What does it matter, uncle, how it appears, when we know exactly how it is?" said Horace, with apparent impatience and real craftiness.

"That is very true, and the most sensible thing I have heard you say," said the unsuspecting Colonel. "Well then, Horace, my boy, there's business. I don't know very well how to set about it, but no doubt we could inquire; and I believe, for a man who desires to get on, there is nothing equal to that."

"If a man has money to begin with, sir," said Horace. "No, uncle, I detest buying and selling—that will not do for me."

"Then you detest what many a better man than either you or I has practised, Horace," said the Colonel, a little affronted. "And there is my own profession. I have some little influence to serve a friend; but to be a soldier—a real soldier—I don't mean a man of parades and barracks, for at present you are not rich enough for that—requires a strong natural inclination. No—I see your answer—that will not do either; and indeed I think you're right. Then—I speak to you frankly, Horace—I would not advise you, for instance, to think of the Church."

"Because I am not good enough," said Horace, feeling his pride wounded by the suggestion, yet laughing with a contempt of the goodness which could conform itself to that level; "and also, uncle, because I have no education and no influence—that of course is impossible."

Colonel Sutherland could not help making an involuntary comparison between Roger Musgrave's humble declaration of want of wit and want of teaching, and this confession, which sounded the same in words. But Horace made his avowal with all the egotistic confidence of a young man who knew nothing of

the world; and having never met his equals, in his heart thought education a very trivial circumstance, and believed his talent to be such as should triumph over all disadvantages. The Colonel gave a little suppressed sigh in his heart, and said to himself that nothing would show the boy his mistake—nothing but life.

“Well then, Horace,” he cried, with sudden animation, remembering his own brilliant idea, “what do you think of the Law? So far as I can see, that is exactly the thing which is best suited to your genius—eh? My wonder is that it should never have occurred to yourself. What do you think of that, my boy?—the very thing for you, is it not?”

“The Law?” said Horace—“do you mean to make me an attorney, uncle?”

“I mean that you should make yourself anything that you may prove yourself to have a talent for,” said the Colonel. “What, boy! you must have some idea as to what you’re good for—attorney, solicitor, advocate—I am not particular for my part, but let it be something. It’s an honourable profession when it’s exercised with honour: in my opinion, it’s the thing most suitable to your manner of mind. Eh?—don’t you think so now yourself?”

Horace leaned over the table with his elbows on it, and his chin supported in his palms. It flashed upon him as he gazed into the air, and thought with little goodwill over this project, that the practitioners of the Law were men who knew everybody’s secrets; that the power of the profession lay in its craft, and the skill with which it laid things together; that to lawyers, of all the different grades, belonged especially the task of finding out, and of concealing everything which it was for the interests of the rest of the world to discover or to hide. This idea sent a little animation into his face; he began to feel that this might really be congenial to the habits of his mind, as his uncle said; and, at all events, he might thus be in the way of discovering those secrets which affected his own life.

“The Law, like every other profession, requires study and time,” said Horace, with, at last, a sincere sigh; “and I have no chance of being able to wait or to learn, uncle. No! it is impossible—my father will do nothing for me. If I could be a clerk, or something, and pick up what information I might,” he continued, warming to the idea, as it seemed more and more impracticable; “but, as for study, what can I do?”

“My dear boy,” said the Colonel, warmly, “if you really feel that you can go into this with all your mind, I will not hesitate to speak to your father. I believe he has not been kind to you—but no father in the world will sacrifice the future of his son for the sake of a trifling sum of money, or a little trouble. No, Horace, you do your father injustice. If you really can go into this—if you feel yourself ready to give your whole might to it, and make thus a deliberate

choice of your profession, I feel sure he will not deny you the means. No, my boy—you are wrong; trust to me; I will see him myself."

"I shall be very glad, uncle, if you will make the experiment," said Horace; "but I know him better—he will do nothing for me. No!—he'd rather see me an errand-boy or a street-sweeper, than help me to the profession of a gentleman. I have known it for years; but still, if you will take the trouble, and undergo the pain of asking him, of course I can only be thankful. Try, uncle—I will not be disappointed if you fail, and you will be satisfied. I can only say try."

"Yes; but my condition of trying is that you are resolved to go into this, and think it a thing in which you can succeed," said the Colonel, fixing his eyes anxiously on his nephew's face.

Horace did not look at him in return; but there was an animation and eagerness unusual to it in his face—he was following out in imagination, not a young man's vague, ambitious dreams, but a chain of elaborate researches after the one secret which he could not discover, and which haunted him night and day. "I do!" he exclaimed, with an emphasis of sincerity and earnestness which delighted the Colonel, who seized him by the hand, and promised, over and over again, to leave no exertion untried which could obtain him his wish. Horace responded to this with the best appearance of gratitude and cordiality which he could manage to show, but with, in reality, a great indifference. He had no hope whatever from his uncle's mediation, and was forming other and secret plans in his own mind for his own object, which was not the same as Colonel Sutherland's; for he did not dream of success in the profession which he was about to choose, or of "scope for his talents," or any of those natural ambitions which occurred to the old soldier—but had entirely concentrated his underground and cavernous thoughts upon this new and unthought of mode, of carrying his personal inquiries out.

