THE

HAVEN UNDER THE HILL.

A Novel.

BY

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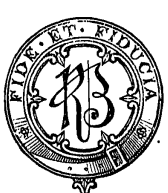
AUTHOR OF 'BETWEEN THE HEATHER AND THE NORTHERN SEA,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE HAVEN UNDER THE HILL.

CHAPTER I.

'AY, NOTE THAT POTTER'S WHEEL, THAT METAPHOR!'

'The coldest precisian cannot go abroad without encountering inexplicable influences. One man fastens an eye on him, and the graves of the memory render up their dead. . . . The entrance of a friend adds grace, boldness, eloquence to him; and there are persons he cannot choose but remember, who gave a transcendent expansion to his thought, and kindled another life in his bosom.'—EMERSON.

IT must not be supposed that Hild's Haven had stood still during the years that Dorigen Gower was growing from childhood to womanhood. On the contrary, the years had been years of quick change, and onward and outward movement. The town itself had grown, growing on the west

side always. Green fields had been covered with rows of red-brick houses, roofed with blue slates, and looking like the excrescences they were. More new houses stood everywhere, in the gardens and orchards which had blossomed and grown green year after year, in the by-ways of the old town. Crescents and terraces were springing like mushrooms on the cliff-top: these to meet the wants of the ephemeral population that was every summer finding its way to the bright and breezy seaport. It was evident that new life was beginning for the old place; new ways crept in, the old ones died out, some of them very quickly. It is probable that a single generation had seen more change than ten that went before.

Still, there is something about the place that nothing has touched, that nothing can touch, to its disintegration. It is as nameless as the charm that sometimes draws you to one who has neither youth nor beauty, nor any attraction to which you can give a name.

Putting this nameless fascination aside, there is enough to account for the appreciation which has written the name of Hild's Haven among the names of places to be seen and long remembered. First and foremost is its infinite variety. Whether you be poet or artist, his-

torian or antiquarian, a student of things natural above the earth or beneath it, you shall still find enough to engage your closest attention. While, should you be a mere student of humanity, you shall find here, sooner than in most places, that contrast, diversity, and extreme of unusualness which is the interesting material for your researches.

If there is a history of the place, there is a history of the people also; and a true account, if it might be written, of certain family vicissitudes, would make the fortune of some novelist to be.

Dorigen Gower knew but little of any of them. The gossip of the place had never been permitted by her father's fire; and at that time she could hardly have told you the names of half-a-dozen of the more important people of the town. She knew that the dwellers on St. Hild's Mount were not as the dwellers in other parts of the place. A kind of mystic effluence seemed to emanate from those old Georgian houses on the hill-top. They had an atmosphere of their own. The dark red bricks of which they were built had a gravity, a respectability, a distinctiveness that no other red bricks ever had; and the shrubs and flowers that grew in the square gardens in front grew always with

an air of exclusiveness, and were only saved from looking melancholy by the fresh breezes and the bright sunshine that seemed to love the place, and to linger there longer than anywhere else. To live on St. Hild's Mount was a kind of 'hall-mark,' and secured for you a consideration in the town and neighbourhood of an especial kind; differing altogether from the consideration accorded to wealth, respectability, talent, or good birth that happened to live in any other part of the town. Honours are divided nowadays; and it even seems as if effort were required to keep off a certain look of something that one would hesitate for a long while yet to term either shabbiness or decay. Shabbiness is not shabby on St. Hild's Mount. The wooden paling of your front garden may have a worn and battered look, the old green paint may be cracked and blistered; still that paling has a look of distinction it could have nowhere else, and the fact is sufficiently appreciated. If you come to the interiors of the houses things are still the same. Defective sanitary arrangements are not defective there; damp, and draughts, and smoky chimneys, ill-fitting doors and shaky windows, are trifles of no moment. Outsiders may build new villas, and call them by fine names, and pretend to advancement; but the

pretence is patent. They would live on St. Hild's Mount if they could.

The preference had not begun to tend downwards at the time when Dorigen was awakening to some interest in her human surroundings. She awakened very slowly, and with an inappetent listlessness. What did it matter whether six Miss Chancelors or seven lived in the big house in Ling Lane? or that Ling Lane had been renamed Coburg Street? Why should anyone care to know that old Samuel Sutheron, the ship-builder, had set up a carriage and pair? And where was the importance of knowing that young Gatonby, who had been a lawyer's clerk, had gone into partnership as a rough-jet merchant with young Wharram, and that they were making money as fast as if they were coining it? These things were far-off, and had no significance. It was matter for surprise that people should concern themselves so ceaselessly and intimately about their neighbours, especially neighbours with whom they never came into any contact. But, of course, this state of things was not universal. It seemed to the girl to be part of her narrow environment. Outside there were wider orbits, where people moved in freer air, and purer. Doubtless, for instance, in the serene empyrean of St. Hild's Mount gossip was

a thing undreamed of, and small uncharities of speech utterly unknown.

If Miss Rountree, who had hung all the beds and covered all the sofas on the hill-top, could have told a different tale, she did not tell it to Dorigen. It might not be exactly loyalty that caused the little woman to speak always with a certain respect and reverence of 'the quality,' with whom she had to do; but years afterward the girl was aware that she had acquired from the prim upholstress a kind of veneration for certain of the people of Hild's Haven; a veneration totally different from any she had for the people of places she knew later in life.

Distinctly she remembered one June morning, when there had been a wedding in the parish church on the cliff-top. It was just two months after that first visit to Thorsgrif; Dorigen had known nothing of the wedding, nothing of Miss Ursula Barugh, who was the bride; nothing of Mr. Charlton Wharram, who was the bridegroom; nothing of the two Miss Golands or the two Miss Salloways, who were the bridesmaids. The girl had gone up to the edge of the cliff quite early, to see if by any chance she could discern the passage of the outward-bound ship in which her father sailed.

This was his second voyage in the *Albatross*,

a Sunderland ship, which by a curious coincidence happened to belong to one of the Sunderland Gowers, a branch of the Yorkshire family which had been broken off, planted afresh, and had thriven wonderfully in the more northern seaport where it had been settled now for a couple of centuries. It was altogether by chance that John Gower, of Wiggoner's Wharf, had agreed to sail with the captain of a ship belonging to Sir Anthony Gower, Knight, of Wychwood Hall, in the county of Durham. Sir Anthony had heard of the matter, and had displayed some little interest in the fate of his far-off cousin who was reduced to 'sailing before the mast' in one of his own ships; and this interest had been discerned and noted by Captain Lynas, a fact that proved to be not so much to John Gower's advantage as it might have been; still, the latter had already sent home some money, and some not uncheerful letters. Now he was bound for the Mediterranean, and Dorigen had a natural wish to see if it were but the sail of the ship that was bearing him away.

Old Than was there with his glass, and Margery Laverock, who was twelve years old now, and was less lame, less delicate-looking than she had been, though she was still the same silent, clinging, affectionate little thing who had won

the older girl's protecting regard, and something of her love, while she was yet a wistful-eyed, suffering baby. Mrs. Gower had never approved of the friendship. Old Pete Laverock, Margery's father, who was a native of Hild's Haven and the owner of a fishing-boat, might be well enough, but Mrs. Gower could never be brought to see any good in the mother, Jean Laverock—a proud, handsome, loud-tongued woman of Scotch descent, who had a history somewhere in the background of her life. It was a tragic history—a history of wrong and grievous oppression, but there was nothing in it that was either shame or blame to the woman. She never forgot that she had suffered. Her loud voice, her harsh accent, her dark quickly-flashing eye told the merest stranger that hers had been an unusual experience. Mrs. Gower was half afraid of her, and had a whole dislike to her, and many a time she wished for her daughter's sake that they had not been such near neighbours.

The three—old Than, Dorigen, and Margery—were coming back along the cliff-top when they perceived that the churchyard was full of people. A flag was flying from the top of the tower in the yellow sunshine; carriages were waiting in the Abbey Plain. Then, quite suddenly, the bells rang out cheerily; guns were fired; there was a

rush among the crowd, a flash of white satin, a glimpse of a flower-crowned head.

'That's her, that's Miss Ursula—Mrs. Charlton Wharram, one owght to saäy noo,' old Than exclaimed a little excitedly. Miss Rountree had for weeks past been helping to fit up the house on St. Hild's Mount which was to be the home of the newly-married people, and the old man's interest was but natural. Miss Rountree herself was there too. The wedding being over, she was moving away apart from the crowd; and Than with the two girls hastened to overtake her. They would all go down Monk's Close together. Quite a little stream of excited people were going the same way, chatting, laughing, gossiping, criticizing.

''Twas a wonder, being so grand a wedding, that they'd nobody but auld Kenningham to marry them,' said the shrill voice of Jean Laverock. She was speaking to some one in the crowd.

'Auld Kenningham!' exclaimed little Miss Rountree, turning round with heightened colour, and indignation gleaming in her small keen eyes. 'And who are you that you should call the Rector of Hild's Haven "Auld Kenningham"? To begin with, he's no older than yourself. If you'd spent your strength in studying as he's

spent his, and then had been Canon of Calcutta for all the best years of your life, perhaps your black hair had turned as white as his has turned, and the fine colour on your cheek might have been a little less fine than it is now. . . . "Auld Kenningham," indeed! Speak of your equals, Mrs. Laverock, and not of your superiors, if you can't speak of them different to that.'

'Wha am I, you ask? An' wha are ye yoursel', Leenock Rountree? An' what knaw ye, that ye should presume to fix a place in the world for me?' retorted Jean. 'The day's been, an' it's nane so lang gane by, when such as you call your superiors were content enough that I should take my place amang them as an equal; an' no man, nor woman neither, daured say that the place was not mine by right. There's mair in the world than's kenned by you, Leenock Rountree. Keep your rebukes for such as ha' need o' them.

The quarrel, if such it could be called, might have proceeded, but for the fact that 'Auld Kenningham' himself was striding down Monk's Close with his usual rapid step and keenly observant glance. Nothing escaped him—that you felt instantly.

> 'He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
> And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,

And broad-edge, bold-print posters on the wall.
He took such cognizance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;
If any cursed a woman, he took note ;
Yet stared at nobody—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you, and expect as much.'

It had not escaped his notice that Dorigen Gower had of late found her way to the church on the cliff-top, going there as often as there was service, and always alone. Mrs. Gower had consented for the inadequate reason that she could not endure the idea of the girl's going to Zion Chapel in the shabby grey frock that she had worn all the week, and the same black beaver bonnet that she had worn for a couple of years. And there was a little resentment in her heart. The Zion Chapel people had not been all that she had expected them to be to her in her adversity. Church people might have behaved no better; but they could hardly have behaved worse. Dorigen might do as she would. If she were not a good child in the Zion Chapel sense of the word, she was good in other ways, helpful, loving, obedient always, and a comfort now that the father was not there. So the mother reasoned when conscience touched her for the lapse she made from what she conceived to be her duty.

The Rector had not forgotten how the child's

face had struck him the first time he saw it; and he was not a man to need that the impression should be repeated. He had never lost sight of her, never passed her in the street without a word, or a smile that was more eloquent than words. More than once while John Gower was travelling down that rapid and painful descent from comparative prosperity, a few true, fitting, sharply-cut sentences from the quick-sighted clergyman had turned the fear in his heart to hopefulness, and the bitterness of his spirit to patient endurance. John Gower never forgot that, nor did his daughter forget it. It might not have much to do with the curious germ of attraction that was between the uncultured child of the jet-worker and the elderly, scholarly Rector of Hild's Haven; but the kindly disposition shown towards her father impressed her to a greater gratitude than the same shown to herself. She looked to him, and he knew it, though she had said no word that implied it. The strange relationship between them was not of a kind to need utterance. A mere glance from the one soul to the other conveyed enough of meaning. Though no word had ever passed the lip of either to the other, the tie, that was neither wholly spiritual nor wholly intellectual, would not have been the less binding.

He spoke to her now and always as to an equal, raising his hat, and holding out his hand.

'I have been wanting to see you for weeks past, Miss Gower,' he said, speaking in his somewhat shrill and high-pitched voice. 'I called once to see you, but you were from home. That was before your father went away. I want you to tell me about him. But take my arm down this rough slope. I will go home with you, and you can tell me about the *Albatross* as we go. Where is she now, do you suppose?'

In sheer obedience the child laid her small hand, with its much-darned grey cotton glove, upon the clergyman's arm. The little stream of gossiping people ceased to gossip as the Rector passed with the tall, pale, shabbily-dressed girl. Little Miss Rountree had curtsied, and sauntered behind with her cousin Than and Margery. And Jean Laverock, seeing that Miss Rountree had taken her lame child's hand, and was guiding her down the broken places at the edge of the field, was appeased in spirit instantly.

'Let byganes be byganes, Miss Rountree,' the fisherman's wife said, coming up to the little group. ''Twas no disrespect I meant, but just the way o' speakin' one gets fra the folks aboot; and I ken weel it might grate on the ear o' one like yoursel'. Let it pass.'

The little woman unbent in very majestic fashion, as, to her idea, became one who had so manifestly the right on her side. But Jean Laverock did not like her the worse for being neither false nor facile. She had had enough of these qualities in her life-time, and recognised a firmer virtue when she met it, which she did not seldom in the yards and ghauts of Hild's Haven. Besides, Miss Rountree was always kind to Margery; and many a bundle of bright chintz for patchwork found its way to the fisherman's cottage at the bottom of Aclam's Raff Yard. If Jean Laverock never forgot a wrong, she never forgot a kindness.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE TWILIGHT.

'There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore;
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.'

WORDSWORTH.

THAT summer was to Dorigen a time of strange quietness, strange peace; perhaps it was also a time of greater growth than it seemed on the face of it to be. 'Growth goes on underground, or nowhere,' some one has rightly said; and certainly here was no sign of any visible advancement.

The quietness was strange, because there was so little to account for it. To love another

intensely, yearningly, passionately, and to know your love unacknowledged, is not usually a cause of peace.

Dorigen had not seen Mr. Salvain so often as she had expected to see him. Every week his mother found her way to the house by Wiggoner's Wharf, bringing books and flowers, smiles and fruit, kind words and new-laid eggs, the latter daintily arranged in baskets of moss and fern. Sometimes, too, there would be a special message, which was something to be remembered; but it was better when Mr. Salvain came to deliver the message himself, as he did on occasion. He would not stay away long enough for any awkwardness or embarrassment to have time to spring up. He had spoken of friendship, and he would have kept his word, though nothing had drawn him and moved him with strong impulsion to keep it. The path he had marked out for himself was not an easy path, nor did it grow easier as the days went on. However it might be with Dorigen—and he saw with painful satisfaction how it was—it was no time of peace for him.

It was noticed everywhere that he grew more and more silent, that the sternness on his face deepened, that the look of heaviness and weariness grew about his eyes and mouth, ageing him

beyond his years even more than before. And yet he appeared to be living a less secluded life than he had lived; at least, he was oftener seen about the streets and gates and lanes of Hild's Haven, wandering alone and lonely, and seeming as if he searched for something or some one not easily to be found. Now and then he was rewarded. A passing word in the market-place, a few fluttering heart-beats, a few swift blushes, a parting smile, these compensations were better than none. He might not do aught to win the child's love, or to increase it; he would not do aught to destroy it. Let it pass on of itself into a pure warm friendship, such a friendship as might make life a grander and greater thing for them both. This was still his end and aim.

So the summer passed on. Dorigen's days were for the most part spent in household work. Because the father was not there, there was no abatement in the strict order and neatness which reigned always in the house. A teacup out of its place, a soiled table-cover, an untidy fireside, were not more bearable because the little household was saddened and straitened. That poverty should lead down to dirt and disorder was always inexplicable to Esther Gower; rather did it seem to her that narrow means were a reason for extra

care, extra watchfulness against the creeping sin of carelessness in small things. Let matters be as bad as they might, to the last she would make the best of them.

Yet for Dorigen the days were not quite filled with that simple, commonplace domestic life, which often seems to be the best life of all. Perhaps these things were the least part of her existence. They claimed but little space in the records of memory. The things that were written clearly there were the books that were sent from Thorsgrif, and read with avidity, as opening new doors and windows upon the world, and letting in the breath of finer air from the regions of thought, and of intellectual and spiritual beauty. A volume of poems by Tennyson or Mrs. Browning, a novel by Mrs. Gaskell or George Eliot, a few stray numbers of *Blackwood* or *Fraser*, made more impression than a month of plain sewing; while a walk over the cliff-tops in the twilight would yield visions not to be disturbed by the small monotonous events of the morrow. These things were her life, the true links in the consecutive chain of her existence. The rest was, in every sense, unimportant.

If Hild's Haven is beautiful in the full bright blue of a summer day, it is hardly less beau-

tiful when the sun has gone and the day is going.

It might be six o'clock one September evening when Dorigen went lightly up the church steps to the East Cliff. She was shut out now from the aisles and transepts of the Abbey, which had seemed to her always as a second home. The gates were locked by day and by night, and she might only walk sadly in the plain by the outer wall. Yet that was better than any other place, unless it were the path by the very edge of the rocky cliff where the wind came straight from the water, and where nothing hindered your sight by sea or by land save only the tall towers of the Abbey looming darkly against the sunset sky in the west.

The girl stood awhile by the edge of the cliff. The sun had sunk into a bank of heavy grey cloud, with misty far-spreading edges. The sea was darkening underneath ; the fishing-boats which had come for the herring-season from Penzance and Lowestoft, from Staithes and Runswick, and other places along the coast, were there, lying in the roads, their bare poles seeming crowded together in picturesque confusion. Here and there among them a light was beginning to twinkle : farther out at sea sailing ships were passing in a clear glow ;

steamers left long lines of low, drifting, shadowy clouds.

It was very lonely. The hour, the place, the great wide sea, and the dim, misty, arching sky, each had its own loneness.

Not a tree was near to stir its leaves and make motion; not a shrub or bush to break the spreading lines of the cliff-top fields. The low bare stone walls mingled with the bareness of the darkening pasture-lands. The distant solitary farmsteads melted gradually into the desolate inland greyness. Down below, the greyness of the wide sea-waste seemed more desolate still.

Yet there was beauty in the hour; and for the girl, a nearness to some soul not her own that delivered her strangely from the consciousness of the bounded, limited existence that was her appointed lot. It was one of those moments when thought goes out, reaching far into the unknown, when

> 'Questions come as wild and fast as winds
> Of autumn,'

and when the lonely, ignorant, untried soul stretches out yearning arms to the limitless skies as if beseeching for some answer, some word to make life and the purpose of life plainer. 'Is

life worth living?' was not asked for the first time yesterday. Perhaps no true spirit was ever touched to any true issue unless the question had been both asked and answered in one of those rare moments when 'the clouds are off the soul,' and the soul looks into Nature's eye, pleading with her that she would reveal the secret she seems so certainly to hold. 'Is life worth living?' Yes; a thousand times yes. Though the very end and meaning of life be hidden here, though all be darkness and pain and perplexity though all be humiliation and defeat and failure, still yes, a thousand times yes, this marred and blind and broken life is worth the living. This answer, and this alone, can you wrest from the changing grandeur of the sky, the suggestive boundless mystery of the sea, the subtle thrill that touches you to sympathy with the stir of the leaves in the heart of the lonely wood, the sense of a vast and mighty power that possesses you in the presence of mountains that seem in their majesty to cleave the clouds of heaven. Each of these has its own voice, its own message. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,' and let him listen; let him for ever listen.

For ever? There is a time to all things, and it would certainly seem, for the majority at

least, as if youth were the only period when any angel of pity might be expected to come down and trouble the waters of a commonplace existence with much yearning for the hidden and higher things that are everywhere inextricably twined with the life we call the lower. This is the one tide in the affairs of men of any import. Can we not all of us for whom the flood has turned put our finger upon the moment when the swift ebbing began? For you it was your entering into the thick of life that took place when you were thrown upon your own resources. For you it was your marriage, with all its cares and efforts and pain. For you it was the hour of bereavement, that threw the weight of new duties, new responsibilities, new troubles upon your hands and upon your brain, and left you neither time, nor spirit, nor power, nor desire for communion with any eternal or other silences. You are yourself still, with your own character, your own capacities, your own leanings and yearnings; but something has gone from your life that will no more come back again, and by brief moments you are made aware of it.

'Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'

For Dorigen, the tide was far from high-

water mark as she stood leaning there against the rude stone wall on the cliff-top, watching the spreading of the filmy grey vapour, and listening to the far-off sound of the lapping water down on the rocks below. She had not heard any footstep in the field behind her, and she started visibly when a voice broke the silence :

'I was sure that it was you,' said Mr. Kenningham in shrill, abrupt tones, which meant fault-finding. 'What are you doing here alone so late? It is neither wise nor right. I must speak to your mother.'

Dorigen was not afraid of him as he stood there looking with his kind eyes into hers.

'Please don't do that!' she asked. 'I like coming here; it is nearly all the pleasure I have.'

He understood more than was said; more than might have been said if the girl had tried to put all the thoughts and emotions of the past hour into words for his enlightenment. He had seen her loneliness, her soul's dimness and unsatisfiedness, and he had wished to be helpful to her, if help were possible.

'Have you any idea what you are going to do with yourself in the future?' he asked, with characteristic suddenness.

The girl looked up with surprise.

'No,' she said, speaking rather sadly. 'For the present I am to stay with my mother, to help her, and to look after the baby. . . . My father wishes it.'

'Quite right. I was not thinking of the present. I was trying to look into your future life. . . . Tell me, have you any thought of marriage—any engagement?'

It was well that the twilight had deepened, so that Mr. Kenningham could not see the burning glow of colour he had called to the girl's cheek. Yet she did not hesitate in her answer.

'No,' she said, speaking with unusual firmness and decision. 'No; I shall never be married.' She paused a moment, then she added, 'I am quite sure of that.'

Had the decision, the assurance, come with the question? Had some new light flashed upon the idea now that it was put into definite words by another? Many an idea which afterward becomes fact is brought to its development by sudden external aid of this kind.

The Rector looked at her a moment.

'It is wise,' he said gravely; 'and it is what I expected from you. Don't let yourself be moved from your purpose by persuasion. . . . If

I do not mistake, you have other work to do in this life—work which will need the utmost effort you can give.' Then he stopped a moment, looking out across to where the dark mystic sky seemed to melt into the darker and more mystic sea. 'Yes; you will have other work to do,' he said, standing there, and speaking as if he were but reading from the great book that was open before his eyes. 'You will live, and you will work, and your work shall live also, *and it shall do good when I am dead, and my sermons are forgotten.*'

So he spoke in these striking yet simply-worded phrases, uttering every syllable clearly, distinctly, emphatically, as if they had been pre-considered and committed to memory.

So he spoke, standing on that self-same wind-swept headland, where the voice had spoken in the night, calling Cædmon from the herdsman's hut to be the first poet of England. It could not be but that the girl to whom he spoke should feel the vibration of his words to the last fibre of her nature. They passed as the *aura* passes which precedes convulsion.

Yet they were not then understood.

But though they might not be comprehended, neither might they be forgotten.

They were not repeated, not even to her

mother—they were too sacred even for that; but during all that night, and during all the days that followed, they remained with her ceaselessly; inclining her to new depths of silence; to a new gravity of manner and movement; to weightier thought, and a more impressive yearning for light and knowledge. That these things would be given she could not know; she could only go on desiring them, waiting, watching for them, wondering what these hidden influences that were working upon her life might mean.

Michael Salvain saw that some change had come to her in the few days which had elapsed since he had seen her before. They had been somewhat unpeaceful days for him; and more than once he had walked over from Thorsgrif, so that he might be at Hild's Haven when the sun went down. But each time he had gone back feeling more wearied, more lonely, more unsatisfied than when he came. At last a little requital was vouchsafed him. Wandering along the path at the edge of the churchyard he had discerned a slight grey figure standing between sea and sky, on the very edge of the angle of the rocky cliff.

'I don't like to see you standing there!' he began brusquely. 'This cliff is always breaking away. If you went down on to the scaur it

would hardly matter whether anyone happened to be passing or not.'

Dorigen looked up with a smile, and moved away; but her face instantly grew grave again.

'Do you think I have forgotten?' she asked. 'I shall never forget. I was wondering only to-day whether I had been sufficiently grateful.'

'What made you think of it to-day?'