Having settled this matter to his great satisfaction, Colonel Sutherland walked to the window and contemplated the weather: it had ceased to rain, but the chill, damp, penetrating atmosphere was as ungenial as ever; the roads were wretched, and he shuddered involuntarily to think of that bare and miserable moor. However, the Colonel had already been three days at Tillington; and did not admire his quarters sufficiently to remain longer than he could help. Then this interview with his brother-in-law, being eminently disagreeable, would be well over. He hesitated, looked wistfully at his good fire, and with melancholy eyes at the dark sky without; but, at last, taking courage, buttoned on his great-coat, threw his cloak round him, took his stick in his hand, and thus defended from cold and violence, took his way once more, Horace by his side, to Marchmain.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE walk was not more agreeable than Colonel Sutherland foresaw it would be—the return the old soldier actually failed of courage for. He directed the gig to be sent for him, and so trudged upon his way without the dreadful thought of retracing all his steps in an hour or two. When they reached Marchmain there was no welcome vision of Susan at the window to solace her uncle's fatigue. When Peggy admitted them it was with an exclamation of surprise and half-indignation. "To think of walking such roads, five miles on a day like this!" she cried, as she bustled into the dining-room after them to refresh the smouldering, half-dead fire. Peggy was by no means rejoiced that day to see Colonel Sutherland. To the shame of her housewifery she remembered that she had nothing in her larder which could be cooked readily for the visitor's luncheon; and Peggy, like most other women of her years, country-bred, was overpowered by shame at the idea of having "nothing to offer" to the chance guest. Susan had gone upstairs, up to a garret room, the highest of the house, to fetch Peggy some apples which were stowed there; and as she was too high up to be able to hear the arrival of her uncle, Horace went to seek her. Peggy gazed after him, pausing in her cares for the fire, with a singular vexation.

"If that lad would but tell the truth—and all the truth," said Peggy; "but he wunnot, Cornel—it's somegate in his blood. I warrant he never told you a word how Miss Susan begged and prayed him to say you were never to think to come; that you would catch cold and wet, and do yoursel' an injury, as it was just like her to say, the thoughtful thing. Na, says I to myself, as I saw him march away with his shut-up face, the Cornel'll come or no come as his ain will bids, but Mr. Horace has no mind to stop him; yet if ye'll believe me, he never said a word, but let Miss Susan believe he would tell her messages every one."

"Never mind," said Colonel Sutherland—who, however, did mind a good deal, as people generally do who use that expression—and who could not help thinking that Susan's messages, had he ever received them, would have turned the scale and kept him under cover that miserable day. "Never mind, Peggy; I ought to take it as a compliment that Horace likes my society so much. I wish I could carry my niece home with me, poor child—eh? do you think her father would be likely to consent?"

"Eh, Mr. Edward, run not the risk of asking!" cried Peggy; "I'm no the person to speak an evil word of him, no me—but he's unhappy himself, as how do you think he can be other?—and he will not have happiness come near his house. Eh, Cornel, honey, if ye could but beguile him to open his heart! I

knowed him a boy, and I knowed him a young man, and I knowed him in the mistress's time, but, sir, though he had his faults, and I would not deny them, all the days of his life, you would not reckonise him now; and all along o' that weary ould man!"

"Hush, Peggy! we must not blame those that are gone," said the gentle Colonel; "they are in other hands than ours; but it has been a melancholy business altogether. Horace, do you know, wishes to leave home and begin the world for himself."

"And the sooner the better, Cornel!" cried Peggy; "the lad will be clean ruined, root and branch, if he bides here. I would give all the pennies I've gathered all my life to see him safe out of that door, though he's a strange lad, is Mr. Horace. Hoosht, they're coming—listen, Cornel," said Peggy, stretching up to the Colonel's ear, that she might whisper this last communication—"Don't you be afeard about Miss Susan. I've that confidence in the Lord, I believe the poor chyild will fall to your hands, Mr. Edward, when the time comes; but, Lord bless you, Cornel, she's no more like her brother nor the tares is like the corn. Her heart's as sweet as a rose—nothing in this world can kill the good that's in that unfortinate infant, but Death itself. Hoosht, here they are coming! —she's just the delight of an ould woman's eyes—ay, there she is!"

The Colonel heard this speech very imperfectly, understanding just enough of it to know that Susan was commended, and nodding his kind head in pleased acquiescence; but when Peggy ended her oration by crying "There she is!" Uncle Edward turned round to greet his niece, who came running up to him out of breath. Susan was sorry, shocked, surprised, and delighted—but underneath all her flutter the Colonel, whose vision was quick when those whom he loved were concerned,saw at a glance that her eyes were red, and that even her joy in seeing him was made half-hysterical by some other sentiment lying under it, which she did not wish him to see. This contradiction of feeling, new and unusual to her, made Susan unlike herself. Her manner was hasty and agitated—she laughed as if to keep herself from crying. Colonel Sutherland looked at her with silent distress and sympathy. What new development of trouble had appeared now?

"Why did you come?" cried Susan. "I wanted Horace to carry a note, and he would not; but he promised to tell you what I said. And your rheumatism, uncle—I am so distressed to think you should have come all this way for me."

"But suppose I did not come all this way for you?" said Colonel Sutherland. "Don't you think my visit is too important to be all for a little girl? No, my love, I should have come for you whether or not—but to-day, I mean, if possible, to see your father."

Peggy had left the room, and Horace had not yet entered it: the two were alone

together.

“To see papa!” cried Susan, with a look of dismay, clinging suddenly to her uncle’s arm, and looking up in his face. “Oh, uncle, not to-day!”

“And why not to-day, my dear child?” said the Colonel, tenderly; “what has happened to-day? You have been crying, Susan. Can you tell why that was?”

With his kind eyes searching into her face, and his tender arm supporting her, Susan could not keep up her feint of good spirits; she faltered, cast down her eyes, tried to speak, and then fell unawares into a passion of youthful tears—hot, angry, indignant, rebellious tears—the first overflow of personal mortification, injury, and wounded feeling—tears too warm and too plentiful to blight or kill. The Colonel soothed her and bent over her with alarm and anxiety—he was almost too much interested to be a good judge of the depth of her suffering, and for the first moment thought it much more serious than it was.

“Papa called me into the study to-day; he said that you—I mean he said that I was careless of him, and did not do what I ought,” said Susan, who had evidently changed her mind, and substituted these words for some others injurious to her uncle. “He said I loved you better in three days than I had loved him for all my life. Oh, uncle, can I help it?—is it my fault?—for nobody until now ever loved me!”

“Hush, my dear child!—is that all?” said Colonel Sutherland. “Come, come, do not cry—I daresay you were thinking of something else at breakfast, and forgot what you were about—perhaps Letty. He will soon forgive you, my love. Sometimes I have a row with my Ned when he is at home. Don’t cry, my dear child.”

“Ah, uncle, but you don’t understand it,” cried poor Susan, rather disappointed to have her sorrow undervalued; “he wanted me not—not”—and here with a great burst the truth came out—“not to keep your presents—nor to see you—nor to write to you—nor anything: he said he would not permit it; he said I belonged to him, and so I think he believes. I do, uncle,” cried Susan, with fire and indignation, “like a table or a chair!”

“Hush, my child! I wonder why he objects to me, Susan,” said the Colonel, with a little grieved astonishment. “And what did you say?”

“I said I would not, uncle—I could not help it!” cried Susan, with another burst of tears. “I never disobeyed him in my life before; but I was very obstinate and stubborn. I know I was. I said I would not do what he told me. I can’t! I will not! I will stay in Marchmain, and never seek to go away. I will do everything else he tells me. I will work like Peggy, if he pleases; but I will write to you, uncle, and see you whenever I can, and love you always. Oh! uncle, uncle, do not you be angry with me too!”

“I!” said Uncle Edward, his voice faltering, “my poor dear, child!—I!—if I only could carry you home with me, Susan! It is hard to think I have given you more, instead of less to suffer. Ah, Susan, if I could but take you home with me!”

Susan dried her eyes, comforted by the words. “I must not hope for that, uncle,” she said, with more composure; “and indeed I could not leave papa, either. He is very unhappy, I am sure. If I only knew what to do for him! And I don’t want him to think me stubborn and undutiful. He is angry, and disturbed, and strange this morning. I never saw him so before. Do not speak to him to-day.”

“Would it be better to-morrow?” said Colonel Sutherland. “No, Susan, especially after what you told me. I must not stay here longer than I can help, and I must see your father before I go; it is about Horace, my love. I have promised to speak of his wishes. I did not know,” cried Colonel Sutherland, with a little mortification, “that I should hurt his cause by pleading it; but I ought to see him at anyrate. No, I cannot submit to this without any appeal. I have lived in his house, and eaten his bread, and had never a moment’s dispute with him. It is impossible; there must be some mistake.”

And Colonel Sutherland went to the window, and stood looking out, with his eyebrows puckered, and his hands behind him; while Susan, drying her eyes again, went to stir the neglected fire. Everything was cold, meagre, uncomfortable, and the poor girl’s restless curiosity, eager to prove her devotion to himself, yet glancing now and then with terror at the door, as if she feared her father’s appearance, and a scene of strife, was not lost upon the Colonel. He stood for some time in silence, considering the whole matter, vexed, and mortified, and indignant, yet feeling more of honest pain for the position of the household, and for unfortunate recluse himself, than offence in his own person. Then, without saying anything to Susan, the old soldier marched silently towards the study-door. It was necessary now, to say what had to be said, at once.

CHAPTER XX.

MR. SCARSDALE was alone in the study, where he passed his recluse life. The fire burned low in the grate, the red curtains hung half over the window, the atmosphere was close and stifling. He sat in his usual seat, with the invariable book before him. But though it was hardly possible for him to be more pale, there was something in the colour of his face, in the rigidity of his attitude, which betrayed a smothered passion and excitement exceeding his wont. When Colonel Sutherland knocked at the door, he got up with a kind of

convulsive haste, stepped towards it at one hasty stride, and opened it. He thought it might be Susan, returned to make her submission. When he saw his brother-in-law, Mr. Scarsdale gazed at him with undisguised amazement and a sullen rage. He stood facing the Colonel, holding the door, but without inviting or even permitting him to enter. “I have something important to say to you,” said the old soldier—“permit me to come in. I shall not detain you.” Then the recluse stepped back suddenly, opening the door wide, but without uttering a word. Colonel Sutherland went in, and the door was closed upon him; they stood opposite each other, looking in each other’s faces. The Colonel, with a grieved surprise and appeal in his look, the other with his head bent, and nothing but sullen, smothered passion in his face. Two men more unlike never stood together in this world. For the first moment not a word passed between them, but their looks, full of human motion and painful life, made the strangest contrast in the silence, with the motionless, dreary quiet of this stifling room.

After this pause, natural wonder and impatience seized the Colonel; he could not resist the impulse of trying to right himself—to right his brother-in-law—to recover if possible a natural position. “Robert!” he exclaimed, suddenly, with unpremeditated warmth and emotion, “why is this?—what have I done to you?—is there any reason why you cannot receive me as of old?”

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Scarsdale, with a formal inclination of his head. “My life and all my habits differ very widely from yours. I have long made a rule against admitting strangers into my house. My circumstances are peculiar, as you are aware—perhaps my dispositions are peculiar too.”

“But, for heaven’s sake!” cried the Colonel, who found this repulse not so decisive as he had feared—“why shut out me?”

Once more the solitary man bowed, with a sarcastic respect. “Again, I beg your pardon; but it does not follow,” said Mr. Scarsdale, with a smile, which would have been insulting, but that it trembled with unreasonable passion, “that a man’s own favourable opinion of himself is shared by all the world.”

The Colonel looked at him with a hasty, astonished glance, a look of compassion and surprise, which wounded the pride of his companion to the quick.