'I hardly know. I was thinking of many things,' the girl said musingly. Not even to Mr. Salvain might aught be said of the strange prophecy which Mr. Kenningham had uttered on the previous evening. And yet it was a temptation. Here, if anywhere, might light be thrown upon it. Here, if anywhere, might she expect strength, and guidance, and support. But it might not be. The strongest instinct she had concerning the word that had been said was the instinct of silence. Not till the prophecy had begun to fulfil itself should it be uttered or written down.

Michael Salvain was watching her as they stood there where the churchyard borders on the cliff-top fields. The old town down below was wrapped in the mingled haze of smoke and twilight. The lamps were gleaming in the

narrow streets; and all along the quays they threw long quivering lances of light deep down into the rippling water. The hum of voices came in a subdued and pleasant way. Across on the other side of the town there were lights in the windows of the houses; people were walking in the amber dusk that was over the opposite cliff, gliding to and fro to the sound of music. The sun had gone down beyond the Castle woods long before, leaving only a long glowing bar of yellow which seemed to send a low light all along the coast, and even to burn like fading fire upon the moving surface of the sea. Dorigen's face was distinctly visible as she stood there, looking out to the west. Michael saw the absent and quietly perplexed expression that was written on it. There was something new in it, something strange.

He went back to his former questioning.

'Has anything happened to make you more grateful for your life?' he asked gently. 'Are you happier than you were?'

'No;' she said, still speaking as one who has the truth to search for. 'Nothing has changed, I think. And I don't know that I am happier. But I am not unhappy. Sometimes I wonder if life will always be like this.'

'You would prefer to have it otherwise—

great joys and great sorrows alternately, for instance ?'

'No,' she said shrinkingly; and her voice seemed to change to a low and more apprehensive tone. 'No; I have a dread of sorrow. I have always had that.'

'And you don't crave much for happiness ?'

'Yes, I do. But it is not easy to know what would make one happy,' she answered thoughtfully. It was less easy now than it would have been a few days ago to come to a decision on this point. The word she had said to Mr. Kenningham, 'I shall never marry, I am quite sure that I shall never marry,' was not the usual careless assertion that most young girls make at some time or other. It had sounded in her own ears like a solemn vow; and when she saw that it was received gravely, and with confidence, the feeling of irrevocableness deepened within her on the instant. Now it all came back with the force of a quick pain. It was not the spoken word. She was not so childish as to imagine that Mr. Kenningham would consider that she had made a binding promise. The thing that troubled her was the same strong instinct which had led her to speak so certainly. It possessed her now quite as forcibly as it had possessed her on the previous evening, standing

like some dark impassable barrier between her and the happiness that might have been. Surely it might have been. Such love as hers would grow, and she might grow greater with it, and so be worthier of Michael Salvain's love. Then true happiness might come ; perhaps then alone. It seemed that there could be no other great joy, or great gladness for her in this world. There might be other things, but there could never be full, glad happiness.

She would have been relieved if she might have spoken of it all as she stood there. Michael Salvain was silent. Was speech denied to him also? He looked sad, and weary, and perplexed. Was he thinking of that evening on the terrace at Thorsgrif when he had been moved to speak so fervently of life, and the joy of living, if the true nature of joy were once rightly apprehended? She had never forgotten; nay, she had even found room in her small experience to test to a certain degree the verity of the thing he had said. It was quite true that pain might be made to yield pleasure, or at least peace; that sacrifice might be found to have joy in it. Was it this that was in his mind when he asked her if she were happier? She put the question into words presently.

'No,' he said. 'I was thinking of a lower

kind of happiness, the happiness that we all desire naturally, and when we cease to desire it for ourselves we often go on praying that our friends may know it.' Then he added in a softer, tenderer tone, 'I should like you to be happy.'

'With the lower kind of happiness?' the girl asked quickly.

Their eyes met in the twilight for one eloquent and dangerous moment; so dangerous it was that Michael Salvain resolved that he would trust himself no more until his strength was greater, or his love less keen and overmastering.

'I pray that you may know happiness of every kind,' he replied. 'But you are right in supposing that only the highest, only that which comes of detachment from the lower, is really worth desiring. It may be difficult to attain—God only, who shapes the plan of it, knows how difficult. But once attained there is no disappointment. The end of attainment is unfathomable peace. And for those who are capable of reaching that height there is no lower way. They must reach it, or live in intolerable misery, self-degraded, self-defrauded. . . . Can we—you and I—help each other, that we do not fall?'

The girl raised her eyes in astonishment.

'You can help *me*,' she said. 'I think of you

always when I want help. But I need helping too much to be able to help anybody else . . . I am so ignorant. I am much more ignorant than you think. How should I be able to help you in any way?'

'You *do* aid me,' Michael said earnestly. 'You have helped me to-night, helped me back to my better self. I shall take home with me more of strength and peace than I brought away.'

It seemed strange afterward that on these two consecutive evenings the two separate threads of which the girl's inner life had been woven from the beginning should each have been taken up by other hands, and laid as it were with fresh design. The one idea, vague, indefinite, yet strikingly persistent, had lain in her heart since that Sunday morning long ago; not lifeless; nor altogether inoperative; though no result might be visible as yet. There was nothing unprecedented about the fact of a child being impressed at an early age with the idea of some special call to some special work. Biography teems with such instances; and in many a one the nature of the call is clearly recognised, and the life surrendered to it, before the age Dorigen had arrived at now. As we have seen, it was not so with her. It would have

seemed to her presumption, madness, that she should dare to imagine that the self-same thing would be required from her as had been required from the cow-herd Cædmon. Yet now and then the temptation would not be gainsaid; and the soul within her thrilled to the pain and to the unrest, rather than to the good or glory of the idea, and she made haste to put it away, lest it should be discerned, and turned to the ridicule it deserved. No; it could not be that. What it would be she must wait patiently to see. When the hour came the voice would speak, and speak clearly.

The word that Mr. Kenningham had said awoke the doubts, the pains, the questionings of years, and it set nothing at rest. The waiting had to be taken up again, and patiently. Patience was not difficult.

That was the warp of her life, and the weft must cross it. It was Michael Salvain who had shot the first woof threads across the web.

CHAPTER III.

'HAD BUT LOVE ITS WILL.'

'O love, my world is you!
Howbeit, to meet you grows almost a pang.
Because the pang of parting comes so soon.'
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

THOUGH Mrs. Gower had borne the separation from her husband with some bravery, it was only natural that, as the wild autumn evenings drew on, the poor woman should give way to despondency and dread. When the heavy ceaseless rains set in, her very heart bled for him; exposed, as she knew he would be, for hours together on deck, drenched to the skin, and having no comfort to look forward to at the end of the long night-watches. The rising of the wind came to be more and more an ominous sound in her ear; the mere stirring of the ivy on the window-pane was like a whisper of his distress,

and when darkness came down it was always like a new severance.

'It seems as if I'd never felt the worst of it till now,' she said one evening. It was near the end of September, and the days were duller and greyer than they should have been, and the nights darker and wilder. Even as she spoke a heavy rain was falling, coming down with that strong swift rush that makes you watch unconsciously for the lightning's gleam, and listen for the rolling thunder. Dorigen was listening as she sat knitting at the fireside near her mother; feeling her mother's nervousness coming upon herself, oppressing her spirit, filling her with the sense of impending fate which seemed every day to be growing stronger in the house by Wiggoner's Wharf. Already the girl had come to dread the morning's relation of the night's dreams; the oft-repeated assurance that the death-watch ticked in the wooden frame of the bronzed silhouettes of her father and mother, and the mournful bewailing of the fact that thrice the new moon had been seen by Mrs. Gower through glass.

'An' I heard the wild geese again last night,' she said. 'They went whistlin' an' cryin' over the house long past midnight. They seemed to be tremblin' an' quiverin' like, by the sound o' their cryin', an' they made me tremble too as I

lay on my pillow. For I've heard both my father an' grandfather say that they boded no good. . . . Eh ! but it's borne in upon me strongly 'at something's goin' to happen ; not to me, nor to my children, but to their father ! An' what will become of me an' them ? Heaven only knows what would become of us if aught happened to him !'

Then the poor woman knelt down beside the sofa and prayed, with one child in her arms and the other by her side. And still the rain came down, rushing and splashing fiercely ; and the wind rose a little and sobbed among the ivy, and about the chimney stacks, and shook the window of the little room. The one candle threw its dim light upon the polished oak and the shining brass ; the fire burned feebly. Esther Gower's voice sank with a sigh, and the wind seemed to take it up and repeat it with a great throb, as of a deeper pain. Then tears came ; and the mother and daughter knelt on, and cried silently together, hand-in-hand, and all the while little Elsie slept on her mother's breast, and smiled in her sleep as children smile when the angels come that way.

Through all this strange sorrow Mrs. Gower felt, more and more as the days went on, that her youngest born had been given her for a bless-

ing. The child was singularly beautiful, and calm with a strange calmness that nothing seemed to break. She seldom smiled even when she was awake, and she cried even seldomer still. Her existence seemed to be passed mainly in looking up with her large light blue eyes into the span of sky that was above the old wharves and the rippling river.

'It's just like havin' an angel in the house,' the mother said sometimes. 'If I catch sight of her when I'm goin' to speak sharp or to complain o' things, then it seems as if the word died in my throat an' would come no further. If she lives she'll be a nice companion for you, Dorigen. But many a time I tremble with the thought 'at she won't live. She hasn't the look o' one 'at's long for a world like this.'

Mrs. Gower was always trembling now. The postman's step, a change in the weather, a knock at the door, or a morning's dream made her tremulous and apprehensive for that day at least. If she read anything now it was a newspaper, which she would search for wrecks and shipping casualties with avidity, dwelling upon the sufferings of men drowned, or saved from drowning, until it seemed as if her mind could entertain no other ideas. It was small wonder that her sleeping dreams should be as her waking ones, or that

they should seem at times to intermingle until she could hardly discern the one from the other. A weaker brain might have yielded altogether under a strain so deadly.

So the days went on until the middle of October was reached. A wild storm had raged during the first few days of the month, but Mrs. Gower had had the satisfaction of knowing that the *Albatross* was laid up for slight repairs in the dock at Sunderland. She had half hoped that her husband would have come over to Hild's Haven for a few days, but he had not done so, thinking, perhaps, that the money he would have spent in travelling would be needed by the little family at home before the next voyage was over. He had written as cheerfully as might be, and for a little while Mrs. Gower's spirit had seemed lighter and more at ease. Now that her husband was about to sail again, the old apprehensiveness came upon her with double force; and even her daughter saw that there was less reason in it than before.

The climax came at last. Mrs. Gower came downstairs one morning with pallid face, distressed expression, and such fixed, unseeing, tearless eyes, that the girl was half afraid to ask any questions. She ventured at last to break the strange silence.

'You are ill, mother,' she said gently. 'Let me go and ask Miss Rountree to come, or would you like me to go for Dr. Mayer?'

'I want no doctor, an' I'm not ill,' Mrs. Gower replied, the look on her face not changing in any way. 'I'm goin' to Sunderland to-day. I shall leave Hild's Haven at one o'clock; an' you must go an' stay with Miss Rountree till I come back. I'll pay her for letting you stay.'

The girl felt herself grow suddenly chill and rigid; but for a moment she made no reply. Since her birth her mother had never slept under any roof but that; and the mere idea of one so strange to the ways of travelling going out thus, was full of distress to Dorigen. But, of course, there were other things behind, causing the vague yet deep uneasiness which this sudden announcement had but increased.

'Have you had another letter from my father?' she asked presently.

'No,' Mrs. Gower replied; 'not since the one I had on Friday. They're to sail the day after to-morrow, Thursday. I must get there before they sail. Your father must not set foot on board the *Albatross* after to-day.'

Dorigen listened sadly to this oracular decision, but it was not until later in the day that she learnt the meaning of it. As soon as breakfast

was over, Mrs. Gower hastened to pack her own things, and, to Dorigen's surprise, some of little Elsie's.

'But you're not going to take the baby, mother?' the girl asked in surprise, the tears starting in her eyes as she spoke. 'You'll never take little Elsie?'

Mrs. Gower only looked up with calm resoluteness.

'Are you so stupid as to think that I could leave an infant like that?' she asked. 'Of course I must take the child. Bring me her hood and her brown pelisse.'

Dorigen went sadly, and brought the things with reluctant hands, while her eyes filled again and again with the slow hot tears. Some of them fell on the face of the sleeping baby, as she bent to kiss her in the cradle, but the little one only smiled a soft, sweet, loving smile that went to the sister's heart like a last word or a parting glance.

The morning was passing swiftly.

'Hadn't I better go and ask Miss Rountree if they can do with me?' Dorigen asked after a time of sad silence.

'No; I should have them down here instantly,' said Mrs. Gower. 'An' I should have to try to explain things that I could never explain to them. You can put your things together, the

few you will want, and take them up with you when you go; an' be sure you lock the door, an' take the key with you. An' you can tell Leenock Rountree that I've gone to save my husband's life. It was revealed to me in the night that I might save him; perhaps I might save some others if they would listen. The *Albatross* is a doomed ship—that I know. I saw her go down in a wild, white, boiling sea, an' all her crew with her—all but my husband: he wasn't in her. He would have been, but in my dream I had seemed to myself to be flying, flying over land and sea in such a raging storm as I never saw, an' I thought as I passed over the sea I saw scores of ships in distress, some sinking, some breaking to pieces, some turning over—it *was* terrible. But I didn't stay to watch them, I went on and on till I found the *Albatross*. She was just striking on a rock, an' I thought I stooped, an' drew your father up out o' the ship by sheer force, an' we stayed together just over her till she went down, as I told you. Then it seemed that your father an' me were all at once on dry land; an' I woke. *You* can tell Leenock Rountree, but I couldn't tell her myself. She would look at me as if she thought I was mad. She won't think me mad when she hears o' the wreck of the *Albatross*.'

Mrs. Gower was quite ready for her journey by this time. She had been dressing the baby as she told the story of the night, stopping now and then to caress it in a gentle, loving way that she seldom displayed so unreservedly. Dorigen was to go to the station to see them start, and a neighbour's boy had been hired to carry the one small box that was Mrs. Gower's luggage.

There was time enough after Mrs. Gower had taken her seat for more last words. The baby was on her lap, sitting there with wide placid eyes, and sweet lovable little mouth. Mrs. Gower's face had the same fixed, resolute look that it had had all the morning, but there were gentler tones in her voice; and she had kissed Dorigen very tenderly before she got into the carriage.

'You'll be glad if I bring your father home with me, won't you?' she said. 'An' I know you'll be good, an' won't give Leenock no more trouble than you can help. An' I'll write to you, or get your father to write, a day or so before we come back, so as you may have a nice fire burnin', an' tea all ready. You shall have a letter if there's time.'

That was all. A last kiss was given; the baby was held forward for another kiss, and then the carriage-door was shut, and the train moved

heavily away. Dorigen stood, seeing nothing through her tears for a little while; then she went homeward by the docks and the bridge across the harbour. All the way as she went she was weeping silently.

It was a mild October day, but grey and sunless, and it seemed to the lonely child as if loneliness were in the very air. The sound of the water lapping about the piers and bridge-ways had chillness in it, and the masts and shrouds of the ships in the harbour swayed to and fro against the dull sky with a certain gloom and mournfulness. The white-winged gulls that swept up from the sea cried bodingly.

Dorigen was going onward; the tears on her cheeks were not yet dried; her eyes were still heavy with tears yet to be shed.

'What is the new trouble?' said a kind, concerned voice close by her side, and looking up with an instant blush she saw Mr. Salvain. His face grew troubled, too, looking into hers. 'What is it?' he said again; and Dorigen, trying by a strong effort to keep back the tears that were rising again swiftly, replied:

'Come home with me, and I will tell you.'

In spite of her sorrow her heart was beating with something that was almost gladness. If aught could take the fear and gloom from the

day's events, surely it was seeing Mr. Salvain's eyes looking into hers, and hearing his voice speaking to her with fresh kindness and gentleness. It was quite easy to tell him all, from the very beginning of her mother's apprehensiveness to this strange outcome from it. Perhaps he perceived more than Dorigen herself perceived: he listened very gravely.

'And you are going to your godfather's?' he said, as they went on Shaddocke Lane together.

'Yes,' she said, looking up with a new tremulous hope, which he discerned and understood with a sudden movement of gladness within him which died into pain as soon as it was born. It might not be. Then Rountree's cottage at the top of Salthouse Garth was a safer place than Thorsgrif. And yet he blamed himself. The child was so happy under his mother's roof, it was so good for her to be there, and she might so easily be saved from this terrible loneliness which she appeared to dread so much. What should he do? He walked on quite silenced by the depth of his perplexity.

And Dorigen was perplexed, too. Her second thoughts had come, reminding her of her mother's directions and injunctions. She could not leave Hild's Haven. Her heart had sunk under the

weight of this decision before Michael Salvain spoke again.

They had reached Wiggoner's Wharf by this time. The great folding-doors were open to the harbour; carts laden with merchandise were coming and going; the tall white crane was swinging slowly and with a heavy bale in its rusty chains. They went down the wharf and through the door that led into the ivy-clad yard in front of John Gower's house. Then Michael Salvain, half unconsciously, sauntered to the water-side, looking thoughtful and grave. The child's apparent forlornness touched him acutely. He turned presently; she was standing near him, quiet, pale, silent.

'You will come with me to Thorsgrif?' he said, speaking rather abruptly.

And when the girl lifted her dark, trouble-filled eyes, and said almost breathlessly, 'I cannot,' her answer struck him like a sudden pain.

'You do not wish to come?' he said inquiringly.

'I wish it more than anything, but my mother may come back, and perhaps father, too. They could never trust me any more if I were not here.'

'You are right,' he said; 'more right and wise than I am.'

'But you believe I would like to go?' she asked wistfully.

He smiled a little at her eagerness to be understood. It was not difficult to him to understand. The yearning, the disappointed hope in the girl's heart found only too certain a counterpart in his own.

'Yes, I believe you,' he said. 'You would like to go, and I should like beyond all else that you should come to Thorsgrif; but it may not be, it seems—not at present.'

He appeared to check himself then, to restrain himself from further regrets or explanations, and presently, seeming silent and unsatisfied, he went away, leaving the child even more lonely and uncomfortable than he had found her. All the way as he went back to Thorsgrif her misery weighed upon him, and a feeling of self-blame touched him more strongly than he could find reason for, turning his thought toward doubts and questionings and heart-searchings keener than any he had yet known. Was there to be no advance in this, the sorest struggle of his life? Was temptation after temptation to come upon him, and each one find him where the last had left him? He was not sparing himself: he had not shrunk from pain, nor snatched too eagerly at the few chances of pleasure fate

brought in his way. Was all his restraint to go for nothing, not yielding him even the peaceable fruit of self-approval? He was not always certain that his resolution was so wise, and right, and good as it had seemed to him when he made it. He had not tampered with it, but good reasons fail to present themselves always with the amount of force necessary for a man's upholding; and to the end the wider path will be fair, the ways of true living narrow, and strewn with sharply-piercing thorns.

CHAPTER IV.

'WHEN ALL WYNDES ARE WHISHTE.'

'There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun ;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.'

KEATS : *Hyperion.*

THE grey October gloom deepened each day at nightfall, and did not lift correspondingly when the morning came. The clouds hung low upon the red roofs of Hild's Haven ; the chill breeze swept up the harbour, confusing the surface of the water with sudden breadths of light and dark. Here and there the sail of an anchored ship was flapping heavily against the mast ; the sound of the hammers came from the dockyards with a dull, heavy thud, as of work done listlessly or secretly. People about the bridge and the quays looked

toward a rift in the clouds as toward an interregnum between two reigns of oppression.

'I don't like the look on it,' Than Rountree said, shaking his head, and looking to windward with a graver face than was his usually.

The old man was walking up and down the narrow gravel path between the figure-heads in the garden. Dorigen was leaning against the twisted apple-tree, from which the last 'Yorkshire Green' had been gathered some days. The postman had just passed down Salthouse Garth, leaving no letter. There was no evening post in those days, so the girl had to set herself to wait for another four-and-twenty hours with what hopefulness she might. Already hope needed effort. The long gloom and dread which had lain on her mother's mind, the sudden action which had grown out of fear alone, the dull-grey oppressive weather, all these things tended one way, and that was not toward reassurance. The girl stood there silent, pale, vaguely apprehensive of coming ill.

Than felt, rather than saw, that the shadow of grief to be was gathering about her heart.

'We'll hev a bit o' dinner by-an'-by, honey,' he said, though it was only the middle of the forenoon, and the breakfast-cups had but just been cleared away.

Miss Rountree had gone up to St. Hild's Mount to cover a sofa and some chairs at Mr. Christopher Northwold's. She would be there all the week, only coming home at night, so that old Than was doubly delighted to have his god-daughter in the house. She should not be scolded for reading now, or made to sit and sew stiff chintzes till her small white fingers bled, nor taught the manners of 'the quality.' The child should at least have freedom, and she should be made happy—at least, as happy as Than could make her ; and, if he could help it, none of his stories should be stories of ship-wreck, or of danger or disaster of any kind. They would have some dinner quite early, he repeated, and then they would go for a long walk into the country, up by the riverside, and into the woods and gills, where the sound of the sea could not come, with its perpetual whisper-ing and moaning. Had the child's apprehension touched the old courageous sea-worn man?

That walk in Langrigg Woods was the best device that Than could have contrived. The amber and brown, the russet and green of the autumn trees seemed less to lack the sunshine than did the darkening town, or the wan, wide reaches of water ; and though few flowers lingered, the undergrowth was still vivid and

beautiful. The bramble-bushes were aglow with gold and crimson; the scarlet berries of the wild arum were peeping out from among leaves yet green and fresh as June. A few rowan berries lingered, the white yarrow gleamed on the hillsides, the yellow hawkweed starred the roadside, the briony berries hung in waving festoons over the scars of red and yellow sandstone by the beck, the dock-sorrel stood with its maroon spires in the air straight and still, and the great green coltsfoot leaves were speckled with orange or deep rose-red. The beck ran on, gurgling gently over the stones; the bright-eyed robins perched on the railing by the little bridge chirping out their clear autumn notes boldly and sweetly. Nature was all stillness, save for these soothing sounds—so still that old Than had no mind to break in upon it with his oft-told tales of the beauty of southern isles, or the yet more awesome beauty of the things he had seen in the Greenland seas. The girl and the old man walked on hand-in-hand for many a mile in silence; but he knew by the look in her face that the dread within her was soothed away for at least that afternoon.

The evening passed, and the night and the morning came again, but the morning brought no letter. Than saw the flush of expectancy

die from the girl's cheek when the postman went past, and he knew that the whiteness which came in its stead was the whiteness of fear and pain.

'Don't fret now, honey,' he begged. 'If the *Albatross* has sailed mother 'll be home to-night; an' mebbe she thought it warn't worth while writin'. We'll go to the station at six o'clock to meet her—her an' little Elsie. An' we'll bring 'em right here to get a cup o' tea an' a bit o' cake—a bit o' real nice short-cake. We'll make it this afternoon, an' put a few curran's an' a bit o' candied lemon in it; only don't look so down, honey.'

But the evening was like the morning, and held only disappointment. Than Rountree went to the station in the late twilight, and Dorigen with him, but only to come away feeling a little sadder than when they went. The lamps were lighted in Gowergate, and all about the bridge and the quays, but it was not yet quite dark out over the sea.

'Couldn't we go down to the end of the pier?' Dorigen asked, stopping for a moment near the bridge.

'In course we could, honey, if thee'd like it,' said the old man, glad that the girl should ask anything that he could grant. 'In course we could go down, an' hev a nice little walk. An'

mebbe there'll be a bit o' breeze down there ; it's despert stiflin' here i' the town for t' time o' year. I'd like naught better nor goin' doon as far as t' lighthouse to see if there's a bit o' breeze. The *Albatross* 'll make no way if the weather's aught like this to the norrard. But we'll hev a turn doon, honey. Thee'll not take cold of a warm night like this.'

It was hardly a warm night, Dorigen thought, as they went down from the Scotch Head to the end of the pier, where the taller lighthouse stands, at the entrance to the harbour. There was no one else down there on the narrow breakwater that runs into the sea, and gives you the sense of being out on the wide ocean on the deck of a large ship. There is nothing before you but sea and sky, nothing to right or left of you but great black rugged headlands, with taller cliffs frowning and darkening behind. To-night the headlands were shrouded in the still purple-black mist which had spread over the heavens, stretching from east to west, leaving only a low steel-blue light shining all along the edge of the horizon, and throwing a strange metallic glare upon the face of the silent stirless water. Not a sail, not a mast broke the lines of the wide expanse. A still oppressive loneness was in the air and upon the sea, a sense as of

something lost or taken away, a world silenced, a heaven of stars blotted out. The girl's impulse was to cry aloud, not knowing why she should cry, nor what her cry should be. If she had found any utterance she had used words said long ago: 'I am oppressed: undertake for me!'