“Well, then,” cried the master of Marchmain, “I decline to receive you—your society is disagreeable to me. Is not that enough?”

“That is perfectly enough,” said Colonel Sutherland; “now, I have only my commission to discharge, and I am grieved I should have made so unfavourable a beginning. I come to you on behalf of your son.”

“Of my son!—oh! and of my daughter also, I presume! You would wish me to bring her ‘out,’ and give parties for her—perhaps you would like her to have a season in London?” said Scarsdale, with his trembling lip, and the forced

smile of his passion—“is there anything else I can do for you?—for, as it happens, I choose to take Susan into my own hands.”

“I say nothing of Susan,” said the Colonel, gravely; “if you choose to debar the poor child from all the pleasures of her youth, it is not for me to interfere. She is in God’s hands, who will guide her better than either you or I. I come to you from your son. Horace is a man grown, very nearly of an independent age, clever, ambitious, and at that time of life when youths would fain see the world and act for themselves; do you think it right to keep him here without occupation or training, in the most precious years of his life? I come to you with a humble entreaty from the young man, that you will give him your permission and help to set forth upon the world for himself.”

“That is admirable!” said Mr. Scarsdale—“my permission and help? This is the first time I have heard of the faintest desire on his part;—nay, I do not believe that he does desire it—you have made it up among you; and no doubt you have settled the manner as well as the fact. What profession, pray, does my clever son mean to devote himself to?”

“He wishes to study law,” said the Colonel, laconically.

“Law?—to read for the bar, I presume?” said the father; “to have chambers in the Temple, and the pleasures of his youth. It is vastly well, Colonel Sutherland—I admire your project greatly—he has my permission by all means; as for my help, I do not need to inform you what kind of claim this young man has upon me. Is it likely I should take my straitened means, from my own comfort and my daughter’s, to support him in luxury and idleness?—is it probable, do you think, that I will make a sacrifice for him? Can you look me honestly in the face and ask it of me?”

“I trust so,” said the Colonel, with a little sadness. “Scarsdale, we are both fathers—we ought to be able to understand each other; is it necessary to weigh the nature of claims, the probabilities of temper, when one appeals to a father for the future life of his son?”

“My son’s future life,” said Mr. Scarsdale, vindictively, “is quite independent of me. Had there been any nature left in our mutual position things might have been different. No! my son has no need to betake himself to a profession—he is quite above the necessity. Should I accelerate the time when he shall come to his fortune? Should I beg your prayers—for I remember you are pious—that he may enter speedily upon his inheritance? I thank you. I do not profess to be quite so disinterested. No, let him wait!—let him take his share of the evils of mankind. Must I deny myself to smooth his path for him, and give him roses for my thorns? It would be the conduct of a fool. No, I repeat he has no need for a profession—let him wait! I support him—is it not enough?”

“Too much!” cried Colonel Sutherland; “you must perceive that it would be

ten times better for him to support himself, to labour for himself, instead of embittering his life in this forced idleness here. Why should he be a burden on you at all, at his years? Though he does not ultimately require a profession, to have one would be his salvation now. You are a hale and healthy man, in spite of all you do to yourself—you have twenty years to live before you attain the limited age of man. Can you think of this unfortunate boy living here as he lives now, in utter ignorance of the fortune which waits him, till he is forty? Think of it, I implore you! It has lasted long enough—too long, Scarsdale. Think, if you have human bowels, human mercy in you, of the extraordinary fate to which you destine your only son. Suppose him growing into maturity, into full manhood, to years in which you had the world at your feet and children at your knees; yet kept in darkness, kept in bitterness, idle, solitary, able to think of nothing but of the injury that has been done to him; until, all at once, you are struck down in extreme desolate old age—and wealth, which is no longer anything to him, wealth which will disgust him, falls into his hands. What! you turn away—you will not have that event even mentioned? What are you thinking of? Is a miserable heap of money of more importance to you than the welfare of your son?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Scarsdale, turning away with a violent colour on his face, and an exclamation of disgust, "I see no reason in the world why I should study the welfare, as you call it, of my son."

"You do not—and you can say so?" cried the Colonel, in loud and stern astonishment.

"I do not, and I can say so, and without raising my voice," said the other, with a sneer. "My son, I beg to tell you once again, is provided for. I give him food and clothing—he has nothing else to hope or to expect from me."

"This is all then that you have to say?" said Colonel Sutherland; "you will not assist him to make his life honourable and useful? Will you explain to him why you decline doing so?—will you tell him that his future is so secured, that a profession is unnecessary to him? Do the boy some justice—let there be a natural explanation between you. You cannot expect him to go on in this way for years. Could you wish it? I beseech you, either tell him how matters stand, or help him to carry out his most lawful and virtuous wish! Will you do one or the other? I beseech you, tell me!"

"I tell you no!" said Mr. Scarsdale. "Let the dog wait! I will neither put myself in his power, nor help him to the best means of spying out my secret. No! Have I spoken distinctly?—he shall have neither confidence nor assistance from me!"

"Is it possible?" cried the Colonel, driven to an extremity of mingled wonder, indignation, and pity; "for the sake of your own exasperated feelings, can you

make up your mind to revenge yourself, by ruining this unhappy lad, your only son, for ever?"

"I beg your pardon—this unhappy lad is very well off," said his extraordinary father; "so well off, that I certainly do not find myself called upon to do any more for him—although," said Mr. Scarsdale, with a glance of bitterness upon the kind, anxious face which bent towards him, "I am aware that to help a man who does not require help is understood to be the way of the world."