A long time, so it seemed, she stood there, with the ancient mariner by her side, as silent as herself, and almost as heavily weighed upon. He spoke no word, and she spoke none, and nothing moved them from their silence.

There was no moon; not a star pierced the pall of purple-black cloud that deepened from east to west.

A long time they had stood there, when suddenly, yet slowly, something, as it were a human sigh, arose, sweeping gently and mournfully up out of the north, across the face of the silent waters, darkening the steel-cold gleam with a momentary shadow, as of the wings of birds of passage. It gathered strength as it came onward, rising to a sob, a sound of stifled pain, and the fear of pain; then it sank, as if strength had departed, and with it hope and desire of hope. The last cadence was as the passing of a last human breath. The stillness that came after was like the stillness in the room where the curtains are drawn, and the face on the pillow shrouded.

CHAPTER V.

'THE WIND OF AZRAEL'S WINGS.'

'The sea broke up,
Dashed suddenly through beneath the heel of Him
Who stands upon the sea and earth and swears
Time shall be nevermore.'

E. B. BROWNING.

THAT sigh, as of some storm-spirit sent on a sad errand, was the first sign of the onset of the great hurricane which has yet a painful pre-eminence in the memory of the living people of Hild's Haven. It might have happened but last winter or this, so graphically do the details come from the lips of those who watched it with sad reason in their watching.

It was on the Friday night that the storm gathered on sea and land. There was no sudden burst of wild fury such as sometimes happens. As the wind rose with that long peculiar sobbing

sound which people know for miles inland to be the harbinger of a storm at sea, the heavy black pall which covered the sky broke slowly into vast masses of cloud, and began to drift with large majestic movement over a sea which gave signs as of a human consciousness of impending trouble and terror. Men were drawn to watch by the sea that night who had seldom spent the night hours anywhere but under safe shelter; and when the morning broke it was recognised far and wide that a storm of unusual violence was raging. The shops in the town by the quays and about the bridge carried on their business with closed shutters, and few people were seen about the wind-swept streets; fewer still cared to face the flying foam that dashed into the faces of such as ventured down the wave-washed pier, or into the rugged water-side streets and ghauts. To be out-of-doors for ten minutes, even in the very heart of the town, was to be driven and beaten by the wind, and overborne by the roaring of the rushing water until you were glad of any shelter that permitted you to recover from the strange confusion into which you had been thrown.

If it were thus on the land, what might it be out there on the torn, flying, mountainous, and still-increasing sea?

If any asked the question, a point was put to it presently, for high above the wild mad roar of the gale another and more startling sound burst upon the listening town. It was the sound of the signal-gun at the coastguard station.

'*Men's lives in deadly peril!*' That was the message which flew loudly upon the loud wind; and touched every heart to fear or prayer that heard it. In twenty minutes, or less, the piers and the cliffs were darkened from north to south with a gathering and anxious and foreboding multitude.

A volume might hardly tell of all that was witnessed from the heights above Hild's Haven that day. Perhaps the volume may be written some time, as assuredly it ought to be; were it but for the honour of the town, and of the brave men, the lifeboat crews, who have dared death so often, with such splendid willingness, such grand and great courageousness.

Sometimes, thinking of the ancient history of the place, of the days when the best and greatest in the land, in goodness and in intellect, congregated in the Abbey on the hill-top; holding their synods there, and fighting their ecclesiastical battles; when one remembers the reputation that Hild's Haven had for learning, for spiritual elevation; when one thinks, too, of its

later distinction as the home and birth-place of brave and world-renowned men, and of the position it once had among the seaports of the land, one is half tempted to think that the glory of the place has departed, leaving only faint reflections of a radiant and ever-receding past. But let anyone who has known Hild's Haven for the last twenty years think of the history of its lifeboat service during that time, and he will find that there is no need to cry 'Ichabod.' We, who live, have seen heroic days; and some not unheroic men. It may not be easy to discern your hero under his slouched sou'-wester; and the blue jersey has no particular attractiveness for the eye of observers in general. But the man who dares death with the quiet promptitude seen not seldon on the quays of Hild's Haven does not live by observation.

It was some time about the middle of the forenoon when the first signal-gun was fired that day. There had been danger, distress, bravery to the north of the bay before that time; and a ship's crew had been rescued from a sinking vessel off Danesbecke by means of an ordinary fishing-coble manned by Hild's Haven men. Now a schooner heavily laden with coal was running for the beach, still to the north of the port; and it was seen that her poor storm-beaten

crew of four men were all of them in the rigging, clinging there among the shrouds with a despair that surely has nothing like unto it. The life-boat crew were most of them on the spot; several of them had been out in the fishing-boat and had but just returned. Yet they were among the foremost of those who hurried the lifeboat over the level beach, and sprang eagerly to the oars. It was low water now, and only a few long lines of heaving, drenching surf lay between their desperate energy and the desperate despair of the men whose lives they risked their own to save.

They were successful. Within an hour the four benumbed and half-lifeless men stood upon the bleak storm-swept beach, the fear of death taken away, and the good gift of life theirs once more by the grace of God and the grand humanity of the men their fellows. Four of these were there, and five from the brig that had gone down off Danesbecke; thus before noon on that wild Saturday morning nine men had been saved from peril by great waters.

The tide was rising now, and the gale as certainly increasing. Even in the shelter of the harbour, ships were being driven from their moorings; pleasure-boats were going down, or drifting out to sea. Uprooted trees floated

through the arches of the bridge; the streets of the old town were strewn with bricks and tiles, the *débris* of falling roofs and chimneys. Terror was present by the hearth-stone; and dread sat cowering by fires fed with the wood of ships wrecked as it were but yesterday.

Notwithstanding the violence of the storm, the crowds that fringed the cliff-top and darkened the piers went on increasing. The Rector of Hild's Haven had been there from the first, a fact which came to be matter of gratitude in due time; and among others there was Michael Salvain; and, almost as a matter of course, the familiar figure of Than Rountree. Michael had seen the old man, and asked him of his guest with a certain quiet eagerness that Than did not fail to perceive.

'She is not out-of-doors, of course?' Michael said, wondering all the while what influence had served to prevent her.

'Noä, sir, she's nut,' Than replied, accommodating his voice to the roar of the gale with ancient skill. 'Ah was rether surprised 'at she didn't want to come doon when she heard the gun. But she hasn't never slept all t' night; an' she's sittin' as still as a moose yonder; an' as white as a sheet. She nobbut just leuked up when the signal was fired. She never spoke,

nor moved. An' she promised as ready as could be to stop quiet at home till Ah went back. She's a good bairn, bless her, but she rether puzzles me at tahmes.'

'And there has been no news from Mr. or Mrs. Gower?'

'Noä, sir; nut a word, sir.'

These two had been standing, with some hundreds of others, about the coastguard station. The nine rescued men had been sheltered and cared for; the lifeboat was being made ready to be launched again; a sudden shower of sleet was driving up over Danesbecke Ness, and the wind was rising with it, lashing the sea to a point of fury and desperation seldom seen even on the coast of that wild northern ocean. And everywhere, among such as understood, there was the feeling that the storm was not yet at its height, the day's work not yet done.

Done? It was but beginning.

Hardly was the lifeboat ready to be launched again when imperative need for launching her was discerned through the torn drifting edge of the snow-cloud that was sweeping by. This time a large vessel was seen making for the beach, or being driven there; a Prussian barque, with a crew of twelve men. And instantly, for the third time, the brave lifeboat crew struck out

through the very thick of the towering, crested, onward-rushing breakers. An intense anxiety, a breathless suspense, held the watchers there on the coast. Over and over the lifeboat was driven back by the violence of wind and sea; over and over the drenching waves broke heavily upon the patient, daring, resolute men. Yet they strove, making redoubled efforts to gain what every now and then they lost; and once more it was given them to reach the side of a vessel that was already breaking up; once more it was given them to receive into their ark of safety an exhausted, grateful, storm-stricken ship's crew.

Yet for some time they stood by the foundering barque. A man, one of the ship's hands, was missing, so they feared. But by-and-by they discovered him; he had sunk down half dead to the bottom of the lifeboat.

Then they came on again, swiftly, and gladly, and successfully. A third time they had shown their readiness to lay down their lives, not for friends, but for strangers; and a third time the strangers lived to thank them; and, let us believe it, to pray always for them and theirs.

Will any find weariness in this brief recalling of that day's events? It is far from ended. The Prussian barque went down ten minutes after her crew touched the shore where the two other

wrecks were lying; and almost at the same moment a brig in ballast, from Folkestone, and a schooner from Dundee, were seen coming for the beach together. There was no time to spare, not even for the brave strong lifeboat crew to stay for food to keep up their strength. Out they launched again; on they went; sinking into the dark shadowy valley between the breakers; rising on the top of the masses of coiling, writhing, seething foam; driven backward, struggling onward; falling out of sight; rising almost perpendicularly on the curling wave; yet all the while getting nearer and nearer to the vessels in distress.

They were reached at length, the schooner first, and her crew was taken off as speedily as might be. Another manful effort brought them to the side of the brig, and her crew of six men were added to the seventeen already in the boat. So, with a living freight of three-and-twenty souls the lifeboat touched the sands to the sound of a ringing mighty cheer. Over thirty men now owed their lives to the men of Hild's Haven that day.

And yet the story is not ended; nay, it seems as if but the prelude were told.

Nothing extraordinary had come to pass so far, except perhaps the granting of an extra-

ordinary success. No life had been lost; no widow wept on the shore; no child sat orphaned; no mother yearned for any son sunk under the waves of the bay at Hild's Haven that morning.

But now the tide was nearly at its height, the storm nearly at its worst; and when the lifeboat landed, the coxswain of the crew admitted that it might not be launched again without deadlier peril than any they had braved yet. Moreover, the crew was half exhausted, suffering from the need of food almost as much as from the desperate labour and oft-repeated effort of the morning.

'You cannot go out again!' Mr. Kenningham shouted, after the captain of the coastguard had given his opinion. 'It would be foolhardiness, and you are married men, remember. Think of your wives and children!'

And the harbour-master added his warning as the men stood looking seaward for a moment before beginning to haul up the boat on to her carriage. Everyone was trusting that there might be no more need for her use that day, or at least during that hour while the tide was at its height, and wind and wave surely at their worst.

But even as they spoke together in the wild confusion another vessel was seen, and a moment

after yet another, the two of them standing for the land with what effort they could use. One, the schooner *Flora*, of London, and from Portsmouth, shot swiftly ahead as she touched the breakers, and came flying over the harbour bar and into safe shelter with a beautiful seeming-consciousness that sent a thrill to the heart of many a one who stood there, expecting her instant destruction. But the other, the *Merchant*, of and for Maldon, and sailing from Sunderland with a cargo of coal, was less manageable, less fortunate, and, missing the harbour mouth, came for the sands inevitably.

The torn sails were flapping about the masts, the shrouds were tossing and tangling in the wind, and almost before the lifeboat could be launched again the ship had struck the beach not far from the pier, and close to where one of the other wrecked schooners, the *Roe*, was lying broadside on in the very thick of the wild, hoarse, plunging surf. It seemed as if the angle made by the pier and the foot of the cliffs served as a point for the hurricane's worst fury. The backward sweep of the seas from the wall that skirts the coastguard station recoiled upon the cross seas that were sweeping in, and clashed like meeting armies. But nothing could stay the crew of the lifeboat. There were five men

in the shattered rigging of the *Merchant*. Regardless of all warning, heedless of all entreaty, the lifeboat was launched once more, the men intending by the help of a rope to pass between the pier and the tossing, splintered hull of the *Roe*.

But this might not be. The sea was lifting itself into mountainous masses of water on either hand, writhing, striking, falling back, till there seemed to be no sky, nor air, nor ocean, nothing but a world of flying, clinging, seething, clashing foam.

Almost at once the rope from the pier was discarded; the lifeboat pulled away to the north of the *Merchant*, and succeeded in getting up to her quarter. But no rope was ready for them there, and while the poor exhausted crew were endeavouring to make one ready, the lifeboat was driven astern. That surely was the hurricane's worst moment.

Again the boat was seen, seen by the breathless crowds close at hand on the pier, at the coastguard station, on the cliffs everywhere. It was seen by the wives, the children, the fathers, the mothers of those brave men that the lifeboat was attempting to get to leeward, making one last desperate effort to get near to the vessel that was dropping spar by spar into the waves already.

The white, horror-stricken faces on the *Merchant's* deck looked on and saw it all too, saw through the flying walls of water the thirteen men who had but one mind, and that mind bent on saving them at any risk, at any cost—ay, at the cost of their own lives, if need were.

But they were coming nearer, those thirteen; in spite of all they were getting nearer. The rope was ready now; the five white faces looking upon each other saw that the awful stamp of despair had begun to yield. The rope would be dropped over the stern the next instant.

But that next instant a cry went up to God such as had never rent the air of Hild's Haven within the memory of living man.

From the land the cry went upward, and from the sea the cry went upward. Above the tempest's worst and wildest and most passionate shriek, that human wail went upward.

It was a cross sea that had struck the lifeboat —a vast, tremendous sea rolling on either side of the wrecked ship, and meeting astern of her where the life-boat hung poised on the top of another incoming wave that was bearing her nearer and yet nearer every second.

Then, under the very stern of the schooner, the two waves met and clashed, hurling the life-boat over toward the pier, bottom upward.

Will any among the thousands who stood there within a stone's throw of the drowning lifeboat crew ever forget that scene, that passion of helplessness which possessed every soul, the heart-rending cries for help which broke from the lips of those strong brave helpers in their last agony?

They could be counted as they tossed there—the dark figures in the white foam. One of them, the leader, was seen on the upturned bottom of the boat, clinging there with all the energy of despair. Rockets were fired, ropes thrown, life-buoys, capstan-bars, anything and everything that could be seized and flung from the pier was thrown into those furious waves; but nothing availed.

Women wept and shrieked as one dark head after another ceased to struggle, and went down.

Not all at once, but slowly and hardly, each man's fight for life was ended, and it was only known that it was ended by the bowed head, bowed beneath the surf, while each dark dead figure was upborne by the narrow life-belt round the waist.

The coxswain, Long Jack, as his mates had named him—a fine, tall, powerful man—was still clinging to the bottom of the boat, when

his younger brother was washed quite close to him by a sweeping wave. The two men were seen to stretch out their hands to each other; another moment, and it was seen that the sea had driven the younger man onward, and very soon his head also went down.

The elder brother's strife was not yet over—perhaps it was the most desperate struggle of all. He was washed from the bottom of the boat, struck away to a distance, brought near again, again regained his hold; but once more, and finally, he was flung off; and then, after a strong, brief battling, he, too, went down.

So it was that that day there was no lifeboat crew at Hild's Haven.

Of the thirteen men, one alone was seen, fighting and beating his way shoreward. Men rushed into the surf to his help, and drew him half-unconscious out of the very jaws of death. This one man alone escaped to tell the story in days to come. Another was seen to be coming onward; life was risked again, but only to save a lifeless body.

And now the boat itself was beating in, still upturned; but as it rolled with the rolling breakers, it was seen that at least one dark figure was held beneath the planks. Might a hole be cut through the bottom, and deliverance

wrought that way? The attempt was made, to the bodily injury of one man who attempted to make it, but the plan failed, and by a great united effort, made at a moment when the sea itself assisted, the boat was raised a little, so that two yet warm bodies could be drawn from underneath. But the wives of these two men were widows, as they knew ere long.

Only the one man was saved, and this one a youth and unmarried, who had never been in a lifeboat until that day.

Of the twelve drowned men, eleven had left widows and children. There was the infant of a month old, and fatherless children of all ages, from one year to twenty. Ah! the mystery of that one wild wave's dread mission!

And the five men still clinging hopelessly on the deck of the *Merchant?* Could nothing be done now in this stun and consternation? The rockets had failed, but the mortar might be used, and no time was lost in using it. A line was thrown across the ship; the life-saving apparatus, then quite new to Hild's Haven, was tried, and tried successfully. One by one the men were drawn from the wreck to the pier, one by one they left the mass of groaning, twisted, shattered timber, that had well-nigh been their grave. It was not one moment too soon. The

last man had hardly reached the shore when the hull of the *Merchant* fell apart, and drifted like morsels of matchwood to the foam-white sands already strewn with the wrecks of that Saturday morning.

Is the tale now ended?

Not yet; but there is a pause in it, even as there was a slight lull in the storm when the tide had turned.

Nature herself cannot remain at her highest tension long, and her climax once passed, she gives time to prepare for the anti-climax with which she too often concludes the most effective displays of her power. Her grander dramas are developed with a consummate skilfulness.

CHAPTER VI.

'WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?'

'And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
For those who will never come home to the town.'

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

'NOÄ, I've niver seen naught like this,' Than Rountree was saying. He had gone back to his own house, back through the stricken, weeping town over which the news had fled as only such news can fly. Miss Rountree was at home, not having ventured to cross the bridge in such a storm; and Mr. Salvain had accepted Than's invitation to go over to Salthouse Garth and have a cup of tea. They were all together there in the little rôom, Dorigen sitting next to Mr. Salvain, white, silent, rigid, losing no word that was said of all that had happened.

'Noäi, I've niver seen naught like it,' the old man went on. 'I were out i' the great gale o'

'21. We were caught off the mouth of the Tyne; an' we missed the entrance to the port, an' were driven on to the rocks. We hung there i' the riggin' for three-an'-twenty hours afore we could be ta'en off. *That* were a gale, but 'twere naught like this—this is a horricane!

'An' then there was the time I was wrecked i' the *Narwhal*, comin' for Hild's Haven fra' the Greenland seas wi' fifty ton o' oil on board, an' a lot o' sealskins. *That* were a gale; but 'twere naught like this—this is a horricane!

''Twas well-nigh eleven years efther the *Narwhal* were lost 'at Ah sailed i' the *Flyin' Huntsman*. We were caught suddenly that time off o' Hartlepool; an' the brig foundered, an' went down as if she'd been scuttled. Only the mate an' me lived to tell on it. We got into the boat, an' we were picked up next mornin' by a steamer, more dead than alive, Ah can tell you. *That* were a gale, but 'twere naught like this—this is a horricane.'

'But surely it is abating a little?' Mr. Salvain said, though the doors and windows were rattling as he spoke, and the sleet hissing in the fire. He could think of no other hopeful thing to say. Something prevented him from touching upon the one thing that he knew was nearest Dorigen's heart, and seeming as if it held her life itself in

check. He had made no mention to her of her father or her mother, or of the sailing of the *Albatross*, for old Than had confided to Mr. Salvain that he was not without fear. It was only too probable that the ship had sailed on the day fixed for her sailing.

And now the twilight was coming down, and the sleety rain was turning to snow ; wild, grey-white snow that whirled and tossed in the gale as the foam-wreaths were tossing from wave to wave outside the harbour bar. The storm might not be raging now at quite that topmost strain of violence with which it had raged at high-water ; but at times, during the showers, the abatement was barely perceptible. The present moment was not a time of assurance to any who had cause for anxiety.

Dorigen had been standing near the window a little while, watching the falling and drifting of the snow, listening to the hoarse undertones of wind and wave that came with confusion and indistinctness to the interior of the little dwelling at the top of Salthouse Garth. No movement of hers, no change in the expression of her face, escaped the notice of Michael Salvain, who sat talking to old Than, and watching her with sad, unsatisfied yearnings and compassions written on every feature of his face. Her silent misery was

terrible to him, and had elements in it which he could not comprehend.

Quite suddenly the girl turned to him. The snow-shower was passing: the small room was somewhat less dark.

'I am going out,' she said with a quiet resoluteness. 'I am going up to the cliff. . . . Will you come with me?'

Old Than protested, and vehemently, but Michael Salvain made no objection whatever. It might be well for her to have some change of scene, to see with her own eyes the things she was brooding over in that too keen and vivid imagination of hers.

'Let her have her way,' he said to Than and Miss Rountree while Dorigen went to put on her cloak and hat. 'Let her come with me for an hour. I do not think it will be unwise. I will be very careful of her.'

They went out together. The snow ceased to fall as they went by the silent deserted streets to the top of the West Cliff. There were sailors and fishermen still congregated about the piers; and all along the edge of the angry ebbing waves were sad groups of men, with here and there among them a weeping woman, watching and waiting to see if by any influence that wild tempestuous sea should be moved to give up her

dead. They had not watched in vain. Thrice already a dark burden had been borne in on the bosom of a wan, crested, shadowing wave.

Looking out from point to point across the wide bay, it seemed that there was nothing visible to an ordinary eye, but the space was not all clear in the gathering twilight. To the north, between Hild's Haven and Danesbecke Ness, a strange crescent-shaped sweep of mist or driving snow was brooding, or rather drifting over the surface of the gloomy sea. It was passing on toward the hollow darkness of the night that was already in the east,. leaving a last streak of the western light behind it.

Dorigen was looking toward the light, watching it as if its changing lurid gleam had some fascination for her. At last she turned quickly, speaking in a low agitated voice which she strove vainly to master.

'Do you see?' she said with trembling lips, and lifting her pallid face to Mr. Salvain. 'Oh! do you see it—the ship on the edge of the mist? *It is the Albatross.*'

But Michael Salvain saw nothing. His sight was good, but it was not as the sight of the girl by his side.

'I see no sail anywhere,' he said, peering across the gloom intently.

'Her sails are not set,' Dorigen replied with quivering haste. 'None of them are set. There are two bare masts; and the hull is low in the water.'

Yet he saw nothing—nothing but the girl's clasped hands and white set face; whiter, it seemed, for the swiftly gathering darkness. A few minutes more and night would be upon the sea.

'Let us go down to the coastguard,' Mr. Salvain said, taking her hand in his. But she did not move. A small tongue of yellow flame was leaping up out there to the north; that he saw; and then another and another. Slowly he looked into the face beside him, hardly daring to look.

'It is a signal of distress!' she said in a hoarse whisper. Then, stretching out her two hands beseechingly to the wild skies, she turned silently away.

But it was only for a moment.

'Will you go?' she said imploringly; 'will you go down and see if the signal has been seen? I will wait here. I must stay here. . . . I cannot turn away.'

The blazing tar-barrel on board the *Albatross* had been noticed at the first moment when it was fired, and already the rocket-apparatus was

being got ready for use again, and the usual signals were given, though the men who had answered them always had that day answered them for the last time, and were sleeping the sleep that only the last great signal shall disturb.

They might not hear, but others were there—the readier and the more anxious for that dread day's events. Before a quarter of an hour had passed, an ancient lifeboat, which had been condemned, having drowned several of her crew, and having hung suspended on her rests for nineteen years and more, was manned and launched into the still seething and writhing surf, and steered for the burning tar-barrel.

Who hearing of this shall say that chivalry is dead, and heroism a note of past history?

By this time it was dark; a fresh array of denser and blacker clouds having gathered suddenly in the north-west, seeming to meet and hurry with a special gloom, but just over where the *Albatross* was tossing in the surf, on the edge of the rock about a mile to the north of Hild's Haven. She had struck: this was made evident by the fact that the glare of the tar-barrel was fixed in one spot.

The rockets were being fired from the beach, but all unavailing. Michael Salvain and John Gower's daughter, standing together on the

rugged storm-swept height above the spot, saw that it was unavailingly.

But they knew that the lifeboat was out. Now and then a rift in the cloud showed a black speck out in the midst of the wild, white, furious foam; but the speck seemed to be making but little way through the desperate strife of waters.

Surely even now it was growing more desperate. The tide was coming up again: fitfully and furiously the masses of foam-white waves were dashing up the sands in the black hollow that was below the edge of the cliff. Now and then small groups of two or three figures could be discerned down on the beach by the feeble light of the lanterns they carried. All was being done that might be done, and yet they had sinking hearts who stood there with strained eyes, peering through the blackness to where the last signal of distress burned on flickeringly.

For over an hour no word had been spoken on that cliff-top. Michael Salvain supported the girl's frail form when the stern blast of the gale would have swept her down, but all the while he had spoken no word. Comfort would have seemed as mockery.

And yet she did not know the worst—no, nor dream of it.

Not for a moment did she dream that out

there in the terrible hurricane that was raging, not only her father was on the deck of the shattered and shuddering vessel, but that her mother was there also, lashed to the mast, and bending over the ice-cold form of the infant in her arms. The blaze of the tar-barrel was merciful, and did not disclose that scene.

In one sense it might be said that it was Esther Gower's own fault that she was there, exposed to the pitiless fury of that dread night. She had found it impossible to persuade her husband to desert his ship at the last moment of sailing. Captain Lynas, seeing how matters stood, and having a humanity beyond the ordinary humanity of his class, had of his own accord arranged that Mrs. Gower need not leave the vessel till they were off Hild's Haven. With fair weather it would only be a few hours' run from Sunderland, and she could easily be put ashore. Now to-night he would have given all he possessed not to have had the sight and prospect of her sufferings. They were not over yet.

It was after nine o'clock now, and there was no change, except that the tide was higher, the night darker, and the hoarse blast colder.

'My child, you are very chill,' Michael Salvain said at last, speaking tenderly. 'Will you go

down to the coastguard station? There will be a fire there, and I can bring you word of anything that occurs.'

'No,' she replied, seeming to speak sobbingly because of her weakness, and the force of the wind. 'No; I must stay here. . . . You will let me stay?'

She had hardly spoken when suddenly the lurid flames of the burning tar-barrel seemed to break out and shoot upward with a wild fierceness, disclosing the dark form of the ship as it lay bent over toward the white waves that leapt along her side and burst upon the deck with mad fury. It was only for a moment. The fiery light went out as suddenly as it had flared upward. Darkness was there in its place—a total, awful, bewildering darkness.

'They have put the danger-light out,' Mr. Salvain said. 'They would be sure to do that if they were leaving the ship. Let us go down to be ready for the lifeboat when it lands.'

They went down to the beach, but another hour went by before it was discerned through the darkness that the lifeboat was making for the shore. All along by the edge of the waves there was a fringe of waiting anxious men—anxious, but not hopeful, not buoyant.

Their hearts sank lower. The lifeboat touched the beach; the spent, exhausted men were assisted to land.

There were only the lifeboat men.

Their tale, when they could tell it, was the history of one of the few defeats ever experienced by a Hild's Haven lifeboat crew. By no effort had they been able to reach the stranded ship with that old, and frail, and unmanageable boat. Over and over they had been driven off, beaten backward ; for over four hours they had been tossed hither and thither. Their strength was going from them, spent for nought, when all at once they missed the fiery sign they had been struggling to reach with such unutterable desire. Yet they did not despair for the crew of the *Albatross*. It was possible—how barely possible they might not know—that the shipwrecked crew had been saved by means of the rocket-apparatus. It was all the men in the lifeboat could do to save themselves, and this was accomplished, but hardly. Another hour, and they had surely died at the oars.

It was near midnight now, and a faint electric-looking light seemed trying to pierce the clouds to the east. This told that the waning moon had risen, and might give light if the clouds should break away but a little.

'I will go back to the cliff,' Dorigen said.

She was hardly able to make herself heard in the tumult and confusion of the storm. Mr. Salvain held her arm in his, and sheltered her as best he might. It was possible that there was none else with any right to protect her now; and the love which he had fought against so long and so unsuccessfully seemed to comprehend a new love within itself to-night, making a double love, which was well, since she had double need of it. He held her as a man might hold a wounded bird, not knowing the extent of its wounding.

'You shall go if you can bear it,' he said, thinking of the passionate desire that she must have for sight, for knowledge, for assurance.

And by this time he knew something of her almost marvellous powers of physical endurance and of recuperation. She might test her strength to the uttermost, with more impunity than she might deny her soul's strong natural yearning in such an extremity as this.

'We will go,' he said; 'but you must promise to tell me if you find your strength failing. It will be a long watch from now till daylight, and nothing can be done or seen till then.'

He would not ask her to turn away, to leave the spot where she might have sight of the ship

standing out there in her great loneness and distress; pleading silently, vainly for the human succour that no human help might give. No; he understood her too well to ask her to turn away.

They went upward in the darkness; up by the slippery winding path through the wet clay and the tufted grass, leaving the sailors and fishermen below, moving to and fro across the gleams of the pallid lanterns. These would not leave the beach till the tide drove them from the last foot of standing-ground.

So, in watching, in hoping, in despairing, in enduring, the hours of that wild night passed on into the eternity that is behind.

They stood together there, Mr. Salvain and Dorigen Gower, away on the cliff beyond the town. Mr. Salvain had chosen a hollow between two points of the cliff, hoping that there might be a little shelter there; but the wild wind came round them, and tore them, and seemed as if it fain would hurl them also to destruction.

They were exactly opposite to the spot where the signal had burned; but no other sign or sound came that could be distinguished above the fury of the storm.

It was nearly two o'clock when the sad waning moon broke through the dense environment of

cloud that had enshrouded her. Slowly the pale light diffused itself, appearing to spread outward to the very ends of the ocean before there was light enough by which to discern things near at hand. Dorigen's eyes were fixed on the one spot; there was still something there, something that stood blackly in the wild white sea-waste below. It was the *Albatross*, she knew; but it seemed as if she had difficulty in realizing her knowledge. She could not question herself, nor wonder at the strange confusion that was about her brain; but she was aware that somehow her sense of terror was deadened and still, her whole soul filled by a quiet, yet strong expectancy. She did not know that Michael Salvain was looking out over the waves to the edge of the rock where the vessel was lying, as a man looks upon a new-made grave. No such feeling was hers. They were there, her father and the men with whom he sailed. Though even her sight might not discern them in that strange misty yellow light that was changing fitfully with every moment, yet it was as if she felt their presence across the storm. This it was that caused the strain, the tension of her soul; a tension so great that it held her senses from their proper perception of the things that were or had been, and even quieted her dread of the things that might yet be. The very

earth she stood upon was fast losing its earthly reality.

Still they stood there ; the moon was obscured for a few moments ; there was a slight pause in the storm, the thunder and roar of the sea was less terrific, the wind sank to a passionate moan. . . . Suddenly, with that moan again came mingled the saddest human sound that human ears can hear, the last wild wail of drowning men.

In the day that wail had been heard ; thousands had shuddered as they heard, shuddering in that helpless, hopeless agony of sympathy which none can pass through and forget.

But now in the wild night there was no watching multitude to listen, to suffer with those who suffered, to send back an answering cry of compassion.

These two were alone there ; these two alone heard that wail, these two alone saw by the pallid light of the moon the last slow yielding of the doomed vessel to the angry, leaping waves.

Gradually it bent over, as one might turn his face for the last sleep. The masts sank down quietly toward the shore ; the hull lay on its side. Then all was over.

It was Sunday morning, and it was eleven minutes past two.

CHAPTER VII.

AT DAYBREAK.

He lieth still ; he doth not move ;
He will not see the dawn of day.'

THE dawn of that Sunday morning was breaking ; and it was breaking brightly for the band of unwearied men who set out from Hild's Haven to walk by the margin of the ebbing tide to the point of Ulyatt Rock, where the signal of distress had been seen on the previous night.

How was it breaking for the crew of the *Albatross?* for the crew of the lifeboat? for all of those who were lying there, the depth closed round about them, the weeds wrapped about their head ?

The most careless-hearted of those who went across the beach went silently. The tide was going out, leaving the remains of the wrecked

ship lying upon the wet brown rock, like the ribs of a dead camel in a vast expanse of dreary desert sand.

There are few things more saddening, even to those who are accustomed to it, than the sight of a goodly ship lying totally wrecked among the wrecking breakers. Though everything be shattered, torn, broken, riven asunder, so that not even two planks hang together to show you with any exactness what the size and form of the vessel has been, yet the sea is not weary, nor satiate. Its waves lift up the twisted masses of wood and iron, and dash them down again. The separate portions of the ship creak and groan in their agony ; but the dashing and tearing and rending goes on. The ropes writhe in the tossing surf ; the torn sails flutter sadly, the chains clank upon the pitiless rock. There seems to be no mercy. All is anger, fury, remorseless devastation.

The mariners and fishermen of Hild's Haven who were there by the marge of the sea at daybreak that Sunday morning, had all of them seen dread storms, had most of them escaped from wrecked ships, looked upon drowned men. There was not one there but had his own thrilling tale of deliverance from some sore sea-peril ; and yet they said to one another, speaking in sad under-

tones, that they had not looked upon a scene like this.

The sun was fairly above the sea now; a glowing globe of amber burning upward across the still cloud-darkened heavens, turning the edges of the clouds to quivering gold, penetrating the masses of dark moving vapour with rich, warm, various red. The sea beneath changed with the changing colour above it, brightening in the distance to glittering yellow, changing suddenly to golden green, darkening nearer at hand to a sullen purple. Then, far as the eye could see from north to south there was the broad fringe of yet angry surf, whitening all the bay from beyond the lighthouses at Hild's Haven to Danesbecke Ness. And in the surf everywhere rocked, and rolled, and tossed, and shivered the remains of the seven ships which one brief day before had sailed proudly upon the proud sea's bosom. Nowhere could the eye turn but it fell upon some portion of dark hull, of bare broken mast, of shattered planking, of splintered wheel. It was as if the end of the sea-world had come, and the sun were rising upon its ruins.

And of all the wrecks that tossed there, none were more completely wrecked than the good ship *Albatross*. The only portion left to tell an

uninitiated person that the confused, unintelligible mass which stood darkly against the sun had ever been a ship, was the curving bow of the vessel. A few broken shreds of planking adhered to it, the bolts protruding; the drifting seaweed clinging in long fringes to every point of twisted iron or splintered wood it found to cling to. In the middle of the sea-ravaged mass a kind of hollow was formed by the black naked ribs that curved upward in gaunt line against the shining amber sky; a hollow filled with torn wet canvas, with rusty chain dangling from a shattered wheel, with clinging, dripping tangles of the brown and crimson, and grey and green seaweed.

Such was the bier, such the garlands above the spot where lay four sleepers, sleeping so soundly that the thud and thunder of the waves might not awaken them—so soundly that the still furious rushing and booming of the wind might not awaken them—so soundly that words spoken in compassionate sadness above them might not for a moment awaken them.

They lifted the sleepers gently, those strong-armed men who had come along the sands in the dawnlight. The first whom they raised was a young and powerful man, a Swede, as they learnt later, Jens Nielsen by name. The second was a

baby, a fair, round-cheeked, auburn-haired baby, with a smile still set there about its small curved mouth. The third was the captain of the ship, an elderly, careworn, seaworn man, who might even have been glad in the end to rest from his lifelong struggle with stormy wind and sea.

The fourth to be raised from out the wet sand and the green seaweed was John Gower. He was known to those who raised him and carried him up out of the reach of the drenching surf, and placed him in the shelter of a projecting rock at the foot of the cliff, and it was quickly discerned that the last spark of life was not yet beaten out of him. What could be done out there, a mile from Hild's Haven? They hardly stayed to think. Some gently tore the remnants of wet clothing from his body; some brought the dry sea sand from a ledge of the cliff, and used it for a chafing medium; others stripped themselves of their own garments, which were dry and warm; others again ran to the town for further means of succour. It was something strange that even one life should be saved from a wreck like the wreck of the *Albatross!*

CHAPTER VIII.

'FACE WE OUR FUTURE ONCE AGAIN.'

'Even so, we let go hands . . . .
And in between us rushed the torrent-world
To blanch our faces like divided rocks,
And bar for ever mutual sight and touch
Except through swirl of spray and all that roar.'

E. B. BROWNING.

IT was hardly surprising that the events of that one wild night should have taken Dorigen's strength so completely, that for awhile she lay unconscious—so utterly unconscious that she could not even be made aware of the fact of her father's deliverance. Michael Salvain went to and fro daily; old Than was disturbed, Miss Rountree anxious and tender and devoted; but the hours went on into days, and there was no change. The girl lay silent, stirless, sleepless, as one entranced.

Her father, who was recovering, and who had gone back to his own empty home by Wiggoner's Wharf stunned, stricken for evermore, yet made effort to climb to the top of Salthouse Garth and sit by his daughter's side. He spoke to her in tones as gentle, and as little sad as he could use, but for awhile there was no response.

At last there was an awakening—a slow, painful recognition of her father's presence. For the first confused moment it even seemed as if the sight of his face, the sound of his voice, were inducing some half-terrible feeling within her, some dread of her own saneness, of his reality, some question in her reeling brain as to which world she might be awakening in. Then, at last, she grasped the idea of his rescue; her lip quivered, her eyes were suffused, but even in that moment the instinct of her race was strong within her. She might not cry there, in her father's sight, like any ignorant untrained child. She hid her face, and forced back the choking sobs for a moment or two; then she said, putting out her hand and trying to smile:

'I will go home with you. Let us go now. . . . I have so wanted little Elsie!'

They were alone there in the little attic room at the top of Than's cottage. Than was in the room below putting on his best black coat; Miss

Rountree had gone out to buy some black gloves. It was yet quite early in the afternoon.

For awhile—a long while it seemed to Dorigen—John Gower sat with his head on his hand, lost apparently in deep thought. Now and then he looked up into her face anxiously, questioningly, and the girl returned his look with one that questioned him at least as eagerly. Why was he dressed so carefully, and in mourning? But she answered herself on this point. He was wearing the only suit he had left at home. Of course, all the other clothing he had had was lost with the lost ship.

It was a heavy and perplexing moment, but perhaps the decision John Gower arrived at was not an unwise one. He would tell her all, and he would tell her now. If that strange stupor came over her again, it might come in mercy. He made a supreme effort.

'We cannot go home to-day,' he said, with more gravity in his manner and more sorrowfulness in his tone than she could comprehend; 'but you shall go to-morrow or the next day, if you are well enough. . . . To-day—this afternoon—I am going to a funeral—a very large funeral. . . . The men who were drowned by the upsetting of the lifeboat—that is, those whose bodies have been recovered—are to be buried to-

day, and also—some of the bodies that were found near the *Albatross*. . . . They are not all men. . . . One man's wife was on board with a little baby. . . . The baby was found, but not the mother. . . . I must go to see the child laid in its grave. . . . It is the same grave where your little sister was laid eleven years ago.'

There are moments and events the full burden of which seems to lie beyond the range of human capacity for feeling and suffering. The blow falls, and we look on as if it had fallen upon another.

John Gower had watched his daughter; he saw by the dilating of her eyes, by the setting of the muscles about her mouth, by the look of mute shrinking, as from a blow, that she had heard and understood.

No tears fell, no sobs shook the slight frame.

The girl lay on her pillow, the small, white, stricken face half hidden under the masses of black hair; and she lay quite silently, quite stirlessly as before, but this time no stupor came to her relief.

She knew when her father went out, when Miss Rountree took his place by her bedside, when the doctor came and went in the twilight, saying only, 'Leave her alone.' She was even conscious enough to be grateful, having no other desire but this, to be left alone.

Her eyes were not closed as she lay, but she saw nothing of aught that met her outward vision. She was living over again the events of that dark wild night on the cliff-top, realizing now, or trying to realize, how she had stood there watching the burning signal of distress, not knowing half its terrible meaning; not dreading, or even dreaming, that her mother was out there in the infuriate storm, lashed to the mast with little Elsie in her arms, and beaten upon by every wave that broke over the doomed vessel's side. The effort to bring these things to her present consciousness was confusing. The darkness, the horror, the despair, the bitter sense of yearning and desolation, were more confusing still. Yet she might not cease from effort. She could only lie there, outwardly quiet to impassiveness, inwardly in the grasp of emotion so strong that the world itself seemed to reel under the blow which had struck her with such overwhelming force.

The days went on, bringing but little change, little relief. Dorigen went back one dim afternoon to her own home down by the water-side, and set herself to face the new sad life there with all the strength that was left to her. But her father saw sadly that she did not recover the old quick keen interest in living which had been hers

always before. Michael Salvain came and went, bringing flowers and new books, and leaving behind him a certain soothing, lingering element of love and sympathy and deep compassion, which the girl perceived and understood, and was not likely to forget. But even these things did not lift the heavy cloud which lay upon her heart and darkened her days, and filled all her thoughts with the ceaseless memory of that terrible storm.

Strangely enough, though her heart yearned for her mother in the night when she wept and did not sleep, and in the day when she was left alone in the still house, yet it was little Elsie's face and form that she saw with greater distinctness and more passionate pain. It was as if the child were crying to her with outstretched arms, crying up there in the darkness that was upon the hilltop churchyard, crying from under the snow that was falling pitilessly upon the new-made graves—falling so ceaselessly that Dorigen had not yet been permitted to go up and see the one little grave which she knew was opposite to the chancel window. Her father went daily, and came back with haggard face and sunken eyes, oft enough to find that Dorigen's face gave but too plain evidence as to how she had spent the time during his absence; but neither wept before

the other, for the other's sake. The few days they might spend together should be spent in helping each other, if help might be.

So another week went on. The house had to be kept in order, the food prepared, the things which had belonged to her mother and little Elsie had to be put carefully away when her father was not there to see them removed, or to see the tears and the passionate yearning kisses that went to their embalming. These were the only moments when the girl was roused from that strange apathy—an apathy into which she seemed to be sinking more deeply as she came to recognise all that bereavement meant.

Her father knew that he must go to sea again, and shortly. 'But I cannot leave the child in this state,' he said one day to Mr. Kenningham, in the street.

More than once the Rector had been to the house by the harbour; more than once he had seen for himself how it was with John Gower's daughter. Her white patient face—patient yet not resigned—her deep silence, her quiet way of moving about, as if her dead were there in the house—these things had all been seen and noted and largely understood.

'You need have no fear,' he said, speaking kindly, and with a certain deference as to one

upon whom God's hand had been laid long and heavily. 'You need not fear. Your daughter is feeling her sorrow with the keenness that belongs to her nature; and she will remember it with the persistence that belongs to her nature also. But she will not remain in this mind and mood; that is not possible to her. . . . And now tell me, what arrangements have you made about her future? Are you going to break up your home?'

'No. I cannot do that,' John Gower replied. 'I cannot leave myself without a shelter in the world, so long as it is possible to keep one over my head. I thought of shutting up the house at present, and letting Dorigen stay with the Rountrees. She's always been happy there, and they are glad enough at the idea of having her. And I thought of letting her go to school for another year or two, as good a day-school as I can afford. She's keen about books, and she's had little chance of getting any real knowledge.'

'The best arrangement you could have made!' said the Rector enthusiastically; 'the very best, with the exception of the school. That would never do for her, not now. She would find it intolerable. Let her stay with the Rountrees by all means; I have a great regard for them both; and let her come to me three times a week for an

hour. I will give her all the help she needs at present. . . . I have long had the feeling that I have not done all I might have done for her. Now is my opportunity to make up for remissness. . . . If I don't get down to see you before you leave Hild's Haven, come and see me. We must talk things over a little more definitely before you go to sea again.'

John Gower went on his homeward way comforted, and gratefully glad for the words he had heard ; and when the time came for him to leave his child, his heart did not sink within him as it would have done but for the assurance he had that she would not be forgotten, nor left wholly without such human countenance as would be helpful to her, let the sequence of her life be what it might.

Even as he stood in the station with her by his side, looking into his face with that wan sadness which was fast becoming the fixed expression of her face, he did not see her future in colours so gloomy as he had seemed to see it in the first hours of his great loss. He had been silent all day, and sad enough, but there seemed to come to him now both the desire and the power to shake off something of the heaviness that had beset him. It might be for the child's sake ; it might not be. Long afterwards she pondered

over that unwonted gleam of lightness and brightness which had moved over her father's spirit in that last moment.

'Don't look so downcast, little woman,' he said, his voice breaking into the rare tenderness which she had not heard half a dozen times in her life. He was holding her hand in his with a strong warm grasp. People were hurrying about, taking their places, saying brief farewells. One man—a short, pale, hungry-looking man—was standing in the shade of the archway not far from where John Gower stood with his daughter. He heard the words that were said. 'Don't be downcast, little woman. Things will go better by-and-by, perhaps. If I can see my way I shall leave the sea and start business again some day. A very little would do for you and me. Try and think of it. You'd like to be your father's housekeeper, wouldn't you ?'

The only answer was a look, a smile, a few bright tears, a warm clasp of the strong warm hand. The picture he had drawn was not new.

'Try and be hopeful about it,' the father went on. 'I haven't much else to say in the shape of good advice. I've no need to tell you to be steady, or tidy, or industrious ; or to advise you to be obedient to people who are older and wiser than yourself. . . . You've never given me much

trouble ; you've been more of a comfort than a trouble. You can remember I said that, if . . . if you should ever need to remember it.'

And all the while the pale man was there, listening, watching, wondering, feeling himself in the grasp of some strange and uncomprehended pains and pangs of remorse.

But for him that parting had never been ; but for him John Gower had in all human probability not been a penniless man, nor wifeless, nor had his daughter been motherless. It was he, Aaron Gilderoy, who had done all this, he said to himself, remembering, as, indeed, he had never ceased to remember, that the loss of the large sum of money he had borrowed from John Gower had been the beginning of the end. He was not a sensitive man, nor given to much regret for the past ; but the present moment was a strong one, and unintelligible even to himself. Half unconsciously he made a movement forward ; the impulse to speak, to express the remorse that seemed greater than he could bear, impelling him onward. But courage, or something else, failed him ; he turned away with a muttered word on his pale lips which might have been a prayer or might have been a curse. He remembered that moment, with all its strange emotion, the next time he met John Gower.

CHAPTER IX.

DE PROFUNDIS.

'As the earth
Plunges in fury when the internal fires
Have reached and pricked her heart, and throwing flat
The marts and temples, the triumphal gates
And towers of observation, clears herself
To elemental freedom—thus, my soul
At poetry's divine first finger-touch,
Let go conventions and sprang up surprised,
Convicted of the great eternities
Before two worlds.'

E. B. BROWNING: *Aurora Leigh.*

IS not the Mystery of Pain the deepest of the many mysteries that lie about our human life?

By no effort or contrivance can a man escape from it; no possession of riches, of health, of talent, of goodness, entitles him to exemption. He who lives, suffers; and the man who lives most deeply, suffers most certainly and most keenly.

Suffering is the stamp of the higher life, in whatever direction that higher life may aim in its living; and it is inextricably intertwined with whatever things are good, or pure, or beautiful, or true.

It is said that when the people of Verona saw Dante in the streets, they would exclaim: 'See, there is the man that was in hell!' To which Carlyle adds:

'Ah, yes, he had been in Hell: in Hell enough, in long severe sorrow and struggle; as the like of him is pretty sure to have been. Commedias that come out *divine* are not accomplished otherwise. Thought, true labour of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of Pain? . . . In all ways we are to become perfect through suffering.'

Experience teaches us that it is not the men who are at ease whose souls rise up and go forth into the darkness of the mystery that is about us everywhere, in worlds not realized, yet close to this everyday world of ours; so close that the atmospheres mingle, and produce for us perplexities, disturbances of spirit, uncomprehended aspirations, vague ineffable dissatisfactions, instincts under which we 'tremble like a guilty thing surprised.'

It is the soul stricken, down-trodden, un-

solaced, failing in heart and life, blinded by stern adversity, reeling under a hand that is dealing stroke upon stroke, that turns in the darkness, stretches out yearning hands to the eternal silences, and declares that affliction cometh not forth out of the ground, and that therefore it must have a meaning and a mission. To find this meaning, or but to seek after it, is quest enough for a human life; and no soul sets out but has been called in the visions of the night of sorrow. The quest is not for all, and it is well to have an answer ready for the inquiry, 'What went ye out into the wilderness to see?'

The spring that followed upon that wild winter at Hild's Haven was an early spring, and seemed to be marked even more than is usual in this northern climate of ours by spring's softer and milder beauties. Even at the top of Salt-house Garth the south-west wind blew revivingly, the apple-tree threw out its pink-and-white blossoms, the primroses beneath it expanded day by day, and in the early mornings the birds burst into carols of glad surprise and thankfulness, such as could hardly have been expected if you had considered their environment. This they did as if to prove beyond contradiction that the gift of song does not depend solely upon the

adequacy of surrounding circumstance, and that a thrush in Salthouse Garth was still thrushlike, and in nowise doomed to partake of the nature of the cats that throve upon the old red-brown tiles, and had their family apartments for the most part behind the rickety butts of rain-water, or in the elbow-joints of the wooden spouting. Race will out, at least as inevitably as murder; as you would have conceded if you had stood in the dawnlight, listening to the thrushes and the blackbirds which frequented the neighbourhood of Monk's Close in the spring mornings of those days.