The Colonel's weather-beaten face flushed high with angry colour; he was surprised and grieved and wounded to his heart, but he had still and always this advantage over his adversary, that the unkindest insinuation which Scarsdale could make made his brother-in-law only the more sorry for him, and wrought more grief than passion in his mind. After the first moment he looked wistfully into the face of his former friend, with a compassionate and troubled amazement, which, little though the Colonel intended it, roused his companion to fury. "How you must be changed!" he said, sadly, "to be able to say such words to me;" and Colonel Sutherland sighed as he spoke, with the hopeless patience of a man who sees no means of bringing good out of evil. The sigh, the tone, and the look wound up the recluse into the utmost rage; he made a wild imperative gesture and exclamation—for his voice was choked with fury—and opened the door violently. It was thus that Colonel Sutherland's appeal and hopes for Horace concluded; he left the study without another word.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Yes, Susan, I am going away presently, and I fear I shall not see you again either," said Colonel Sutherland, with a cheerfulness which he was far from feeling—"that is, not this time, my love; but there is plenty of time, if it be the Lord's will, Susan. You are very young, and I am not very old. We are tough, we old Indians; we wear a long time, and we shall meet, my dear child, I don't doubt, many happy days."

Susan looked up to him with inquiring eyes—with eyes, indeed, so full of inquiry that he thought she must have spoken, and put his hand to his ear. "No, uncle, I did not say anything," cried Susan, touched by that gesture almost out of her self-possession. The poor girl turned away her head and rubbed her eyes with her trembling fingers, to send back the tears. When might eyes so tender shine in that forlorn solitude again? It was impossible to look at the old man, with his solicitous kindness, his anxious look of attention, and even the infirmity which threw a tenderness and humility so individual and characteristic upon his whole bearing, in the thought of, perhaps, never seeing

him again, without emotion. It was to Susan as if the sunshine was departing. He might go away, she might never see him again, but nothing could obliterate the effect of that three days visit; nothing in the world could make Susan what she was when this week began. She did not know how it was, but the fact was indisputable; her undisturbed and unsusceptible content was over for ever. Was it good for Susan? She did not ask the question, but rubbed back the tears, and stood close to her uncle, intent upon hearing the last words which he might have to say, and vowing to herself that she would not grieve him by crying—not if she should faint or die the moment he was gone.

Such resolutions are hard to keep. When the Colonel laid his kind hand upon her head, Susan trembled over her whole frame. Her unshed tears—the youthful guilty anger provoked by her father, which still palpitated in her heart—which the poor child could not overcome, yet felt to be wrong; and the unusual agitation of this crowd of diverse feelings, very nearly overcome her. Her cheeks grew crimson, her lips and her eyelids trembled, yet she controlled herself. And Uncle Edward was still making light of the injury to himself—still accepting his repulse as something natural and spontaneous; it moved her to an indignation wild, impetuous, and unlike her character; but there was no blame on the Colonel's lips.

"Some time or other you will come to my little house, and see the country where your mother was born," said Uncle Edward; "we shall not know what to make of you when we get you there—you will be queen and princess, and do what you please with us. Yes, I hope after a time your father will consent to it, my love. He is rather angry just now, but time will soften that down. And remember, Susan, you must make the best and not the worst of everything. Horace does that last, you know, and 'one wise body's enough in a house,' as we say in Scotland; you must be the foolish one, my little Susan, and always hope; everything will turn out well, under the blessing of God."

"I hope so, uncle," said Susan, with an involuntary sob.

"Perhaps, my dear child, I ought to say you must obey your father, and not write to me," said Uncle Edward—"but I am not quite virtuous enough for that; only always do it honestly, Susan—never conceal it from him—and stop if it should make you unhappy, or you find it out to be wrong in your own conscience. However, I shall write to you in any case. My boy Ned will want to come and see you, I fear, before he leaves the country. You must always remember that you are of great importance to us, Susan, though we have not the first claim on you. You are the only woman in the family; you represent all those who are gone, to me, my little girl. Hush! do not cry—you must be very strong and courageous, for all our sakes."

"I am not crying!" cried Susan, with a gasp of fervent resolution, though she could scarcely articulate the words.

“That is right, my darling,” said the Colonel. “Now, don’t let us think any more about it, Susan. We shall hear from each other constantly, and some time or other I’ll show you Inveresk, and Edinburgh, and your mother’s country; and in the meantime, you will be cheerful and brave like yourself. Now tell Peggy to bring me some bread and cheese, my love—I am going to be grand to-day; my carriage is coming for me presently. Where is Horace? I must see him before I go—call him here, Susan, and order me my bread and cheese.”

Susan was very glad, as her uncle suspected, to run out of the room for a moment, and deliver herself of the sob with which she was choking. When she was gone, Colonel Sutherland looked sadly round him upon the dreary apartment, to which the agitation of this day had given a more than usually neglected and miserable appearance. He shook his head as he glanced round upon those meagre walls, and out to that bare moor, which was the only refuge for the eye. He thought it a terrible prison for a girl of seventeen, unsweetened by any love or society. He thought that even the departure of Horace, though he was not much of a companion to his sister, would aggravate her solitude; and involuntarily the old man thought of his own bright apartments at Inveresk, and wondered, with a natural sigh, over the strange problems of Providence. Had Susan been a child of his own, saved to him from among the many dead, what a different lot had been hers!—but here was this flower blossoming in the desert, where no one cared for its presence—and his hearth was solitary. He did not repine or complain—ingratitude had no place in his tender Christian soul, but he sighed and wondered at the bottom of his heart.

In a few minutes Horace joined him. Horace did not care to form the third of a party which included his uncle and his sister. Their friendship annoyed him, he could not tell how; it was an offence to Horace that they seemed to understand one another so entirely; far superior as he thought himself, he was conscious that neither the one nor the other was intelligible to him. He came, however, with a little excitement on hearing that the Colonel had been with his father, expecting little, yet curious, as he always was about everything, done and said, by his perennial and lifelong antagonist. When he entered the room Colonel Sutherland held out his hand to him with an affectionate sympathy, which he accepted with astonishment, and not without a passing sneer in his mind at the idea of being consoled, either for such a supposititious disappointment, or in such a manner. It was with a feeling very different from a young man’s anxiety to know his fate, or expectation of a decision which should influence his life, that he waited to hear what his uncle had to say.