Dorigen Gower listened, and was stirred and moved as she could not fail to be, though she might have no definite idea as to what it was that thrilled within her so responsively to Nature's lightest touch and faintest music-note. Not yet had the cloud of sorrow been lifted from her soul; nay, rather had it come to pass that new sorrow had been added to the old that was still so heavy. The one cup of pleasure that her father had thought specially designed to dispel the melancholy that had gathered about her life had been dashed from her lips untasted. On the very day when she was to have gone to the Rectory for her first hour's mental aliment Mr. Kenningham had been stricken down by para-

lysis. She had not seen him since ; and the one brief message she had received had only bid her wait indefinitely, and work on according to the light she had unceasingly. This she was doing—this she had not failed to do, though no message had come for her encouragement.

Some one has said that 'genius always brings with it force enough to educate itself.' And it is well that it is so ; well that souls set apart for a special work should be free to choose the special aliment needed for that work ; and therefore to be assimilated without effort. There was certainly no effort in aught that Dorigen found opportunity for doing ; nor was there any idea of any future good to be gained ; of any ambition to be fulfilled. It could hardly even be said that she sought knowledge for its own sake. The sole good and pleasure was the pleasure of seeking.

So the winter days had gone. The house by Wiggoner's Wharf had remained closed ; the girl had lived her own lonely life in the house with her godfather and his cousin, obedient to them as a little child, and helpful, and patient under Miss Rountree's many scoldings and reproachings concerning her silence, and her over-quietness, and her reluctance to go out of doors.

'It makes my heart ache to have to scold her,

sir,' the little woman said one day to Mr. Salvain, who happened to come one afternoon when Dorigen had, of her own accord, gone out to the top of the cliff. 'It makes my very heart ache to have to find fault with her when she is so good, and keeps things in such nice order when I am out, and spends so much of her time in knitting warm stockings for her godfather. I can't bear to do it; but neither can I bear to see her sitting with her knitting in her hand for hours together without speaking, and her pale face growing paler and thinner with every week that goes by. I was speaking of it to Mrs. Salvain on Saturday, and she was kind enough to say that Dorigen should go to Thorsgrif again as soon as the weather was a bit warmer. That brought the colour into her face as I'd never thought to see it come any more. She'll be pleased to go there again.'

'Not more pleased than we shall be to have her,' said Mr. Salvain, rising to go; and debating within himself as he went as to whether he should turn upward and go through Monk's Close and by the churchyard pathways to the cliff top, or whether he should go direct on his homeward way. He stood a moment or two at the gate, fighting the old hard battle that he had been fighting for over a year, without yet

achieving any sense of victory. He was victorious now, at least in action, if not over his strong desire. 'Oh, child! child! would that I had never seen you!' he said to himself as he went down by the narrow crooked steps that led through Salthouse Garth into Kirkgate.

It was late in the afternoon ; so late that the sun was already descending into the bank of cloud, rose-pink and soft, warm grey, that was over the distant moor. Out over the sea the lights and shades were sadder and colder. For one who watched it the sea was always sad now.

And yet its old fascination was not dead—nay, rather was it deepened, intensified. For awhile its face in calm and in storm had seemed as the face of a friend who had struck a blow in a moment of passion, not dreaming to find the blow fatal.

This had changed. That moment's passion was not forgotten, but condoned. It is supposed that love makes condonation easy ; but the reverse is true. The greater the love the greater the pain of having aught to forget or to forgive.

Later there had come hours when it had seemed as if the soul of the sea were one with her own soul, so true was the note of sympathy struck by its wild unrest ; its alternations of mood and tone ; its voice as of pain and yearn-

ing, of sore regret and sad mystery. That was its keynote, mystery.

Was it not also the keynote of human life? the cause of human unsatisfiedness? Was it not the very essence of bereavement, of loneliness, of all suffering, this same mysteriousness?

And the hollow roll and murmur of the sea on the rocks down below made answer, 'Its very essence is this mystery.'

All the winter the cloud of pain had darkened the girl's soul, had weighed upon her heart and brain until it had struck from out her life all its keenness of perception, its vivacity of hope, its swift susceptibility toward beauty. It seemed as if with the uprooting of the fibres that had wound so clingingly about the home fireside, the familiar faces there, the homely, yet dear and haunting voices, all things else had been uprooted and destroyed. Give her back her mother's face in the firelight, little Elsie's smile and clinging baby hands, her father's footstep in the house by the harbour, and all would be well again.

Was her pain quickened by the quickening springtime? Was the emotion within her stirring with the stirring life that was in the trees, the birds, the wild flowers of the lanes and hedgerows? Was the west wind as full of elo-

quent voices for her as for him who prayed that he might be made the wind's lyre, who cried to it in his sore distress :

> 'O, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
> I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !'

who desired that the wind would through him prophesy to the unawakened earth of things to come, to come swiftly, uttering his prayer, his song, his prophecy in words which attuned themselves of necessity? . . . The west wind was blowing now. Was Dorigen Gower listening?

What is it that comes upon a human being, coming in solitary hours, coming suddenly, and with apparent causelessness ; breaking up the very foundations of that being's nature as with the force of the great upheavals that move the earth, and cause it to tremble and shiver to the unseen mighty power?

Dorigen was trembling as she stood alone—nay, not alone, but with hands stretched upward and outward to Him who had always seemed to her to be there, one foot on the sea and one on the consecrated land. And as she stood her soul was moved to prayer ; and the prayer fell from her lips with a rhythmic passion of earnestness that shook her nature as the west wind was shaking the whitening grasses at her feet. Yet,

she prayed on ; and yet the prayer moved, as if inevitably, to an unpremeditated measure.

So was utterance given. Her first poem was a prayer.

And as she prayed the clouds were lifted ; not only that cloud of sorrow which had lain upon her life so long ; but that cloud of the sense of God's personal displeasure and awful unapproachableness, which had darkened and saddened her inner life since before she was conscious of any inner life at all. For the first time the sense of an actual and near, and patient and tender Fatherhood was with her, folding her about, 'close as the air' itself, enshrouding her with a calm that was more than the calm of forgiveness and reconciliation. For the time it was an ecstasy ; though the girl knew it not.

'The peace that passes understanding,' we say; not knowing how immeasurably far our poor finite understanding is overpassed.

It is in the experiences which pass so greatly beyond our knowledge and comprehension that the true value of our life lies.

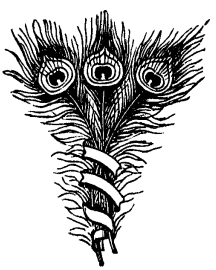
It is enough, or should be, that we are capable of such times of refreshing. Probably not even the angels understand all the workings of their own spiritual nature.

These experiences do but come in moments to

most of us; but these are the test moments; and bear witness to the point we have arrived at. And the influence of them is not to be gauged by standards known of us so far.

One such moment, perhaps the most important of her existence, had come to the girl who stood there on the cliff at Hild's Haven, uttering with subdued yet passionate earnestness the rhythmic words that were at once prayer and praise and confession of the new hope which had come with the new inspiration. For the first time in her life she had, as it were, a glimpse of the great grand unity that lies 'in the infinite space in which all things are contained, the eternal time where all things come to pass in succession.' It might be no more than a glimpse, no more than the merest thrill awakened by the perception that one essence, one spirit, one design was in the starry height above her head; in the far dim distance and measureless depth of the sea at her feet; in the solemn music of its rush and roll and break; in the stir of the quivering grasses on the rocky ledge of the cliff; in the west wind's soft harmony; in the mystic, moving, unisonant harmony that was stirring and breaking upon her own soul; and might therefore break and stir with equal might and power upon the sad, sorrowing, earthbound soul

of all humanity. Ah, the *oneness* of it all! That was its secret; that was the mystery of Nature's mighty power to draw and charm, to soothe and uplift; her heart, her spirit, was one with the Spirit of Him who breathed the breath of life throughout the universe; and so made it an imperative condition that every created thing should move in concentric circles about that central fact which we term Divine Love; some attracted nearer, some left afar off; but none beyond the reach of that Infinite Power, which is Infinite Lovingness.



CHAPTER X.

'MY OWN BEST POETS, AM I ONE WITH YOU?'

'Nor know I yet
By what so friendly fortune I am graced
With your good company and gentle speech.'
SIR H. TAYLOR: *Philip von Artevelde.*

THAT 'divine first finger-touch' of poetry was not for Dorigen Gower a season of intellectual excitement; rather was it a time of wonder, of silent surprise, of subdued, wordless gratitude. She remained in the attitude of one who would ask, 'Whence is this to me?'

She made no further effort to set the music that remained with her to the measure of words. It even seemed to her that there would be irreverence in the attempt; that the act unprompted would be a stealing of fire from off the altar.

She had waited before, and patiently; she

would wait again. As the fire had descended, without effort of hers, in the first instance, as it had burnt upward and outward, forcing its way at its own time, and in its own manner, so doubtless it would be again when the time arrived for its fuller coming. Meantime she would wait, waiting still as a 'reed with the reeds by the river.'

The other reeds could not but perceive that change had passed upon this tall and supple reed they watched so kindly, and with such tenderness. Michael Salvain saw, as others saw, that the light had come back to her eye, the quickness to her step and movement. The old desire to be out of doors, away up on the cliffs, or down on the rocky beach below, possessed her as of old; and, as of old, she came back with fresher colour, fuller vigour, readier speech, and prompter action. In a word, she was herself again; and yet not quite that, but herself with completer vision, with the unconscious force of wider hope, the new earnestness of higher and clearer aims of existence. If it might be that some day she was to have further assurance, that it was to be made plain to her beyond question that the life marked out for her to live was to be one with the life of the poets who have

Enriched the blood o' th' world,'

then all else would be made plain; and she knew already that to be sure of your work and place in the world is to have the best earthly knowledge that can come to you.

The friendship that was between Dorigen and Michael Salvain was growing more precious, more helpful with every week that went by; but neither was deceived. It was a friendship that was more than friendly; and what the 'more' meant was every day better discerned. No word was said—at least, not *that* word, 'I love you, I have loved you from the beginning;' but such realities of human life are none the less real because they are kept in the finer keeping of silence. Higher souls everywhere have affections and admirations that play a large part in the inner life, and yet remain unmaterialized by even so much as acquaintanceship.

Now that Dorigen was living her own full life again, it could not be but that she should become conscious of the growing fulness of her love. And though it was still crossed by that shadowy feeling of impossibility, yet that impossibility seemed connected with future contingencies, and in nowise with the present deep and quiet happiness which was growing with her growth, and intertwining itself with every hope and desire that she had.

The coming and going of Mr. Salvain was every week less and less a matter of course. Latterly he had come to Hild's Haven with just sufficient irregularity to give room for a more intensely passionate hoping and fearing, watching and waiting, than he had dreamed possible to one so outwardly quiet and self-contained as Dorigen. Yet he was learning swiftly to measure the depth of her emotion by the amount of rigid impassiveness visible in her manner and on her face. The calmer her reception of him, the briefer her parting words, the more he went back to Thorsgrif satisfied and patient. What if after all—

'Good, right, and law
Should be summed up in what was possible'?

This was a time of transition; and it was not for him to say what might be the next duty that Fate would provide for him. He was forgetting to be downcast.

Fate had not forgotten him; and one summer afternoon she crossed the Abbey Plain, carrying destiny in her hand, in the shape of an incomplete, and not particularly interesting, guide-book. Dorigen was walking there, with absent expression and dreamy eyes—eyes that did not perceive how keenly the little lady in the grey silk dress and hat with grey feathers seemed to

be watching her. She sauntered on by the Abbey wall in the languid afternoon; then by-and-by she came back again, and stood in the hot sunshine, looking through the great iron gates that shut in the cloister square. There was no one else near but the grey lady with the fine colour on her face, and the unconscious air of importance, who was still watching Dorigen, hardly knowing what it was that drew her to notice the tall, slight girl who was dressed in such deep mourning, and had such a look of sad wistfulness on her thin, pale face and in her deep blue eyes. Perhaps it might only be that the lady was a little idle, a little unoccupied, a little inclined just then to find life drearier than she liked it. She had even found Hild's Haven disappointing, and its magnificent Abbey only an uninteresting ruin, exactly like all other ruined abbeys, except that it had no ivy, and that it stood on the top of a cliff by the sea.

"I suppose this is not the actual abbey that St. Hilda built?' she asked, coming up to where Dorigen stood, with a nervous little rush of determination, and speaking in tones that were slightly fretful, and slightly contemptuous. 'I bought this book, but there is so much in it that I don't care to know, that I haven't patience to look for the very little information that I

really want. . . . Excuse me for troubling you.'

'It is no trouble,' Dorigen said, turning quietly to the small unquiet lady by her side. 'You are right in supposing that this is not St. Hilda's Abbey. It is said that the one she built was probably only built of wood, and roofed with thatch. It was destroyed by the Danes, who were led by the sons of Regnar Lodbrok—they came down on this coast in 867 to avenge the cruel death of their father. For about three hundred years there was no abbey here at all; I think this one was not begun till 1140, and it was not finished till 1400.'

'Thank you!' said the small keen-eyed lady in a peculiar tone. A suspicious person might certainly have imagined that it was not free from satire. 'Thank you. You seem to be well up in the history of the Abbey. I suppose it came to grief when the others did?'

'Yes,' replied Dorigen, neither noting nor suspecting aught but a desire for information. 'Yes; its last abbot, Henry de Val, resigned the monastery into the hands of Henry VIII. on the 14th of December, 1539. It is said that the soldiers who came threatened to imprison the monks, and even to kill them, if they resisted. Some of them were poor old men, who had no

shelter in the world except the monastery, and they prayed the soldiers to let them remain until the cold weather was over; but it was no use. The soldiers took possession of everything, and did not even spare the crucifix, or the vessels that belonged to the altar; and when they had got all into their own hands they turned the poor monks to the door, and packed up everything that could be removed; I believe they even tore the lead from the Abbey roof, and took down the woodwork, and dragged the beautiful peal of bells from the tower, and put them on board a ship to be taken to London. But just as the vessel cleared the harbour-mouth the wind rose suddenly and drove it aground on the rocks, and it was beaten to pieces there. The bells went down, and were never recovered; but Uncle Than says that the old people of the town used to hear them ringing quite distinctly in stormy weather.'

'Really!' said the little lady, who stood listening, apparently divided between admiration and a natural tendency to see the ridiculous side of everything; and, beyond all doubt, some of these communications had a ridiculous side. For once, however, she was too truly interested to care to indulge in the half-mocking tone which she had used until it had become habitual. She did not

dwell upon the last doubtful piece of information. Looking straight into the pathetic eyes before her, she said abruptly,

'Do you live at Hild's Haven?'

'Yes,' said Dorigen, with a certain pride discernible beneath her quiet manner. 'Yes, we have always belonged to Hild's Haven. . . . My name is Dorigen Gower.'

'Thank you. . . . . I saw that name in the churchyard just now, and it struck me as being uncommon. Mine is Wilderslowe—Lady Anna Wilderslowe; and I live at Grancester, or rather, just outside of it. My husband, Colonel Wilderslowe, is in India, and I and my little boy live with my husband's father, who is Vicar of St. Dunstan's. . . . . Is that a sufficient introduction?' the lady added, lifting a rather mocking face to Dorigen's.

Dorigen Gower's safety was in her ignorance, her inexperience. A cleverer girl would have been utterly nonplussed by the clever lady, who, despite her natural courtesy and good-breeding, appeared unable to refrain from a certain eccentric raillery, which was always perplexing, and not seldom distasteful. It was neither to Dorigen so far. She answered with undisturbed simplicity. Instead of replying directly, she asked a question.

'Is your little boy here—at Hild's Haven?'

Was she thinking of the tiny grave that was in the churchyard but just below where they stood? Something—a mere shadow—crossed her face as she asked the question. And Lady Anna noted it. She had noted the black dress before. A moment the lady hesitated before replying, though she was not much given to hesitations.

'Yes, Auberon is here,' she said presently. 'We came on account of his health, and we are staying on the West Cliff, at No. 20, Streonshalh Terrace. . . . . Will you come and see him? I mean, of course, will you come and see me?'

'I shall be very happy to come,' Dorigen said simply.

She was a little surprised at this invitation from a perfect stranger, but she would have been much more surprised if she had known all that she came to know later. In all the West Riding of Yorkshire there was no such fastidiously exclusive person as Lady Anna Wilderslowe; no one who took less pains to please; no one who had so little care not to offend. And yet she had her friends—friends who were devoted to her. It was a matter of pride to her that the number was not unlimited.

Two days later, when Dorigen was ushered into the drawing-room of the lodging-house on the cliff, Lady Anna was lying on a sofa by a window looking out upon the sea, and reading a story to a child who might have sat as a model for an infant St. John, so saintly and quiet did the small listening face seem to be. At the first glance Dorigen was drawn to the little one; and, as is usually the case, the attraction was mutual. They were friends from the beginning.

'Auberon is not usually so affable to strangers,' said Lady Anna, after the child had given some evidence of his sudden liking. 'He resembles his mother. We don't always take to new faces, do we, Bertie?'

'No, we don't,' said the child solemnly, yet with a very baby-like utterance for his years—he was between three and four. He was sitting on the sofa at his mother's feet, and he had not once taken his eyes from the stranger's face; and as the conversation continued, he sat listening with a patient intentness such as few grown-up people possess.

There was no effort on Lady Anna's part to put her guest at ease—perhaps she saw none was needed; but Dorigen began by-and-by to be a little puzzled by the lady's manner—by her rapid questioning, her unconsidered comments. As

before, there were touches of raillery, and evidences of a certain curious desire to get at once to the bottom of Dorigen's life—to penetrate into the last recesses of her nature. What was the meaning of it all? Dorigen wondered as she went on answering question after question. Yet she felt no resentment; perhaps she discerned the kindness—the real interest that lay behind this desire for knowledge of her, and of her life's experience. And Lady Anna's manner was a very variable one. Beside the touches of satire and of general eccentricity, there were other touches of reserved sympathy, of compassion not made evident by words. She grew paler, and listened with compressed lips, when Dorigen spoke of the storm; and after a time she rang for the child's nurse, and sent him away that he might hear no more of the story of the sea. Lady Anna wanted to hear the end of it herself, and she heard it with tears.

'Come nearer to me,' she said, stretching out her two hands with a warm, sudden impulse, and taking Dorigen's hand with its black-thread glove in both her own.

Lady Anna noticed the thread glove, and hated it; but she had perceived enough to feel that the significance of it did not lie deeper than the girl's evident poverty. Poverty was a thing

Lady Anna had no sympathy with, as a rule; but she felt here that it was but an extraneous circumstance, concerning which she need not trouble herself.

For some time she kept silent, holding the girl's hand in hers. She had drawn off the thread glove, and put it aside with the action of one quietly disposing of an objectionable spider. It was a satisfaction to her to perceive that the ungloved hand was as white and as well kept as her own. It was one of the few evidences of race she believed in. And having made up her mind, she was glad to have her decision confirmed.

Lady Anna was not deceived. Dorigen had spoken too unreservedly for any misunderstanding as to her antecedents to be possible, and the elder lady was conscious of something that was almost disappointment; and yet the feeling did but seem to add zest to her sudden fancy for the strange, quiet girl who was so little afraid of her, so unimpressed by her rank, so unembarrassed, so apparently undesirous of saying or doing aught to strengthen the favourable impression she must have perceived that she had made. It might be this seeming indifference as much as anything else that led Lady Anna on to throw off her usual guard of cautiousness, and

to put her usual caustic waywardness of speech aside with some suddenness. But mingled motives were at work, though the lady herself was hardly conscious of them.

She sat thinking for some time after she had yielded to that impulse to draw Dorigen nearer to her, and try to comfort her in the grief that had come back upon her as she spoke. She was already half glad that the girl was practically alone in the world. It was a furtherance of an idea that was beginning to develop itself in her brain with some rapidity.

Lady Anna could hardly have been more than thirty-seven years of age. She was not a handsome woman, but there was something striking in her appearance—something that awoke admiration unawares, even in people who suffered under the keenness of her tongue. Dorigen, who had not suffered, was conscious of the charm which was about her new-found friend; she was capable of appreciating the air of distinction which belonged to the little lady naturally, and which seemed to add a graciousness to the least gracious of her ways. She looked very like a princess, the girl thought, as she watched her lying there, dressed in an exquisitely made and braided dress of finest navy-blue cloth. It suited the somewhat high

colour and severely modelled features of Lady Anna, and the upright linen collar with the small silk tie below it gave just the finishing touch that was needed. She wore no cap; her soft, dark-brown hair was smoothly brushed and coiled; her grey expressive eyes were bright and keen as they looked out over the blue summer sea that was all studded with the herring-fleet which had just arrived. The sun was slanting down upon the red and brown and yellow sails. There was a band playing upon the promenade. It was evening already, Dorigen perceived, rising to go.

'No—sit down again,' Lady Anna said imperatively. 'You have nothing to do?'

'No; I have nothing particular to do.'

'Then by-and-by you shall go and take your bonnet off, and we will have some dinner. I dine at seven. . . . . Mr.—the people you are staying with—they will not mind? They know you are here?'

'Yes; they know I am here,' Dorigen replied, wondering over the proposal. 'And they are used to my staying out till dark; but——'

'But what?'

'I am not dressed suitably.'

'No? Then do as you are told. Sit down here by me till I tell you to do something else.'

Dorigen sat down at once, smiling as she did so. These commands were not the commands of a superior to an inferior. This she perceived readily enough; and, instead of feeling resentment, she could not but feel a little glad to find herself treated with that absence of ceremony which, under certain circumstances, is the finest kindness, the warmest hospitality.

It was at any rate the best that Lady Anna had to offer to Dorigen Gower so far. Whether any finer and higher intercourse would become possible with increased intimacy had yet to be seen.

Dorigen was tremulously hoping for it, feeling that so far only the surface of her life had been touched, and knowing sadly that it was not in her own power to make visible any depths not stirred by external influence. No such depths were stirred that evening, and yet the girl went home thankful, hopeful, quietly elate. She was to go to Grancester with Lady Anna, to be her guest at St. Dunstan's Vicarage for a month at least, if no objection were made. And who should make any? If the question were somewhat saddening for Dorigen, the answer was not without its suggestion of satisfaction to Lady Anna Wilderslowe.

CHAPTER XI.

'WILT THOU FALL AT THE VERY LAST?'

'I go to prove my soul!
I see my way, as the birds see their way.
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send His hail,
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
In some good time—His good time—I shall arrive.
He guides me and the birds; in His good time.'

ROBERT BROWNING: *Paracelsus.*

AND yet the matter was not accomplished, the invitation finally accepted, without a great deal of discussion. This ended, old Than shook his head sadly and silently, and let his clay pipe go out while he smoked. Margery Laverock, who had heard of it all from Miss Rountree, sat with wistful eyes and tremulous hands, braiding a wonderful dressing-bag; and Miss Rountree, who had seen Lady Anna, and become more reconciled, sat stitching at Dorigen's dresses with a will, and

spoke with bated breath; and charged the girl faithfully as to the manners and speech and bearing to be cultivated before she could expect to find favour in the eyes of a person so exalted as Lady Anna Wilderslowe.

Poor little Miss Rountree had been aghast at first. Dorigen had been left in her charge, and this thing that had happened had seemed too improbable a thing to have happened in good faith; and believing as she did that the world outside Hild's Haven was full of wicked and designing people, the little woman could not rest till she had seen Mr. Kenningham, who had recovered up to a certain point—the only point he was ever to reach—and was greatly interested, though considerably less surprised, than Miss Rountree had been.

'Miss Gower should have come herself,' he said, speaking in his usual quick straightforward way. That was not altered, though he sat in an invalid chair from which he would never move again without assistance. 'She should have come herself. You must tell her she is to do so at once. I am delighted to hear of this invitation. Years ago I knew Colonel Wilderslowe in India, and I know something of his wife's family. She is a daughter of the late Earl of Erris, an Irish nobleman, who was perhaps no

better than he should have been; but you needn't repeat that to Miss Gower. Her husband's father, Dr. Wilderslowe, is a man who ought to have been a bishop by this time: he would have been, I dare say, but for the fact that he spends more time in the acquirement of learning than in making a display of it. But that is not much to the point at present. I will write a note to Lady Anna myself, which you shall take. I will tell her what I know of Miss Gower, and ask her to see you. She owes you as much as that, at least. And then you can come back and tell me what sort of reception you have had.'

Miss Rountree did go back, taking an answer to Mr. Kenningham's note, or rather his long letter, an answer written while Miss Rountree waited, yet sufficiently full, and altogether courteous.

'It was satisfactory,' Lady Anna said, 'to know more of Miss Gower than she had divined for herself; to be assured that her instincts had not betrayed her in the sudden liking and sympathy she had been drawn to feel. She trusted that a few weeks' stay in so healthy a part of the country as St. Dunstan's would be beneficial to Miss Gower; and if it should happen that her stay should be lengthened beyond the

time named, Lady Anna would be glad at any time to hear from Mr. Kenningham, or to write to him for the better satisfaction of his very natural anxiety; or, doubtless, Miss Gower herself would write if she were asked to do so.'

It is exactly as I thought,' Mr. Kenningham said to Dorigen when she went to the Rectory herself in obedience to his command. 'More is meant than a brief visit, and I am glad of it; and your father is glad, so he says in the letter I have had from him this morning. There is distinct guidance in it all, and you could not have refused. I see what it means for your future. You will be led by ways you know not; and if you are true to yourself, true to the higher voice within yourself, you will reach the end I have foreseen for you from the beginning. And yet don't mistake me. I am not prophesying smooth things for you. Your way may be smooth before you now for a little while, but that will not continue. It is in the very nature of the things I speak of that you cannot have an easy life, much less a luxurious one. At first, when I heard of this change, I was afraid for you; but I did you an injustice. The life that you must live for awhile at St. Dunstan's will not hurt you. It is even needful for your nature to make acquaintance with it, but it will only be

continued till you have acquired all that it can teach you. Beyond that I do not see. I shall not be here to see. But when sorrow comes remember me, and remember that I foretold it, and urged you not to sink because of it; and when out of your sorrow there comes joy—the joy of finding that sorrow had but been as it were the channelling of your nature so that human sympathy may flow through you and from you without let or hindrance—then remember that I foretold your life and its work. More I may not foretell,' Mr. Kenningham continued. 'And you may think that in foreseeing for you only labour and sorrow, and preparing you for these, I am hardly doing you a kindness, yet the time will come when you will understand me. Your labour will not be in vain, and your task, so far as the suffering and misunderstanding of it goes, has been set by One who went the same way before. There was little of what the world calls "happiness" in His life, still less of what men term "success;" and when the end came He had to cry in His agony, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Do not be cast down when you begin to perceive that the end of your own life may be like to that.'

Such was the last word that Dorigen Gower was to hear from Mr. Kenningham's lips; and it

seemed to fall rather sadly upon the new hopes and thoughts and dreams that were occupying her brain during those swift, bright summer days. Every day she saw Lady Anna; and not seldom the whole day was spent with her, driving about the lanes and woods in the morning, wandering in the afternoon down upon the beach, and sitting upon the green tangle-fringed stones while Bertie played by the edge of the wavelets that came creeping up the sands in the hot sunshine, breaking with soft murmuring sounds that were more soothing than music—more inducive of quiet hoping and trusting than any words that Dorigen could use for her own helping. She was taking the new good, the new beauty which had come into her life, with a calmness that was surprising even to herself. It seemed perfectly natural to her to be sitting there with her hand in Lady Anna's, listening to low, loving, admiring words, such as she had never heard or dreamed to hear. There was exaggeration in them, and the girl knew it and felt it, but they were not the less delightful for that. The strange thing was the change in Lady Anna herself: the soft pleading for a loving friendship that came, instead of raillery about ill-made gowns and antiquely-fashioned bonnets; the confession of utter loneliness and weariness

during the few hours of separation, instead of mocking queries as to where this or that piece of ancient mannerism had been acquired; though, after Lady Anna's interview with Miss Rountree, she had felt that there was no need to ask any more such questions.

'I see it all now, Dorna dear,' she had said, stooping to kiss the hot blush away from the girl's white forehead. 'I know now where you acquired that condescending little bow and that stately way of entering a room. It is too delightful; I wouldn't have it all changed for the world. You have been taught it, but it is yourself for all that, and makes you look exactly as if you were stepping out of an old picture. I know that is what Lance will say. I hope he will be coming home soon, and I shall get him to paint a portrait of you for me as soon as he comes. You shall have a dress made square at the throat, and your hair must be all rolled up at the top of your head. And he shall paint you just like that. . . . You silly child! How can you blush in that way for nothing?'

Dorigen heard a good deal as the days went on of Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe. This gentleman was a younger brother of Colonel Wilderslowe—much younger; there was nearly twenty

years' difference in age between them, and this long span of time perhaps helped to account for some other differences that marked the two men. The staid, middle-aged soldier had been but little in England of late years, and this might have something to do with the difficulty he found in understanding his younger and cleverer and more versatile brother. Lancelot's versatility alone was a sufficiently weighty stumbling-block to the elder man. It seemed to the latter there was nothing that the former had not tried to do, and, unfortunately, all his efforts had been crowned with more or less of success. His latest ambition was to be a painter, and at the present time he was said to be studying abroad.

'But I don't quite know what he can be studying,' Lady Anna admitted to Dorigen. 'Six weeks ago he was in Holland, and had determined to devote his life to the realistic. Next I heard of him in Florence, passionately worshipping the imaginative. Now I believe he has started for Greece, hoping to find in Arcadia some enlightening influence that will enable him to reconcile the two. . . . I shall write and tell him to come back to St. Dunstan's, where he will find the very idea he is seeking.'

Long ago Lady Anna had drawn from Dorigen the history of that one visit to Thors-

grif, with all, or rather nearly all, that had preceded it and followed it, and the little lady had not failed to have fears and suspicions. It did not suit the *exigeante* waywardness of her fancy that the girl's affections should be divided. She was jealous of the unknown influence which she discerned, but did not quite comprehend; and notwithstanding her affectionate imperiousness toward Dorigen, there were yet limits which she could not overpass. There were times already when she stood a little in awe of the girl, of her straightforward surprises and simplicities, and she could not put the exact question she would have liked to put. She knew that no engagement existed between Dorigen and the Mr. Salvain of whom she spoke so seldom, but with such evidently disturbing emotion; and Lady Anna was of opinion that no such engagement was probable or desirable, considering the disparity of years. Yet she was not at rest concerning the matter; and when Dorigen told her that she had promised to spend one last day at Thorsgrif before leaving the neighbourhood, the impatient little woman did not take the news amiably.

'Why should you go there in such hot weather as this?' she said fretfully. 'Let the Salvains come here to say "good-bye" to you.

I will ask them to luncheon or to dinner, if they will come.'

'I don't think they would like that so well,' Dorigen replied, with unadorned truthfulness.

'You uncivil little creature! . . . But have your own way; only take care of yourself. If you see a net spread for you, don't in sheer stupidity walk into the middle of it.'

A net spread for her! How little Lady Anna understood; how little, as a rule, she cared to understand people whose ways were not as her ways!

When the day came for Dorigen to keep her promise she sat by Michael Salvain's side in the old-fashioned gig, perplexed, silent, even a little saddened by the complications that had come upon her life. She had not desired them; less than anything else had she desired to change her own outward standpoint in life for another; to achieve in this cheap way something that others might consider to be a gain—a gain that would in a certain sense be a severance from all that had been good in her life, and pleasant, and desirable.

It was not so long since she had sat by Michael Salvain in the same gig, driving by the same barren rocky ways, and feeling that she had left her childhood's life with all its straitness

and repression behind her. And now again fate was forcing her onward, but by no will of her own. She had hardly even drifted passively at first. Her ideas had been set on other lines, lines which had seemed to require that she should remain in quiet expectancy near that storm-beaten cliff-top where the call had come to her once, and where she might hope that it would come again, and more definitely.

Through all that had happened since she had not ceased to hear it with more or less distinctness, to realize all that it might mean with more or less of recognition of its weight and import. No subsequent experience had touched the solemnity of that one hour, and its impress was outwardly visible though its meaning might not be discerned easily. Lady Anna was well aware that there were depths in the girl's nature which she had not yet sounded, which, perhaps, she might never sound; and the knowledge did but increase the already enthusiastic admiration which she felt for one so utterly different from herself. Doubtless this very difference was one source of the strange attraction to which she had yielded so unreservedly; but Lady Anna did not reason about it—she reasoned about very few things; reasoning was not in her way. Her way was to take such good as life could be made

to yield without question, to reserve all question and resistance for the ill. It was not a very perfect system, perhaps, nor philosophical, but it acted fairly well from Lady Anna's point of view.

Dorigen was not thinking of Lady Anna as she went over the cliffs, drawing nearer and nearer to Thorsgrif with every moment. It was not two years since she had gone there before, but it seemed as if the experience of a lifetime had been crowded into the months. It had been sad experience for the most part, and the memory of it was weighted with a sadness which could be felt through her lightest word. This Michael Salvain perceived now as he had not perceived before. And though her extreme youthfulness had been to him the one great hindrance and restraining motive, holding him from all earthly peace, all earthly felicity, he had to remind himself that the tall, grave-eyed woman, dressed in deep mourning, who was entering his house, greeting his mother and sister with such quiet warmth, had not yet ended her eighteenth year.

'She looks more like eight-and-twenty, a great deal,' Mrs. Salvain said when Dorigen had gone upstairs with Joanna to take off her bonnet and make herself ready for the early dinner. Lady Anna had made her promise to be back again on

the West Cliff in time for a cup of tea in the late evening.

So there was only that one afternoon—a hot, sunny, silent August afternoon. Thorsgrif was just the place to be in on such a day. The sweet, fresh loneliness of the grif had a peace, a restfulness which was refreshing after the dusty streets, the busy, unsavoury quays, the stir and bustle of the promenades of Hild's Haven. Dorigen was glad to be there, though it was for the last time. She had a curious feeling that it was the last—a feeling that the others seemed to share.

'It is no use your telling me that you are only going for a month,' Mrs. Salvain said. Dinner had been over some time, and they were standing on the seaward end of the terrace, leaning against the stone balustrade. Michael was looking silently down into the copse below, where the soft green fringe of the young larches hardly stirred in the summer air. There were bluebells in the tangled grass, blue as the sapphire sea which was shining and gleaming as far as the eye could follow it. A few foxgloves stood up tall and straight on a sandy hillock; the white yarrow gleamed in the shade; the beautiful pink rest-harrow crept downward to the very edge of the beach.

'I am only asked to stay a few weeks,' Dorigen said, in reply to Mrs. Salvain. She spoke rather sadly—sadly enough to satisfy Michael, who turned to watch her as she spoke. He had noticed before that she looked a little weary, a little wistful. Was she already feeling the burden of the new perplexities which had come into her life? Were there perplexities which he could not discern or understand? Her face was not easy to read as she stood there with her small grave mouth closed firmly, and her large blue-black eyes shadowed as if with the sadness to be. It seemed to him as if the old air of inaccessibleness had come over her again, making him feel as if something stood between his soul and hers. He felt it more than ever when Mrs. Salvain went indoors to see what Joanna was doing, leaving them alone together in the cool shade that was upon the terrace by the sea.

They stood in silence awhile; but presently it was broken.

'You will be tired of standing,' Michael said gently. 'Shall I fetch a chair, or would you like to go for a walk? . . . Will you go up the gill once more? I found the oak-fern there the other day.'

'Did you? I should like to see it growing,' the girl said, but not with the old eagerness

which had been hers but such a little while ago. Yet, that she cared to go at all was sufficient for Michael Salvain. He had hoped for this last walk in Thorsgrif Gill, not knowing why he hoped or what he expected from it. If he had asked himself the answer would have been, 'I expect some human sweetness—one brief taste of human sweetness. I desire no assurance but the assurance I have. I only crave to be side by side for awhile with the one soul I love, the one soul whom I would wish to have love for me. Let me have this one brief taste of life's sweetness, since the chance and hope of more is going from me for ever.'

And all the way as they went up by the murmuring beck, and under the cool blue shade of the firs, the man was saying to himself: 'This is the end; even hope is going. To-morrow it will be gone for ever.'

And the rippling water went downward to the sea, echoing with mocking cheerfulness: 'For ever! for ever! for ever!'

By the little wooden bridge there were some moss-grown stones, half buried in fronds of fern and spreading hemlock. Dorigen sat down there, leaning against the rude railing behind. The projecting point where she had gone down into the swollen water with her handful of daffo-

dils was just above. Dorigen smiled as she turned her head to look at the spot, and Mr. Salvain, who was leaning against the trunk of a tree close by her side, smiled his reply.

'Have you forgotten?' the girl asked quietly.

'No,' he said, speaking with slow, emphatic earnestness. 'I have not forgotten, nor have you. . . . I am not afraid that you will forget.'

There was a slight pause. The beck ran on, twinkling and trickling round and over the grey stones; the wet fern fronds quivered to its rushing. Somewhere there was a stone-chat knapping out its song.

What is there in human love that it should see always where it loves some human beauty? Dorigen Gower was not beautiful, nor, in these days, what any ordinary observer would have termed pretty. Yet as she sat there in her sombre black dress, relieved only by home-made frillings of white muslin, it seemed to Michael Salvain that this was the one beautiful woman he had seen. Her thinness was a graceful slightness of figure; her paleness was fairness; her insignificance of appearance full of all highest and truest and purest significance that a man of true and pure life could desire. 'She is even more beautiful than I had dreamed,' he said in the fervid lovingness of his soul; but even as

he said it the fervidness turned to a new sadness, and kept him silent.

And even as his thought, so was hers. This man who stood there before her had never been to her as other men. Slight as her experience of the world of human life might be, she had discerned the distinction that was on the calm, forceful face; the deep, tender beauty of the dark-grey eyes, the nobility of nature which seemed to be made visible in the broad white forehead, where the brows curved after the manner of 'the bar of Michael Angelo.' The short, thick moustache was of the same light-brown colour as the hair that clustered in strong, heavy waves across the square of the forehead. There was evidence of strength everywhere—strength that could melt all at once to gentleness, or all at once be roused as by an indomitable force. So evident it was that Dorigen, as she sat there, felt that touch of something which is almost fear, and which is seldom absent when deep but unacknowledged love is present. There was constraint in her timidity when she spoke.

'I am not afraid that you will forget,' Michael had said, having special meaning in his tone. And she made answer by asking another question:

'What is it, then, that you fear?'

'It is the touch of change that I fear,' he replied. 'There are changes that arise out of other things than forgetfulness.'

'Then you think I am changeful?' she asked, lifting her face to his in some surprise.

Michael smiled.

'Not changeful,' he said. 'But swiftly changing . . . . Have you any idea how far you have travelled since that day we met in Wharram's office?'

Dorigen looked down, her eyes wandering searchingly among the fern and harebells at her feet.

'That is a long while ago,' she said slowly.

'It is less than two years.'

'But I have not altered in any way,' she said, looking up again. 'I am just the same as I have always been.'

Michael only answered by a smile to this, a sad smile which ended with a sudden sigh. In one sense she spoke truly. There were elements in her nature that had not changed, that could never change; and if he had any hope, there it lay; and this he knew, and recognised for all that it was worth to him. At this moment it seemed to him that everything depended upon such changes as might be wrought within her and upon her at St. Dunstan's Vicarage. Fear con-

tended with hope, and both emotions drew their strength from the great love he was so greatly repressing as he stood there. It did not help him when she raised her blue, wistful, wondering eyes to his, full of a love that he could not but see was as true, as deep, and almost as full of pain as his own. It was as if she were asking him for help in some trouble, and he were refusing to give it—refusing sympathy where he would have given his life.

And she would no more sit there, looking towards him appealingly, turning her pale sad face from his sorrowfully and wearily. To-morrow she would be gone. To-day if he said, 'I cannot let you go, I cannot let you go at all; you must never go from me again,' she would yield, undoubtedly she would yield, and unhesitatingly. And though he knew this, there was no vanity in his knowledge, nor any presumption. No true man values a woman's love the less because that love is given with unconscious generosity.

Dorigen had not enough of cunning to be 'strange;' diffident she might be; the more diffident the more she was assured; but there would be none of the littleness of coquetry. She would accept his love as greatly and gravely as she accepted her life.

And all this while there was silence—a perilously sweet silence, sweet with the very sweetness he had desired. It was some time before he could break it again.

'Why do you not ask me what kind of change I am dreading?' he said, taking up the thread he had dropped before.

'Because I know . . . You are thinking that I shall learn to care more for others than for you.'

'Exactly. And you are thinking that you will not?'

'No: I don't think of what is impossible. . . . You said a year ago, more than a year ago, that we were to be friends, and I took you at your word.'

The reply was broken off abruptly, as if it were not completed.

'And haven't we been friends?' Michael asked.

'We have been friendly.'

'Then I have disappointed you?'

'Sometimes—often. You don't seem to trust me; at least, I think that is it; I hardly know. . . . There are times when I expect help, and I don't get it. Now, for instance, when I am going away, going from Hild's Haven for the first time, you might make it less painful, but you do not.'

There was another pause. Michael Salvain's face grew paler.

'I was not dreaming that your going to Grancester would be in any way painful,' he said.

'Nor is it,' the girl replied swiftly, and with a sudden blush. 'The pain is in parting. I keep on saying to myself that it is only for a little while, but I feel as if I were cheating myself with an untruth. Lady Anna drops little phrases about the future, about my helping her to teach Bertie, and I feel as if it were all settled, and I could not rebel. I don't want to rebel. It is good, my going there; if only because there will be a chance of my being put in the way of earning my own bread, it will be good . . . And yet there is pain in it, not in going there, but in leaving here, leaving everything I have cared for . . . Can you not see?'

'Yes,' Michael said, 'I can see quite plainly. If any good comes, it is always by pain. We talked of that long ago.'

'And I did not forget it,' the girl said earnestly. Her cheek was burning now, and her eyes alight with a quicker fire. 'I shall never forget it . . . I shall never forget anything that you have said.'

'Nor shall I forget anything that you have said,' Michael replied, sitting down beside her

among the ferns and hemlock, and taking her hand in his and holding it there with a grasp that might have been painful if she had been conscious of physical pain. 'Especially I shall remember what you have said this afternoon, that you will not forget me, that you will not forget my friendship; that you will not forget my words . . . *All my life depends upon your remembering.* I will not ask you for any promise, I will even refrain from making any promise to you that would seem binding upon you for one moment; but I shall wait here for your coming back; I shall wait with such a hope in my waiting as my life has never had in it before, never, never. . . . But, oh, my child! What am I saying? What have I done? You are free, free as the air above you. My youth is gone, and how could I bind your best years to the end of my lost life? . . . It is as you say, as I have always said, we are friends. Friendship is very precious; it is very, very precious. . . . Forget if I spoke of anything more precious than friendship. . . Forget, and forgive!'

* * * * *

That was not the last word, not quite the last. Another was spoken on the cliff at Hild's Haven when the sun had gone down, when the

lamps had been lighted, and the band had begun to play.

Michael Salvain had left his conveyance at the farmhouse by Ulyatt Bank. 'We will walk back by the cliff-edge,' he said; and Dorigen knew that he was thinking to lengthen out the way a little. She was glad, but a little nervous, as she always was if anyone were waiting for her anywhere. And she knew that Lady Anna would be waiting now, and waiting impatiently. It was almost bondage already, but no freedom had ever been so sweet.

And the lingering by the edge of the cliff beyond the gas-lamps was sweet, too. The cool evening breeze came from the land; the shadow of the coming night was upon the town. The strains of the band came fitfully; now loud, and swift, and triumphant; now sad, and faint, and far off. Down on the smooth beach below the waves murmured to a measure of their own, softly and soothingly; and Michael stopped there, where the music of the waters came more clearly than the music of the sighing, singing waltzes for which he had no mind. 'I shall say "good-bye" to you here,' he said, as they stood just beyond the outermost lamp. And there was both hurry and pain in his tone, as if he were anxious that this moment should be over.

There was little pain now for Dorigen in this parting. Her love was of that well-tempered kind —tempered with faith, with much reverence— which needs nothing less than it needs the constant presence of the one beloved, the constant assurance of continued lovingness. All had been said by the little bridge in Thorsgrif Gill that was necessary to her present or future happiness. Michael Salvain loved her; he had said that he would wait for her love. And again his word had satisfied her like a benediction. She was at peace.

She stood there by his side quite calmly in the dim light; quite silently. The gentle rush and fall of the waves was as subdued as the rustling of leaves on a summer night. The stillness of the great wide waste of waters beyond was like an assurance of peacefulness. Even Michael Salvain felt it falling upon his keen emotion. When he spoke again there was less agitation in his voice.

'Say "good-bye," my child,' he said tenderly. 'And tell me once more that you will not forget.'

He did not see the girl's hand held out to him in the darkness, but suddenly he felt it lying gently upon his arm, and saw the white, wistful face lifted, as if she were trying to see his face for the last time.

"Good-bye," she said, speaking in tones that quivered to the solemn weight of the thing she said. 'Good-bye. And I will not forget. I can never, never forget! . . . Say you believe that I cannot forget.'

Her face was lifted to his; he took it between his two hands silently and kissed it passionately. Then she stood alone, and the clouds upon the sea seemed to brood there with a new blackness, and the waves on the beach below broke with a new sadness. The music was silenced; the few faint stars had no light in them; the light breeze swept from the sullen moor, shivering and sighing for the pain to be.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW LIFE.

'He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river.
The limpid waters turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.'

E. B. BROWNING.

IS there a special training needed to enable people to be rightly happy? Do we need to have our eyes opened, and be as gods, before we can discern the good of life? How is it that so many of us, looking back, can see all too plainly that we touched the zenith of our happiness not knowing that we touched it, and all the while looking to some higher point never to be attained? Ah! the pity of that wasted opportunity for being happy! And yet, are we to blame so much? Did we

not miss it in very ignorance, in utter inexperience of the nature and limits of human felicity?

But though we may have missed it, though we may have marred it, we cannot altogether have escaped its beneficent action and influence. We *were* happy, though we knew it not till too late.

From the first day of their arrival at St. Dunstan's Vicarage, Lady Anna Wilderslowe had set herself, with what knowledge she had, to make life good and beautiful for the silent, grave-eyed girl who was her guest, and who had apparently seen so little of life's fairer prospects.

It was not a difficult matter to make the days pleasant at the Vicarage. For Lady Anna the utter calmness, the uneventfulness, the solitariness had been almost oppressive at times. Now there was new zest in everything, from the prayers that were read in the beautiful little chapel in the morning to the last *tête-à-tête* by bedroom fires at night. Sometimes they sat by Dorigen's fire and sometimes by Lady Anna's; the rooms being side by side in the southern wing of the building, and differing only in size. They were both as pretty as Lady Anna's taste could make them, and as luxurious as the money at her command could ensure. 'She was not rich,' she said, sighing as she said it; and

Dorigen could not help wondering what riches might be, since in the absence of them there could be such ease, and freedom, and unstinted gratification of desire.

There was not in the girl's nature any touch of that vulgarity which is so deeply impressed by unwonted elegance or luxury of material surroundings; and the refinements of life came to her as things which she had hitherto been obliged to forego. The sole surprises were in the shape of disappointments; and certain shabby prayer-books and hymn-books, certain soiled and torn sheets of music, with chintz here and there about the house not of the freshest, were more unexpected things than the dainty way in which all the needs of life were served. Her feeling as to these was very much that of a person who has been long in a distant country, and is glad to return to his former place and way.

St. Dunstan's Church is in the town of Grancester; but the Vicarage is at least a mile distant from the last of the suburban terraces, and stands on a green wooded hill which slopes toward the Ellan, a small river which runs among the West Yorkshire hills, and adds considerably to the beauty of the beautiful and varied scenery through which it winds and

turns in such unexpected directions. Here and there on its banks there is a village spire, a red-roofed hamlet, a whirling mill; now and then a rustic bridge spans the silver thread. Cattle low in the meadows; birds build in the round-crowned elms; year by year the wild flowers waste their sweetness on the fresh, sweet air.

The village—or rather the hamlet—of Ellandale is but just below the Vicarage. There are a few picturesque farmsteads, a few trim labourers' cottages, a village school, a forge, a joiner's shop. The small and ancient chapel, dedicated to St. Margaret of Scotland, stands about half-way between, on the edge of a tiny copse, which is part of the Vicar's estate.

All about the place there is that soft, dreamful peace which comes with a kind of charm, as of pastoral poetry, or music. To come upon such a place when you are weary, or world-worn, is to live through the days with bated breath; to expect hourly that the scene will dissolve, and leave you with the shriek of the railway whistle in your ear, and all the confusing stir of your restless modern life about you for evermore.