“I am sorry to tell you, Horace, you have judged more correctly than I did,” said the Colonel, with hesitation; “I find, to my great disappointment, that your father is not disposed to assist you, my dear boy. I don’t know what to say about it—it appears that he has taken some erroneous idea into his mind

about myself. I'm afraid the advocate hurt the cause, Horace. If some one else spoke to him, perhaps—; but however that might be, to my great concern and astonishment, he has quite refused me!"

"Don't trouble yourself about it, uncle; I knew how it would be," said Horace, his eyes lighting up with the unnatural contention which had pervaded his life. "It was not the advocate, but the cause which was hopeless. What did he say?"

"He said—some things which had much better remained unsaid. He was affronted with me," said Colonel Sutherland; "but he gives his permission, Horace—not assistance, remember, but still permission—that is always something; he seems to have no objection that you should follow your own course, and do what you can for yourself."

"That is very kind of him," said Horace, with a smile; "but I rather think I never should have asked his leave, but for your hopes of help from him, which I never shared. I suppose he was amazed at the idea that I should expect anything from him. I daresay he appealed to you why he should take his own narrow means to support an idle vagabond like me. Ah! he did!—I could have sworn he would!"

"Nay, Horace," said the Colonel, who had been struck unawares by the correctness of his nephew's guess; "what is the use of imagining unkind words, which most likely were neither spoken nor intended? The fact is simple—your father does not think a profession is essential to you; he thinks that—that you will most probably have enough without. In short, he does not feel called upon to assist you; but at the same time, remember, Horace, he puts no obstacle in the way. All is not lost yet, my boy: I must try whether I can do anything. I am not rich, I have little to spare, but I have friends, and there are some people who might be interested in you. Wait a little, Horace—leave it to me, and we will see what can be done. I would not be discouraged; there are more ways than one of doing everything in this world."

"You may trust to me, uncle, that I certainly will not give up my own intention because my father declines to assist it—everything is safe enough so far," said Horace; "as for anything great, you know, study and that sort of thing, I give that up as impossible—I did so from the first. I will never be a great lawyer, uncle; but I daresay I'll learn enough for my own ends."

"Your own ends!—I don't understand you, Horace," cried the Colonel, somewhat alarmed at the expression of his nephew's face, and for perhaps the first time in his life suspecting something of double meaning in the words he heard.

"Have I not to work for my own living?—to support myself, uncle?" cried Horace, turning round upon him with a bitter emphasis.

"Very well, my lad, what then?" said Colonel Sutherland, with dignity—"is

there anything very terrible in that? The best men in the world have had to work for their living. I am sorry for you that you cannot get the freedom of using your powers, and proper advantages for their cultivation; but I assure you, Horace, I amnot sorry for you on the ground that you must support yourself."

"To be sure not," said Horace, with a little secret mortification; "but it is therefore I say that I will learn law enough for my own ends."

Once more the Colonel looked at him doubtfully, pondering the peculiar and unnecessary emphasis with which the young man pronounced these words. Colonel Sutherland perceived, in spite of his unsuspicious nature, that there was a gleam in the eye, and a sudden animation in the manner of Horace, which referred to something different from the calm means of sustenance, or the knowledge sufficient to secure it. Something vindictive and eager was in his look. The Colonel probably thought it better not to inquire too closely into it, for he turned away from Horace with a sigh.

Perhaps it was a relief to them all when the gig arrived at last, and Colonel Sutherland bade farewell to Marchmain. The old man was troubled because he trusted his niece, and knew that she would not deceive his expectations; and he was troubled because he could not trust his nephew, and did not feel at all warranted in undertaking for him. While Horace, for his part, brooded with renewed anger, though he professed to expect it, over his father's refusal of assistance, and was tired of amusing Colonel Sutherland by a show of good humour, all the more when his uncle seemed unlikely to be of much service to him; and the difficulty with which Susan kept her composure, and the unusual tumult of personal feeling in which the poor child felt herself, made the continued effort almost too much for her. The gig arrived at last. The Colonel said his last good-bye, and drove away from the inhospitable door which he had seen for the first time three days ago, leaving Susan, Horace, and Peggy outside, watching his departure, and waving farewells to him; and leaving, besides that external demonstration, a revolution in the house, and, for good or for evil, the germs, to these two young people, of a new world.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE Colonel drove away, out of sight of Marchmain and its moor, with thoughts many and troubled. This visit, which he had undertaken with so much simplicity of intention, had already thrown a disturbing influence into his life; he went away, bearing on his own very heart and conscience the burden of an unmanageable boy, and a girl neglected and suffering. An unmanageable boy! The Colonel summed up his non-comprehension of the character of Horace in

these uncomplimentary words, and it was his first experience of the kind. He had never learned to doubt the honest common-places about youthful openness and candour which good hearts, like his own, receive and repeat so authoritatively. He could have laid down rules to any one, with a little mild dogmatism, and a world of kindness, for the management of “the young;” and would have told you, with affectionate complaisance, and not without an idea that judicious training had much to do with it, that his Addiscombe cadet had never given him a moment’s anxiety. That was very true of honest Ned, to whom nature had given, not her fairy wealth of genius, but something safer; her gift of competency, if one may use the expression—a sincere, straightforward, sagacious soul—a judgment wise without knowing it, and true by instinct, to which craft or concealment were things impossible. Colonel Sutherland, “with his experience,” as he said, did not believe in the youthful mystics, the Manfreds and Werters. He smiled in his kindly superiority and said, “Youth at bottom was very consistent in its inconsistencies, and very manageable if you took pains enough, and knew the right way.” The Colonel was a little mortified, accordingly, to be obliged to conclude that he knew very little of Horace, and that his nephew baffled him. It put him out in his calculations—it spread a certain doubt over the whole fair face of nature, and left an ache in the old man’s unsuspicious heart. He could not persuade himself to condemn, and therefore troubled his mind with the idea that he could not possibly understand.