The Vicarage itself was a large, irregular building, and strikingly picturesque, having attained its picturesqueness mainly by means of many and varied additions. Originally it had

been a small stone house with high-pitched gables and diamond-paned windows. Later, a Tudoresque wing had been added; and Dr. Wilderslowe himself had built the square, tower-like excrescence at the angle, which gave to the whole building something of the appearance of an Early French château. The lower parts of the house were everywhere covered with creepers: ancient, broad-leaved ivy on the north and east; with jessamine and Virginia creeper, roses, and clematis, all about the south-western front, clustering over the windows, dropping from the roof of the veranda, flinging green and flowery sprays to every breeze that blew. The garden generally was luxuriant rather than trim, and, if the truth must be told, it was not well cared for. The one gardener did as he liked, and he did not like gardening; so that people with trimmer places used to speak of the Vicarage garden as neglected. It might be so, but it was very beautiful in its neglect; and even in the late autumn of the year there was no nook or corner but had its own beauty of rich colouring, of fantastic growth, of careless, spreading, charming luxuriance.

To the girl who, in her childhood, had taken Than Rountree's little plot at the top of Salt-house Garth to be a veritable Garden of Eden,

this garden at St. Dunstan's was a wonder and a revelation such as she had not dreamed of. The very generosity of the tangled things was a marvel not to be understood ; and she saw how they crept about, and climbed upward, and flung themselves downward, and threw long sprays over walls, and hedges, and mossy arbours, with a separate love awakening in her for the very liberalness of life and growth. It was Lady Anna who taught her the names of things, and laughed at her ignorance, and satirized her passionate love for them ; but the satire didn't matter now. It had never mattered, and Lady Anna was well aware of it, disliking always the people who took her too literally. There were a great many people she disliked.

The month or six weeks that Lady Anna had spoken of had been lengthened into three months by this time, and it was known everywhere in the neighbourhood that Miss Gower was to be accepted as Lady Anna's friend, and accepted cordially, by such as cared for the little lady's own friendship. This was an unwritten law, and unspoken, but it came quickly to be understood. Some hated the girl beforehand ; some wondered 'What on earth Lady Anna could see in her ?' and a few won the lady's approval by lavishing real kindness upon Dorigen for her

own sake. It was not long before she had friends of her own outside St. Dunstan's.

And all this time the days had been passing much as time passes in a sweet and easeful dream. But little news of any kind had reached Dorigen from Hild's Haven ; none from Michael Salvain ; but she did not need news of him. As her nature grew and expanded, it seemed as if her knowledge of his nature grew with her growth, inducing a larger reverence, a fuller faith ; and with these something that was almost a dread of any association that should mar the fineness of her great love. It was as if time and distance were but protectors, protecting them each against the other's weariness, against the possibility of spiritual desecration, against the chance of that apathy which too often comes upon unguarded and undisciplined relationships. The instinct to dread these things was in the girl's nature, and pre-dated all experience, so that she was glad now for the space and the peace of absence.

The time was altogether one of peace ; the old strain and stress of her life was all but forgotten. Indeed, there was neither solitude nor opportunity for remembering it. All the day was filled with an orderly and leisurely coming and going, doing and resting. In the early morning

the little household used to meet in the wide hall; Dr. Wilderslowe, with his white surplice, and his square cap in his hand, and his courteous greeting ready for everybody; his son's wife, with her felt hat and her fur cloak; Dorigen, with her sombre, crape-trimmed garments, which Lady Anna so much disliked; and Bertie and his nurse just behind, waiting for the little procession to start. Dr. Wilderslowe went first, going down between the laurel-bushes to the wicket-gate; and by the edge of the copse to where the little chapel stood. The bell had a very cheerful sound in the frosty morning air. A few people used to come up from the hamlet; four or five servants came down from the Vicarage; the village schoolmaster came with a dozen or so of the children trooping in before him. Lady Anna sat at the organ, which was in the chancel; and Dorigen sat beside her, watching the small white hands move firmly over the keys with a certain wonder and admiration, and a touch of sadness which had no perceptible cause. There was always a morning hymn and a canticle or two; and that was the time when Dorigen first perceived the passion, and the poetry, and the prayerful, moving beauty of the songs of the Poet-King. Altogether the mornings in the chapel under the fir-trees were

memorable events when they came to be looked back upon.

After breakfast there was always a little idling about the bay-window of the breakfast-room, or out on the terrace if the day was fine. Even Dr. Wilderslowe used to allow himself a quarter of an hour, looking at his watch several times in the course of it, if there were no letters to be read. He was a little grieved that he received so few communications from his younger son; but he was glad to get them when they did come, and any special piece of news was always imparted. Greece had delighted the young man, Rome was delighting him still more. It was even possible, he said, that he should look upon the Eternal City as his future home. Dr. Wilderslowe's voice quivered a little as he read this letter, but he read on to the end.

Dorigen had had a little awe at first of the tall, white-haired old gentleman who was so courteous and so learned, but she soon forgot to be awed. It was not possible, indeed, to remember it with one so gentle, and even so deferential; and Lady Anna had taken some pains to make them understand each other. She had been angry with the girl more than once—angry, that is to say, in her own affectionate, tempestuous way.

'Why are you always so silent when Dr.

Wilderslowe is in the room?' she had said, rather vehemently. 'It is stupid of you to be so shy when I want him to know you, and to like you. He would like you immensely if you would let him. Why don't you talk to him more?'

Dorigen blushed as was usual with her, and looked up with that expressionless look which she always had when required suddenly to give an answer.

'What can I say that Dr. Wilderslowe would care to hear?' she asked, with girlish literalness.

'You could say a great many things that he would care to hear; I only wish I could say half as many. If I had read as much as you have, and remembered what I had read half as well, I should be a great deal more of a companion for him than I am. . . . Now then, give me a kiss, and go and put on your habit, and we will have a canter as far as Widdington Knolls before luncheon. I want to try to teach you to sit square in your saddle, and to handle your reins better. . . . Now go, my sweet Placida; go at once.'

'And Bertie's lessons?'

'Bertie isn't well enough to have any more lessons this week; Mrs. Williams says so.'

Before this time there had been a little scene,

and it had been brought about mainly by a letter which Dorigen had received from Mr. Kenningham, asking her of her welfare, and of her intentions for the future.

'What are you going to tell him about your intentions?' Lady Anna asked with a good deal of eagerness, and a touch of mockery.

Dorigen paused and looked thoughtful.

'You told me that I was not to mention the idea of going back to Hild's Haven any more till you spoke of it,' the girl replied.

'What an excellent memory you have! But it is not quite perfect, dear. I said something else.'

'You said that there was work enough to be done here. But you have never let me do any—not real work.'

'No? . . . . To begin with, you are Bertie's governess.'

'For an hour a day, about three days a week.'

'That is my concern.'

'And I don't know anything myself, so I am not fit to be anybody's governess.'

'My look out, again.'

'And you said I might help you in the parish; but I don't feel helpful.'

'Don't you? I regret that. What do you think would make you feel helpful? You teach

twice every Sunday in the Sunday-school—a thing I hate; and you take it as patiently as if you'd been born to do nothing else; and afterward you spend nearly an hour over those dirty and in every way objectionable parish library books. Then every Monday morning you help me with the coal-club, and every Tuesday afternoon with the clothing-club. You read for hours together when there's a sewing-meeting, and make those poor, wretched women cry till they can't see the needle from the thread. You sing in the choir till you are hoarse; and if there's a row among the choir children you make peace. If anybody in the parish wants gruel or beef-tea, you take care that they have enough to drown them. Cook hates the sight of you; she told me she did. And in addition to all that you've changed me, or changed my life, till life seems worth living again, and all the weariness and dreariness gone out of it. . . . Don't be a simpleton, if you can help it, Dorna; and give me that letter. *I'll* answer it, and to the abundant satisfaction of your worthy pastor when I am about it. Though I don't know that I agree with him in thinking you such a paragon of perfection, after all.'

'Will you let me see the letter he wrote to you before?'

'No, never! You'd expect to sit on a pedestal for evermore, with me at the base of it in an attitude of worship.'

There is something of that which we call romance in most lives; something that comes unexpectedly, and is unusual, and is not easily intelligible to bystanders. Mostly it comes in connection with the great events of love and marriage, but not always. Friendship has its romantic tales also; its prose poems, its poetic prose, its interesting and pathetic episodes. But we are not prepared for these, and we make little of them when they come, not even allowing them the proper space which belongs to them in our life. It is not till they are gone by that we know how we have been impressed and influenced; not till too late that we find how much we owed that other soul; how much we were indebted for that generous devotion which knew no measure; but gave because it had to give, and hoped for so little again. Dorigen Gower was not ungrateful nor insensible, but it was not while these days were passing that she discerned the beauty of them; the unshaded happiness they held; their freedom from care, and responsibility, and sorrow—from all, at least, but that great sorrow which was in the past. It was hardly to be expected but that thoughts of that

should come, striking darkly upon the surroundings and events of the new life. But she sorrowed silently; and Lady Anna knew that she did, and missed no chance of providing any fresh or pleasant distraction that could draw the girl's mind from too much brooding over the irrevocable past. All the old diversions that the little lady had laid aside—riding, or driving about the country for driving's sake, boating on the river, skating on the mill-dam, gardening a little now and then, and now and then opening the piano in the winter evenings, and playing old music, singing old songs one after the other as long as Dorigen wished her to sing—all this and more Lady Anna roused herself to do in that strong affection and sympathy which she was lavishing upon the almost friendless girl, who had so little to give in return that it never occurred to her that she had anything at all. Inexperienced as she was, she could not but see the inequality of this friendship, nor could she fail to see that this very inequality made it more beautiful. She was awake to much of the beauty, to much of the pleasure, to much of the good; she was not awake at all to the fact that she was living out, and rapidly, the only felicitous days she was ever to know.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BREAK IN THE MONOTONY.

'I used to sit and look at my life
As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it.'

THE drawing-room at the Vicarage was a handsome room, and had been furnished and decorated by Colonel Wilderslowe before he brought home his bride. It was supposed to be Old German in the general style of it. The chairs and tables were heavy, yet picturesque, with elaborate turned work, and brazen mountings and finishings. The velvets and fringes of the upholstery were of colours not easy to be named ; some of them seeming like pale and faded foxglove purple, and some like the deep dark tints of old wine. There was a brass chandelier with candles which seemed as if it might have come out of some ancient church, and jars and vases of real Indian china stood

about the room everywhere. Colonel Wilderslowe had brought these, with a small cargo of rugs and shawls, prayer-carpets, and silver caskets, brazen bowls, and idols of rare, carved odorous woods.

Later he had sent a small but exquisite tea-service, which Lady Anna had taken into immediate use; for although afternoon tea was not in those days the established social fact it has since become, still many cups of tea were had in many drawing-rooms before the meal had a local habitation and a name. Lady Anna had always permitted herself the indulgence, and had offered it to her friends, most of whom came out from Grancester, or from neighbouring parsonages, and were therefore supposed to be in need of refreshment of some kind. Lady Anna's tea was very refreshing, everybody conceded that. She had been accustomed to make it herself; but Dorigen made it now, under her supervision; and Auberon was duly taught to carry the cups steadily, and hand the bread and butter prettily. It was very seldom that Dr. Wilderslowe made his appearance.

One frosty afternoon—it was in January he came in—looking quite moved from his usual placidity. Lady Anna saw at once that something had stirred him; and even Mrs. Alver-

thorpe, who was not the most perspicacious of women, saw that there was an unwonted light in the old man's blue eyes, an unwonted tint of rose-red on either cheek.

'Was it the frost,' she asked with heavy playfulness, 'that made the Doctor look so young and so well?'

The old man bowed with his usual grave courtesy.

'Thank you for the compliment, madam,' he said with a smile. 'Is your husband here? Ah, there you are, Alverthorpe. I hope you are well. Have you heard the news?'

'No; I have heard nothing special. We never do hear anything at Vernham Dene. What has happened?'

'A rather serious thing has happened to me,' replied Dr. Wilderslowe. 'Caringford has had another offer of a living—a very fair living I take it to be. And I have just been advising him to accept it, which I think he will do.'

Mr. Alverthorpe, who was Rector of Vernham Dene, and Mr. Cumberland, who was Vicar of Kellingbrooke, both condoled with the old man, to whom a change of this kind would be, as they knew, an extremely unsettling thing. Mr. Caringford had been curate of St. Dunstan's for fifteen years, and was to Dr. Wilderslowe as his

own right hand, so far as all work outside the mother church at Grancester was concerned. No quite young man or new man of any age could take his place all at once. The news that Mr. Caringford had again been offered a benefice was received with a gravity and concern which might have been found amusingly disproportionate in some circles.

Dorigen went on listening, pouring out tea, talking to Muriel Percy, feeding Bertie's Dandie Dinmont with scraps of bread. It could hardly concern her, this coming change, yet she was sorry that Dr. Wilderslowe should have anxiety.

'Will you have another cup of tea?' she said with sympathy in her voice, as the old man came up to the table.

'Ah! you are like all other ladies; you think a cup of tea a specific for every ill of life. But, thank you, my dear, thank you, I will have another cup, with a little more sugar in it, just a little more. Thank you.'

There had been other people in the room besides the Alverthorpes and Mr. Cumberland. Two of the Miss Percys of Thurnholme had taken home the news of the impending change at St. Dunstan's, and the eldest Miss Oakworth from Grancester had heard it with deep interest. A new curate was such a rare event in the neigh-

bourhood of Grancester ; and Lady Anna could be trusted to use her influence in favour of a single man. She was not, they imagined, a woman to wish to divide the honours of her position with a curate's wife.

Judge, then, the surprise there was in the air when, three weeks later, it became known that Dr. Wilderslowe had arranged for the coming of a curate who was not only married, but whose wife was said to be one of the most beautiful women ever seen.

'At least, she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen,' said Mr. Cumberland, an elderly, grey-haired widower, who was supposed to have very aristocratic connections and to have seen a good deal of something that was called 'life.' Some few years ago he had happened to meet the lady of whom he was speaking. 'She was just married then, and looked quite a girl,' he said, 'but she was surpassingly beautiful.'

Dr. Wilderslowe knew but very little of the clergyman who was to take Mr. Caringford's place. He knew that he was not a very young man, and that he was married and had two children.

'They can't lodge with Mrs. Barnes, Anna,' the Vicar said one afternoon, just after he had made his decision. Lady Anna was pouring out tea in the firelight. Bertie was playing at

her feet; the wind was sweeping the long jessamine sprays, which were beating with sharp strokes upon the window-pane. 'They can't lodge there, you know, dear. Mrs. Barnes can only spare one bedroom.'

'But they won't want lodgings,' said Lady Anna. 'They will want a house to themselves. There are several to be let on the Grancester Road.'

'But those are expensive houses, my dear.'

'Are they? Well, I should think and hope Mr. Fairfax has some private means. But, however, they can arrange for themselves when they come. We can take them in here for a few days. . . . Is that you, Dorna? Come here, we're not talking secrets. Where have you been in such a wind as this?'

'I have been to Admer's End to see poor old Mrs. Hurst,' said the girl, coming forward into the ruddy firelight with wind-raised colour on her cheeks, and eyes brightened by quick exercise. She was altering rapidly in those days, and not for the worse.

'What have you got in your muff?' Bertie asked in his most solemn tone.

'Ah! what *have* I got?' she replied, holding down one end of her muff so that a little snow-white Persian kitten just showed its head. 'But what were you saying when I came in, may I

ask?' she said, turning to Lady Anna. 'I heard a name which awoke my curiosity. I know some Fairfaxes—at least, I know about them. And the gentleman is a clergyman.'

'Really! Are you going to get excited about it?'

'Not particularly. But tell me, please. Is he the new curate?'

'He is, my sapient one. Have you any objections?'

'None. But I should like to know if it is the same. Is he married?'

'Very married, I believe.'

'And is his wife beautiful?'

'Lovely, as lovely as you are.'

This was received without any shadow of distaste.

'Have you forgotten the fate of Alessio of Lucca?' Dorigen asked, still kneeling on the rug beside Bertie, and watching the child's delight in his new possession.

'I know nothing of Alessio. What happened to him?' said Lady Anna.

'Dante met him in the *Inferno* in rather bad plight, and induced him to confess that his taste for flattery had brought him there.'

'What excellent English you always speak when you are angry, dear!' exclaimed the little lady, while Dr. Wilderslowe lifted his

kind blue eyes to the girl's face with some surprise.

'Could you find me the passage to which you allude?' he asked courteously. 'But not to-night—no, not to-night,' he hastened to add, as she rose to comply at once. 'I would not try your eyes by lamplight on any account. But if you will find it for me in the morning, I shall be obliged, greatly obliged. I have several copies of the "Divina Commedia" in the original, with some translations, which I will show you, if you will come to my study.'

'You will not keep her there, grandpapa?' said Lady Anna.

'Not against her will, I hope.'

'Nor with her will. I have done my best to keep her out of that scene of temptation.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Dorigen; 'I have wondered why I was never allowed to see more than the backs of all those books!'

'There are books enough in the house without those, and you have not neglected them, by the look of your room. . . . But now tell me about your Fairfaxes.'

All that Dorigen knew was soon related, and it seemed extremely probable that the Rev. Herbert Fairfax, who had married Mrs. Salvain's beautiful niece, Ermengarde Vyse, was the same

Rev. Herbert Fairfax who had just accepted the curacy of Grancester St. Dunstan's-cum-Ellandale St. Margaret's.

'I shall soon see,' Dorigen said. 'She cannot have changed so very much since the picture was painted; indeed, Mr. Salvain said she had hardly changed at all when they saw her last.'

As Lady Anna had foreseen, the day of Dorigen's entrance into the Vicar's study was a fateful day indeed.

It was an upper room—he had chosen it for the sake of greater quiet and greater freedom from damp—and it was large and light and pleasant. From the floor to the ceiling it was furnished with books. There were books on the tables, books on desks, books on all manner of ingeniously-devised stands that were everywhere about the room. Even the back of the door was covered with tiny shelves for tiny volumes, and the door stood always slightly ajar. 'It was bad for books to be shut up,' the old man explained to Dorigen, and he seemed to be gratified to find that he had so many things which she required to have explained. Her scant knowledge pleased him more than her wide ignorance amused him, and the thing that struck him most of all was her evident thirst and yearning to drink more deeply at learning's springs than

she had ever before had any chance of doing. He mused within himself how he might do a great kindness without seeming to do any at all.

It was not difficult to find a way. The passage in the 'Inferno' found, there were others that required finding. Dr. Wilderslowe's sermons had always been remarkable for the number of poetical and other quotations woven into the texture of them, and he was scrupulous in his accuracy to the last comma. It was delightful, he discovered, to have some one who could verify his quotations, and not think the small task burdensome; and from requiring this congenial service he soon came to require others. And Lady Anna ceased to find fault in earnest, since she saw plainly that the arrangement gave two people pleasure, and must certainly be profitable to one. How profitable it was hardly likely that she discerned in that dim beginning.

So it happened that, even before the advent of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Fairfax, Dorigen had come to spend a portion of each morning in the Vicar's study, with very frequently another hour before dinner in the evening. The Fairfaxes had accepted Lady Anna's invitation to stay at the Vicarage until they could decide upon a house and send for their furniture; but they had

declined to burden Lady Anna with the two children and the nurse. Mrs. Fairfax would bring a maid, if it would not be inconvenient.

It was evening when they came, and Dorigen was alone in the study, half-forgetful of the expected arrivals. The dressing-bell aroused her, and she went to put on her black silk dress in a kind of trepidation—she was so sure that Mrs. Fairfax would prove to be Mr. Salvain's cousin Ermine. That was how she always thought of her—as Michael's cousin. Once she had thought of writing to him, or to Joanna; but Lady Anna Wilderslowe had dissuaded her strongly from opening a correspondence which had not been required of her.

Lady Anna came into Dorigen's room before the latter had finished dressing.

'That is right, Dorna dear; make the most of yourself. It is requisite, I can tell you. Haven't you got a prettier fichu than that? And where is your coral necklace?'

'It is here; but tell me, please—*is it* my Mrs. Fairfax?'

'*Your* Mrs. Fairfax! Well, if you like to call her so, though I doubt whether she would appreciate the compliment, my dear. She admits the Thorsgrif relationship with considerable frigidity. Don't be be too ardent, my sweet one. I expect

you will have to put up with me for a friend a while longer.'

'Isn't she—well, isn't she genial?'

'Magnificently genial. I feel extinguished in my own house already.'

'And she is beautiful—as beautiful as the picture?'

'Not having seen the picture I must leave you to judge. But there's the dinner-bell. Come and be looked at!'

They went down together, Lady Anna in a grey silk dress, Dorigen in her black one, to find an effective little group already gathered about the drawing-room fire. Dr. Wilderslowe was there, and Mr. Fairfax; the latter a tall, thin, pale man, with fair hair, and a sad, wearied expression. But Dorigen saw no one save Mrs. Fairfax in that first moment. It was beyond all doubt the lady of the picture who sat there; but more impressive, more beautiful than any picture could ever be. She was leaning against the purple velvet of the antique sofa; a cloud of pale, silvery-green silk and creamy lace was all about her; her magnificent yellow hair was dressed so as to show her fine head and finer face to the utmost advantage.

It was an unspeakable face. In the first presence of it you felt an indefinable kind of

exaltation, as in the presence of power or genius. This might arise from its simple perfectness. The clear, well-shaped hazel eyes were not easy to read—not even on longer acquaintance. They seemed to command rather than to beseech; to impress by force of will rather than by force of gentler attractiveness. And yet the whole presence and bearing of the woman was beyond doubt full of a strange fascination.

'Lady Anna has been telling me that you know my cousins, the Salvains of Thorsgrif,' she said to Dorigen when they had taken their places in the dining-room. She bent forward graciously, as a princess might have done, and she spoke with an exquisitely finished utterance. Her voice was as pure and clear as her hazel eyes, and she spoke always as if the thing she said was of dramatic importance. She listened to Dorigen's reply with deliberate courtesy.

'Yes, I know them,' Dorigen said, blushing like the shy and untrained girl she was. 'I know them very well. Once I stayed there some weeks.'

'Ah, yes; I remember. My aunt told me; she told me, too, about that most romantic accident you had. You fell into the sea, did you not? and my cousin Michael rescued you, which

must have suited his *rôle* admirably. Dear, good, ungracious Michael! He would be quite my ideal of a knight—a knight of the old chivalrous days—if he could be trained to anything like knightly manners. But it is too late. Why, he must be getting quite elderly! Years ago he used to seem to me old enough to be my father.'

So the lady spoke on, as if for the mere pleasure of speaking, the mere delight of filling the room and enchaining the attention of others with her pure, perfect, musical intonation. Every syllable fell with a liquid, silvery grace, which made you feel that you had never listened to human speech in its finest perfection before. It was so very beautiful as to be almost wonderful.

All the evening Dorigen sat listening to it, for Mrs. Fairfax talked well, and on many topics. She had travelled; she had read; she had held stalls at fashionable bazaars; she had sung at charitable concerts; she had taken prominent parts in amateur theatricals, private and not private. She did not hesitate to admit that she liked excitement; that she lived hardly without it; and when she disclosed the fact that since their marriage her husband had held eight different curacies in five different dioceses, it was not

judging her harshly to suppose that the changes had not been due solely to his ill-health.

'Are you expecting to find Grancester a lively place?' Lady Anna asked, with an expression on her face and in her voice that amused Dorigen greatly.

'No, oh no!' said Ermengarde Fairfax. 'I think I may even say that I am prepared for the worst. But I am told that there are extenuating circumstances; mainly, sad to say, in the shape of moderate butcher's bills, and inexpensive education. But, oh dear! how I hate to think of it all!'

The knitting of the few fine lines about Mrs. Fairfax's classical forehead did not escape Lady Anna at this moment.

'How old are your children?' she asked rather brusquely. Mrs. Fairfax spoke of her afterward as having 'horrid manners.'

'Valerie, my eldest girl, is four; Zaré is not quite three. I long to show them to you.'