It was early evening when the little vehicle reached the top of the slope from which the road descended to the village; and the twinkling lights in the shallow vale beneath, the hum of sound, the twilight calm through which the Colonel, whose eyes were equal to any practicable distance, though “small print” somewhat troubled them, recognized the different points of his morning and evening walks—filled the old man with a strange sensation of familiarity and friendship. Already, though he had been here so short a time, he knew the place, remembered the hedge-rows and the trees, could tell where was the best point of view, was able to distinguish from a distance the principal houses in the village, and could even recollect where the green primrose leaves lay warmest, and were likely to be first unrolled and spread into the light by the spring sun. Somehow, unawares to himself, the kind old man, with his warm natural sympathy, had established a certain connection with this unknown place. Here was Kennedy, his old companion-in-arms; here was young Musgrave, whom the Colonel seemed to have somehow adopted, in spite of himself, as the type of what Horace should have been, and in whom he had interested himself with an inexplainable rapidity and rashness which appeared very odd when he thought of it, though it was extremely natural. He recollected now that this second protegé must be looked after and seen this evening. The Colonel had become quite a man of affairs since he came to

Tillington. All this time, occupied as he was by his own thoughts, the drive had been a very silent one—so much so, that honest John Gilsland, who had driven the gig himself in hopes of an opportunity of displaying his wisdom to "the Cornel," had been much disappointed of his expectations. John was supposed to play second fiddle in his own house; the "missis" had not so much respect for his talents and sagacity as became a wife, and the good man proportionately esteemed the chances of letting loose his opinions out of doors; and was especially anxious that "the Cornel" should not leave Tillington without being aware of his host's superiority. The honest fellow had been maundering on for some time about the houses which they passed before some chance words caught the Colonel's attention. He turned round rather sharply with the sudden "Eh!" of a mind pre-occupied. John Gilsland started so much, that he startled the mare, who tossed her head and winced, and showed inclinations "to mak' a boult of it," as her master said. This occurred, as it happened, near the spot where the Colonel had discovered Kennedy and his hare on the previous night. He raised himself with a little alarm, and peered into the darkness over the bushes, doubting that some concealed movement of the old poacher must have been the occasion of the mare's start. However, there was nothing to be seen behind the hedge, and John Gilsland recommenced his monologue, to which the Colonel now gave his ear, with a flattering attention which won his landlord's heart.

"As far as you can see—not that that's so far as might be wushed at this hour o' the nicht," said John, "was th' ould Mr. Musgrave's land, Cornel. Yon'er's the house, sir, amidst of a bit of wood—guid tim'er and ould, and a credit to the place. D'ye see the pair bit dribble o' smoke, Cornel?—th' ould chimneys puffed i' another fashion when the Squire was to the fore. There wasn't six days i' the twelve-month but there was coompany at the Grange, and a sight of fine folks wance or twicest in the year, like in September and the shooting saison. But ye cannot both eat your cake and have your cake, Cornel. There's this coom of it, that the siller's a' puffed away; and the young heir, poor lad, he's left destitute; and the more's the pity, for a more affable gentleman than Mr. Roger never carried a gun. That's him that coom to see yourself, sir, the last nicht—ye would be a friend o' his family, it's like?—for he's no of this parish born."

"Was the young man related to the Squire?—his godfather, I know—but they seem to be of the same name," said the Colonel; "he is a fine young fellow—he will have many friends, I presume, in the families hereabout."

"Ye see, Cornel," said John Gilsland, dropping the reins upon the mare's neck, and suffering her to fall into almost a walking pace, as he saw himself at last appreciated, "it makes an uncommon difference when a man gets shot of his siller. There was a time when Mr. Roger was foremost favourite mony's the

place; but wan house ye see, there's a parcel o' young ladies, and what if wan o' them took a fancy to him? They're tender-hearted, them girls—they're just as like as no to fa' in love with a man, for the reason that's he's misfortinate. I've seen a young lad myself that lost a' he had, and was prosecooted by the women for ne'er anither reason that I could see. Then anither place you see there's a regiment o' sons, and my leddy wants a' the influence she can wun, fair means or foul, for her owen prodgedy; and another place, they've little enough themsels, and cannot afford to keep friends with wan that has not a penny—and that's how it stands, Cornel, on the whole. If he had th' ould Squire's estate, he'd ha' loads o' friends."

"Poor fellow!" said the Colonel, shrugging his shoulders, half with compassion, half with disgust—he was not very well acquainted with this phase of human nature. Nobody had ever suspected him of being rich, and he remembered, with a half smile, quickly followed by a sigh, the gleeful opposition to established authority, with which young Edward Sutherland, ensign or lieutenant, returned to the charge, when repulsed by a prudent mamma from the vicinity of her daughters. But he soon reverted with ready sympathy to the woes of the disinherited. "This Squire must have been a very imprudent man," he said, "or a very heartless one. Had he no regrets to leave the young man penniless?"

"Hoosht, Cornel!—Mr. Roger, sir, he's wild if a man dare whisper a word. He's broke with his acquaintance that he had, and the common sort o' folks, sir, that were sorry for him, and ready to make friends if he wushed—he's quarrelled with half the county, Cornel, because this wan and the tither said their mind o' th' Squire. He wull not have a reproach of him, not a word. He took even mysel' down as fast, I thought the nose was off my face, for saying, in an innocent way, that th' Squire was very free with his money when he had it, and so was seen on him. I would not say, but it's all the better of him, to stand up for wan as cannot stand up for himself no more. And I ne'er knew a man as was deceived in Mr. Roger, Cornel—he's hasty, but he's true. He'll gang in o' the auld wives' cots, and give the children pennies, but never put an affront on a lass, or refused satisfaction to a man, as far as ever I heard, all his born days."

"I am glad to know it," said the Colonel, with a little shiver,—"but we are surely making very slow progress. What's happened to the mare? She surely forgets that this is the road to her own stable. Eh?—a beast of her good sense seldom does that."

"She's fresh, sir, fresh—she minds no more for her own stable nor I do, Cornel. She's good for twenty mile and more, if there was the occasion," said John, caressing the animal with the end of his whip, but prudently increasing her pace.

“And, by-the-bye, I have a question to ask you—Sir John Armitage? What sort of a place has he?—is it near?—is he rich?—and where do you think he is to be found?” said the Cornel rapidly, as they approached near Tillington.

Once more the mare, much against her will, slackened her pace. “Ye see, Sir John Armitage, Cornel,” said John, raising his hand in explanatory action, “he’s wan of the great squires o’ th’ county. He wasn’t born tull’t, as ye may say. He was an army gentleman, sir, such like as yourself, and th’ ould Sir John was as far off as his second cousin, a dissolute man, without neither chick nor child. This wan, he’s grey and onmarried likewise—the title will gang, as it came, slantlike, to a nevvy or a cousin. It’s the park, Cornel, a grand mansion as is his sait—but a desolate place, and him no more enjoyment in’t nor me. Sir? The mare? Oh ay, she’s jogging on.”

“It’s rather cold for this pace, it appears to me,” said the Colonel, whose face, so much of it as was visible out of the cloak, was blue with cold. “Hey? Halt then! Do you mean to upset us? What’s the matter with the beast now?”

“Na, Cornel, she’s gane fast and she’s gane slow, and nouther pleases—it’s none of her blame, puir brute,” said John, with affected humility. “I give her a taste o’ the whip, and ye say I’ll upset ye. Me! I’m the safest driver in ten mile; and as for my mare—there she is—she kens her gate hoam.”

Where accordingly they arrived in a few minutes, and where the Colonel got down frozen, and limped into the little parlour, where the blazing fire comforted his eyes. But having been frozen stiff in the first part of the road, and then jolted almost to pieces in the concluding gallop, it was some time before his numb fingers had vigour enough to unloose his cloak, and his lips to speak. The landlady brought in wine, pushed it aside with a mild feminine imprecation upon the “cauld stuff,” and came back presently with a steaming goblet of brandy and water. The Colonel was the most temperate of men, and had not had his dinner; but the siren seduced him—and the first words he uttered, when the frost in his throat began to melt, was an inquiry, which startled Mrs. Gilsland out of her propriety, for an “Army List,” if such a thing was to be had.

“An ‘Army List!’—eyeh, Cornel, what’s that?” said the good woman in dismay.

“Are there any old officers about Tillington, Mrs. Gilsland? An ‘Army List’ is simply a list of the army,” said the urbane Colonel. “Do you think you can manage to borrow one for half-an-hour from anybody in the village—eh? Consult with your husband, it is of importance to me.”

“Him, Cornel? What does he know?” said the landlady. “Officers, na—unless it was th’ Ould Hundred, begging your pardon, Cornel, for he’s nothing but a sergeant; but that’s the byname he goes by in my house.”

“The Old Hundred? I’m an Old Hundred man myself,” said the Colonel, laughing. “Kennedy, is it? No, he will not do, the old humbug—I suspect he tells the lads a parcel of lies about the regiment, and brings discredit on as fine a body of men as there is in the service. Eh?—is the sergeant a great man among ye here?”

“Oh, Cornel!” cried Mrs. Gilsland, “I’ll go down to you on my bended knees if you’ll say to my Sam, sir, what you say to me. He’s wild for the sodgerin’, is that lad! and th’ Ould Hunderd he lays it on till him as if it was Paradise!—and an only son, Cornel, and a great help in the business, and if he ’lists, and go to the bad, what will I do?”

“But if he ’lists, he need not go to the bad,” said the Colonel. “I’ll speak to him if you like; but in the meantime, my ‘Army List’? Is there nobody in Tillington who has a son an officer? Nobody who——”

“Bless my soul, what am I thinking on? To be sure, there’s the Rectory!” cried the landlady, rushing out of the room in the fervour of her discovery. And the Cornel heard her immediately commission her son, who seemed to be at a distance, at the top of her voice, to run this moment to the Rectory, and ask if there was such a thing about the house as a list of all the regiments and officers, for a gentleman that was an officer himself, and a Cornel, and that was staying at the “Tillington Arms.” “And thou’ll take it in thyself, Sam,” shouted the good woman, “with thy best manners, and never tarry on the road. The Cornel wants to speak to thee himself. Now, mind what I say!—he’s something to tell ’ee lad, will put ’ee out o’ conceit with th’ Ould Hunderd—run, as if thou hadst wings to thy heels!”

The Colonel, sitting by his fire, gradually thawing, laughed to himself, and shrugged his shoulders as he heard this adjuration. Was he to be electedimpromptu adviser of all the adventurous youth of Tillington? He sat in his chair, by the fire, wondering whether the ‘Army List’ could be had—whether Sir John Armitage would turn out to be Armitage of the 59th—and chuckling quietly over the Sergeant’s nickname, until, in the warmth and the silence, the old soldier nodded over cheerily into a half-hour’s sleep.

END OF VOL. I.