It was not long before Mrs. Fairfax had an opportunity of showing her two tiny, winsome girls to Lady Anna. They were charming little things, with loving, unaffected ways, and eyes that looked up at you with wistful, tender gleams, which reminded you of their weary-looking father rather than of their bright, beautiful

mother. And they were dressed with perfection of taste. Their little sienna-brown velvet dresses fell to their feet, and were made loosely, so that they could be tied at the waist with satin sashes of a darker shade. Their wide-brimmed velvet hats were of the same dark, rich tint, but were relieved with large feathers of a varied tone, falling over the upturned side of the brim, after the manner of a picture by Rembrandt. On their hands they wore tiny mittens of brown silk, and on their feet little shoes of soft, brown morocco leather.

'Really, in these costumes, they ought never to be seen anywhere but in a room with an orange-coloured dado,' Ermengarde said when some word had been spoken about the pretty dresses. But she had not ventured on an orange dado for her drawing-room, having regard to her own fair hair, and love of tertiary shades in dress. No room of the common-looking house on the Grancester Road had been fitted up without due regard to its æsthetic harmoniousness with the appearance of its mistress.

It was some time before it could be said that the Fairfaxes were fairly settled in their new home; and Lady Anna was very good, very hospitable. In after-days she liked to remember that she had done all she could to make the

transition-time pleasant and agreeable for Herbert Fairfax.

'I cannot thank you,' he said wearily when they went away; and Lady Anna could honestly say that she desired no thanks. She approved so thoroughly of the new curate himself that nothing she could do to save him, or to serve him, seemed enough.

And after that things began to move on at St. Dunstan's Vicarage in quite the old way again—a smooth, bright, placid way it was for Dorigen Gower. It seemed to her that if it had not been for her father's letters she might almost have forgotten, as the time went on, that she had ever had any other home. The thought that she might one day have to leave it used to come like a sharp spasm of pain.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEEDTIME.

'Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought;
And then! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

IMAGINE, then, the passing on of two years, with no more important changes than six weeks at some southern sea-side place in the summer, or a month among the Malvern hills in the autumn. Once, indeed, they went for a few weeks to London—Lady Anna and Dorigen. Bertie was left at home with his grandfather.

They stayed with Mrs. Dallrivers, an elderly yet active-minded aunt of Lady Anna's, who had previously spent a few weeks at St. Dunstan's.

The time was made as pleasant as possible for the girl, to whom London, with all its myriad sights and sounds, had been as a far-off vision, not likely ever to become reality. It was in no way like her vision. Some things were disappointing, some far beyond her brightest and most vivid imagination. The music was the greatest revelation of all, next came the picture-galleries.

'Ah!' Mrs. Dallrivers said one day at the National Gallery, 'we ought to have had your brother-in-law here, Anna. He knows all about these old Italian masters, I suppose. I was told the other day that he was quite as likely to turn out an art critic as an artist.'

'Quite as likely, I should think,' replied Lady Anna, prefacing her remark with a little laugh, which Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe had hardly cared to hear.

'Where is he now?' asked Mrs. Dallrivers.

'Gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca,' was the more or less conjectural reply.

Lady Anna understood very little of painting herself, so that all guidance and explanation fell to Mrs. Dallrivers, who had too many strong personal likes and dislikes to be a good guide to the pictures of the day. Yet the information she gave was very valuable. Dorigen could

feel the scales falling from her eyes as they went from gallery to gallery, and from modern pictures to ancient ones. The beautiful little gallery at Dulwich was not forgotten; and Mrs. Dallrivers was Englishwoman enough to be proud of the fact that no collection in Europe could boast of a finer gathering of Cuyps. And Cuyp was one of her favourite masters. She loved his glowing noonday haze, his warm-toned evening clouds, his sleepy cattle, his shepherds and his milkmaids; and she had the enthusiasm to impose some of her feelings for these and other good pictures upon the younger of her companions. Dorigen never forgot those days at Dulwich. They were the beginning of her love for graphic art.

And as it was in painting, so it was in music. She was glad in the bewilderment of new impressions to be swiftly directed to the best. Mrs. Dallrivers declared that she had not gone to so many concerts for years past, but she enjoyed going now all the same; and Lady Anna saw that she did, and was grateful.

But they neither of them saw all that was going on in the heart and brain of the girl they were doing their best to gratify. She was a little struck, a little troubled that they should take so much pains and care so little for expense

when she could not even thank them properly, or make them understand for a moment the full weight of the burden of good and gladness they were laying upon her heart.

When the time came she went back with Lady Anna to St. Dunstan's Vicarage with more of new life stirring in her mental veins than she was aware of then; but she was very well aware that almost for the first time in her existence a real, wide sense of the good and glory of living was hers. Her keen memory and vivid imagination enabled her to bring back every scene through which she had passed, to recall almost every picture she had especially cared for, to see before her every face that had attracted her, to hear again every voice that had had particular charm for her. The only thing that no power of hers would bring again was the deep and passionate impression that the best of the music she had heard had made upon her at the time, and this being the one thing she had desired above all others to retain, the inability came upon her like a loss for which she could find no compensation. It was as if she missed from her soul some influence, some companionship, which had raised her above herself while it was with her. Now that it was gone a certain lowness, a certain loneness was inevitable, and the haunting

desire grew to a pain which could hardly be comprehended.

It was difficult to express a stirring so mysterious in intelligible words; but Lady Anna was too watchful, too strongly drawn, and too deeply interested to be unsympathetic.

'You should hear good music, the best of music, every day if I could bring it to you or take you to it,' she said kindly one summer evening.

They were walking down at the bottom of the garden, where the old apple-trees overhung the path, and stretched out gaunt arms to the rose-bushes, and the great creamy-flowered syringas on the other side. All the air was still and sweet: a single bird-note rippled down from the tall elms in the paddock; the long clematis sprays, that the lightest breeze would have stirred, were motionless. It was an evening to remember for its very peace.

'We don't have enough of music, we solemn provincial English people,' Lady Anna went on. 'It is so different abroad. There is music everywhere; and the air seems brighter for it, and life lighter and easier. There are some natures which seem to want it specially, as others seem to have special need of tenderness. . . . I think sometimes that the one might compensate for

the absence of the other. What do you think, little one?'

'I don't know. They seem to belong to each other in some way,' Dorigen said in her slow, thoughtful manner. Then a quotation flashed out quickly: '"If music be the food of love, play on."'

'Ah, but true love doesn't need aliment of that kind,' said Lady Anna with a slight sigh; and then there was a silence, while her thought went backward, and outward, and forward. Had she lived her life? Had she loved her love? Sometimes Dorigen wondered over these things; but Lady Anna gave no sign. She seldom spoke of her absent husband, but she spoke quite easily and unrestrainedly when there was aught to be said. And the correspondence that was kept up was both full and regular. So much all the world knew; and it may be that there was nothing more to be known. Lady Anna seemed happy enough, and people construed her happiness according to their own nature or the passing mood of the moment. Not the crudest slanderer dared to suggest that all was not well.

Yes, she was happy enough, and she had enough of vitality to keep her own life and other lives going with sufficient activity of movement

to prevent any touch of the heaviness and gloom that must come always with stagnation. Hardly a day passed but some small turn of circumstance was raised to the dignity and standing of an event; hardly a letter came that was not made to seem a vivid chapter of human history; hardly a visitor made his or her appearance at the Rectory without having his or her character thrown into strong relief by a few almost Shakespearean touches of criticism. Dorigen's admiration was often drawn out to the uttermost, proving the aphorism that we always admire most what most we lack; and no one could have taught her better than Lady Anna that she lacked the peculiar instinct and perception which goes to the quick and keen appreciation of character. What talent she might ever have of that kind she would have to buy, and often to pay for it by long and sharp pain, as happens to most of us if we have not the gift by nature.

One morning of that fine summer Lady Anna had quite a pile of letters lying beside her plate on the breakfast-table. One was from India; this was read first, and passed on to Dr. Wilderslowe immediately, with a few bright words of satisfaction. Another was from Milan, from Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe, who was writing a libretto

for an opera, to be composed by a young musical friend of his, an Italian, who, without doubt, would prove himself a second Paisiello. A third letter was read silently, but with smiles and little flushes and restrained glances, that Dorigen could not but perceive were intended in the first instance for her. But nothing was said till after breakfast, then Lady Anna turned to Dr. Wilderslowe.

'I can't spare Dorna to-day, father,' she said, with a certain quickness of pleasure in her tone. 'We are going to drive into Grancester, and may not be back till after luncheon.'

'That seems as if shopping were intended,' said the old man, with a kind smile. 'Well, I hope it won't be too hot, and that you will not tire yourselves. It must be dreary work, I should say.'

'It is more than dreary; but it has to be done. If you will come out on the terrace I will explain. . . . Dorna, go and make the most of yourself—the new hat, of course, and the grey costume ; and try to look a little less resigned, if you can.'

The explanation Lady Anna had promised was soon made. The letter which had wrought all this stir was from Mrs. Stanmere, a lady who had stayed for over a fortnight at St. Dunstan's

during the preceding autumn. She was an old friend of Lady Anna's, and of about the same age ; but her lot in life had been very different. She was a widow now, and childless ; and her wealth was hardly compensation for these negations.

Her home, Stanmere Grange, was about fifty miles distant from Grancester, but it was still within the boundaries of the West Riding, and not more than five or six miles distant from Kirk-Leighton. The letter was to remind Lady Anna that the triennial musical festival was to be held at Kirk-Leighton in the autumn, and that she had half-promised to come. Greatly to the little lady's satisfaction, Mrs. Stanmere had included Dorigen in the invitation.

'Bring your friend,' said the mistress of Stanmere Grange. 'She will be company for you on the journey, and I shall like to see her enjoying herself in her own remarkably quiet way. I have just had the three younger Miss Rushleighs staying with me, so you will perceive why I have a fancy for having the quietest guests I can think of for the festival. . . . It is, perhaps, only fair to tell you that people are already making unusual efforts in the way of dress. The festival is to be presided over by a royal prince and his bride ; and there seems to be an

intention to make things as gay as possible. I only tell you this as a matter of conscience. People who don't dress at all will be there by the hundred, so that you may consult your own inclination. You know what I shall wear.'

'There are six weeks yet,' said Lady Anna eagerly, folding the letter as she spoke. 'But Grancester people are so slow; and we shall want at least eight new dresses each. There are to be seven performances, and we can't appear twice in the same dress. Besides that, we must each of us have a decent gown to travel in.'

'I see,' said Dr. Wilderslowe, evidently not seeing at all. Then he rubbed his hands gently together, as he was apt to do when he was pleased, and his beautiful, placid, yet sensitive mouth relaxed into a smile. 'I am glad Mrs. Stanmere has thought of Miss Gower,' he said; 'I am very glad. . . . Do you think, Anna, you could manage that the new gowns should be my gift without her knowledge?'

'I can manage anything,' said the little lady, turning impulsively, and standing on tiptoe to give the old man a kiss of gratitude. 'And they shall be the prettiest dresses ever made in Grancester.'

CHAPTER XV.

'BY A GIFT GOD GRANTS ME NOW AND THEN.'

'Yet, is it possible that that inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich, yet so simple; so intricate, yet so regulated; so various, yet so majestic, should be a mere sound, which is gone, and perishes? Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be.'

CARDINAL NEWMAN.

IT is not too much to say that the great Yorkshire musical festival has a European reputation. A distinguished Continental composer who died not long ago had written an important work before he died, and his one strong desire concerning it was that it should be made known to England through the medium of the Kirk-Leighton Choir. Had he heard those wonderful voices? Had he marvelled over the fact that difficulty

seems not to exist for them? Had he listened, spell-bound, to the ease and lightness, the roundness and fulness, the purity and spontaneity with which the most intricate and impossible seeming passages are rendered? To have listened but once is to have had a priceless experience.

The opening day of the festival was not, strictly speaking, a fine day. The sun's face was hidden, and the world was grey, a dark and unmitigated grey, at Kirk-Leighton; but no one cared except for the impression that might be made upon the Prince and Princess. It does not need sunshine to enable you to enjoy music. The soul's sense, as touched by hearing, is not hindered by cloudy weather. The world into which you are lifted is above the clouds.

The Town Hall was already filling fast when Mrs. Stanmere's carriage stopped by the awning that went almost round the building. The surrounding streets seemed one dark sea of heads. Gaily-dressed people were going up the steps; plants and flowers were ranged against the walls; in the wide vestibule lamps were burning; expectation that was almost excitement was in the air; it had been in the air for weeks past, and now almost every face seemed to have a quiet, yet radiant content, as if to be so near to an anticipated delight were sufficiently satisfying.

Inside the hall the scene was more brilliant, more impressive still. Even in London Dorigen had never made one of a multitude so vast, so evidently moved by one enthusiasm—an enthusiasm suppressed as yet, but present, as a kind of latent electricity, awaiting the touch that should turn it to fire. For a long time the girl had no eye except for what was going on in the immense orchestra, where over four hundred people were ranged, row above row. The musicians were in the centre; there was a busy tuning of violins, the organ-note was sounding for their guidance; then, after a brief pause, a deafening burst of applause broke upon the place as the conductor made his appearance upon the platform, bowing his way to as proud a throne as a man need care to occupy. The enthusiasm in the orchestra was wonderful to note, and even while you thought it was subsiding it burst forth again with even less of measure in its fervidness than before. The audience turned as one: the Prince was there, in front of the gallery, looking quiet, dignified, unassuming; the Prince's bride was smiling shyly over her big bouquet, and was evidently moved by the fervour of the Yorkshire greeting, which seemed as if it could hardly be stayed. The moment was one not to be forgotten, and the singing of the

National Anthem by the whole of that grand choir was a fitting climax to it. . . . It was difficult to realize that all this was but the beginning of things.

There was only a brief interval while people reseated themselves. Mrs. Stanmere and her little party were in the body of the hall, and well in front. The lady herself looked pink and pretty in her black silk dress and lavender bonnet; Lady Anna Wilderslowe wore a dark violet-coloured silk costume, and a bonnet of creamy lace and feathers. She was a little excited, and very much alive to all that was passing; she was seated between Mrs. Stanmere and Dorigen. Presently the widow bent forward—

'Would Miss Gower care for my fan?' she whispered. 'I see she hasn't brought one, and she is looking very pale. Does she ever faint?'

'No, she doesn't,' said Lady Anna sharply, and looking up at Dorigen as she spoke. 'And she'd better not think of it, not at present. It is an accomplishment she can acquire later. Take the fan, Dorna dear, and give it back to Mrs. Stanmere as soon as possible. It doesn't match your dress, and I don't want to have my teeth set on edge this morning.'

Dorigen took the fan and smiled reassuringly.

'Be at peace about me,' she whispered.

That was all she could say. Apart from the music she was strangely impressed, almost weighed upon by the close presence of so vast a congregation of human beings. It seemed as if this of itself were a strong and exciting influence.

But now the trombones were announcing in solemn, deep-mouthed tones that the 'Elijah' had begun, and presently tones more sad and solemn still awoke a new sense of pain, of impending calamity. A sensitive listener quivers as under a presentiment as the anguish deepens, and when the sudden desperate cry of the voices of the chorus goes up to heaven for help, one is impelled, almost overpoweringly, to kneel and pray with them and for them, so real, so deep is the effect of that most impressive music when impressively rendered.

A recent biographer has said, 'The "Elijah" destroyed Mendelssohn.' It is quite conceivable that Mendelssohn knew it, and was content. He would have been more content still if he could have known how often his pure and elevating music comes stealing across the worn, and tired, and world-wearied spirit, bringing with it the comforting words to which it is wedded for all time. Your very soul sinks under its burden, and you would fain lie down and make no more effort to bear. But listen! You heard voices

once, you hear the echo of them now, and these are the words the voices sing:

'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.'

Listen again:

'He that shall endure *unto the end*, the same shall be saved.'

And yet again lift up your weary head. There is one voice alone now, and its tones plead with you, and they pierce you through. Unknowingly you yield yourself to its divine influence with the feeling that you are yielding yourself for evermore.

'O, rest in the Lord,' entreats this one compassionate voice; 'wait patiently for Him. Wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire.'

Long after that day, in strangely diverse scenes, in strangely contrasted moods, Dorigen Gower heard that beseeching voice and was comforted. . . . Through the arches of St. Hild's Abbey it came; from the bleak, barren moorland it came; from the wild wide sea it came—pleading always. 'O, rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him, wait patiently for him;' and patient waiting was at least made possible.

There was an interval between the two parts of the oratorio. Most of the people went out to the vestibule, or to the luncheon-rooms, but Mrs. Stanmere and Lady Anna decided to remain

where they were, and eat of their biscuit, and drink of their flask of wine and water in the comparative solitude of the empty hall. Dorigen acquiesced in the arrangement as a matter of course.

'It is of no use asking her,' said Lady Anna, in her usual half-satirical tone.

Others used to wonder that the girl bore it so quietly and patiently, but, truth to say, she understood it so well that there was nothing to be borne. She would have missed the tone of badinage with something more than regret, and any change must have had the significant touch of 'enforced ceremony.'

'It is of no use asking her,' said the little lady to Mrs. Stanmere. 'She always agrees in small matters, and reserves the strength of her will that she may be "great on great occasions."'

An understanding smile passed between Mrs. Stanmere and her younger guest, but the widow had penetration enough to see that Dorigen's smile and glance betokened some absence of mind or preoccupation; more than this she did not see. She might have been amazed if some magic mirror could have shown her the pictures that were passing through the girl's brain.

It is said that a drowning man will see his past life in a single flash, as one sees a wide campaign when the lightning pierces the midnight darkness.

There are some upon whom any moment of high and keen excitement will have the same effect. It would seem as if for these it only needed that the brain power should be as it were electrified, and so strengthened and exalted by strong emotion. Sometimes such a moment is as the foreshadowing of what the power of the spiritual and intellectual faculties may be when

> 'From the burden of the flesh,
> And from care and fear released.'

Dorigen's abstraction really amounted to a kind of momentary trance. Though she sat there in the splendid Town Hall at Kirk-Leighton, with the empty seats all round her, and the empty orchestra before her, she saw none of these things. Instead, there passed swiftly before her mental vision the quiet, unnoticed life of a quiet, unnoticeable child, a life lived out by the harbour-side at Hild's Haven, surrounded by influences of the homeliest, acquainted with poverty, and need, and sore struggle, and sad uncomplaining sorrows of many kinds. It was not Lady Anna Wilderslowe and Mrs. Stanmere, of Stanmere Grange, who were there beside her, but old Than Rountree, with his kind face and voice, and little Margery Laverock, with her beautiful eyes, her rich clear colour, her dreamy, pathetic mouth. No face was missing, no sound that had been wont to come from the wharf, or

the dockyards, or from the watery highway, failed to help in the illusion of the present moment. The very whirr of the jet wheels in her father's shop was in her ears, and the exact burr and harshness of Mr. Nendick's voice. She could see him plainly, as if in actual fact he snatched her carefully-folded parcels and tore them apart, and flung them back with words that were worse to bear than curses would have been. But all that ended suddenly, and a tall, strong, protecting figure, with compassionate eyes, and pity that was akin to love in his voice, and strength of heart and will and intellect written on every feature of his grandly rugged face—this man came between, and stayed in her vision, and did not depart through all that followed. Through all that most vivid recalling of Thorsgrif he stayed, through that terrible storm he stayed, and through the desolation that followed after the storm he stayed. And his face lived before her, his voice spoke constrainingly, his eyes looked into hers sadly and yet beseechingly. It was as if he stood before her now as he had stood on that last day in the Gill at Thorsgrif, when he had said, speaking as one surprised into saying a thing long hidden:

"I shall wait, and I shall wait with such a hope in my waiting as my life has never had in it before, never . . . never!' Then, after a little

while, a kind of awakening had come upon him, and he had added: 'But what am I saying? my child, what am I saying? . . . You are free—free as the air above you. . . . And we are friends. . . . Friendship is very precious.'

Though all this had happened three years ago, and though these three years had been full of new and varied experience, yet the time was annihilated. That is the curse and the blessing of a vivid memory, that it annihilates the years, and reproduces the pictures of the past with the sharp outline and crisp touch of work that left the great studio of life but yesterday.

She never doubted but that Michael Salvain's memory would be as vivid as her own. His silence had nothing strange in it. She had expected nothing else but silence; and yet as she sat there her heart was filled with yearning for a word, for a glance. It was as if the exaltation wrought by the potent power and influence of the music included her whole nature, deepening every desire, intensifying every hope. The quiet, certain, satisfied love that was in her heart, that had lain there, still and firm and true as only the highest love can lie, was stirred and vivified, and moved strangely to yearn for some fresh sign of recognition. 'Let me go,' was her desire. 'Let me go to him; let me hear him speak; let me see his eyes looking into mine;

let me feel once more the strength and the sufficiency of that tie which is between us, and which can never be broken. . . . Let me go!'

The vision had shown the past, it had brought life down to the present, and now inevitably it passed on to the future, finding nothing but perplexities there, and widely-yawning contradictions. Was it always so? Did it often happen that a woman's heart drew her whole being one way, while inexplicable desire for some other, some less definite, and in all probability less satisfactory life, drew her whole soul another way? Was this other way a higher way? Beyond all doubt it seemed so to her, then if not always, and she was one who might never undisturbed, unarrested, turn deliberately into a broader or lower road, while any certain signpost stood at the entrance to a narrower one. She might deviate, but she would suffer for it; her suffering would be at least as certain as her sin.

It might have been thought that temptation was far enough away at that moment, but in truth it was never very far away, and just now it came with all the force with which we sometimes anticipate a trouble that seems certain to come sooner or later. If such a trouble in the distance has haunted us for long, we are sure to have known moments wherein the desire to go out

and hasten it, and have done with it at any cost, has come upon us with an almost overmastering power. In one sense such a moment had come to Dorigen now, confusing her with confusions that might never arrive, making instant decisions seem imperative on points she might never have to decide. Darker the future grew, and darker, wider the contradictions yawned, sadder seemed the probabilities, the negations, the losses, the contentions . . . Then again the vision changed, and swiftly.

Dorigen had hardly noticed that the hall was full again, that the members of the orchestra were in their places, the bâton in the hand of the conductor, who waited only for a sign from the royal gallery. The sign was promptly given: a piercing, exulting soprano voice broke thrillingly across the silence with words of hope, and comfort, and assurance. Then, after a moment's pause, the whole of the mighty chorus took up the strain, and burst as it were upon the ear with the rushing, impetuous, triumphant cry—

'Be not afraid, saith God the Lord. Be not afraid; thy help is near. God—the Lord thy God—saith unto thee, "Be not afraid."'

It was as if you heard the shout and song of those whose singing goes up between the seven lamps of fire that are before the throne of God.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE UNEXPECTED.

'There's something tells me (but it is not love) I would not lose you.' *Merchant of Venice.*

'WELL?' said Mrs. Stanmere interrogatingly, looking with her kind eyes into the girl's bright yet tranquil face. 'I see you have been happy. I think you look better now than you did in the morning.'

'I am better,' Dorigen replied, and Lady Anna uttered a dry little 'Glad to hear it,' which a bystander might have thought was not meant to be taken literally. There were a good many bystanders in the dark crimson shade of the vestibule. Some waited there for their carriages, as Mrs. Stanmere was doing; others had their friends to meet, and greet and exchange satisfactions with. Everybody was glad, radiant, genial; almost everybody was well-dressed; a few looked like poems in colour.

'There is a young girl there whom I know,' said Mrs. Stanmere. 'Linda St. Maur. Isn't she beautiful? I always call her the Greuze. She is so like a picture in the Pinakothek at Munich. . . . And who is the gentleman near her, I wonder? He seems to be staring very earnestly at Miss Gower. Surely I have seen his face somewhere before? . . . Of course I have. . . . Why, Anna, do you see?'

'Yes, my dear, I see,' said Lady Anna slowly. She was looking intently and with greatly surprised eyes in the same direction as Mrs. Stanmere, and her colour was gathering and deepening on her face in a way that it very seldom did. What was it all about? Dorigen wondered. And who was the tall, slight, elegantly impressive young man who was coming forward with such studied yet careless grace, restraining a smile as he came, holding out a long arm with something dramatic in the gesture? He was the first to speak. 'How do you do, Anna?' he said in clear, languid, cultivated tones, and speaking as if he had parted from Lady Anna but last week. There was no surprise in his manner; no particular satisfaction was evident.

'I am quite well,' Lady Anna replied, speaking in a tone that was very obviously meant to be a satire upon his own. 'You have met Mrs.

Stanmere before, I think? Dorna, allow me to introduce my husband's brother, Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe—Miss Gower. . . . And now favour us with an explanation, my good sir.'

'There is nothing to be explained, Anna dear.'

'Not when I meet you at Kirk-Leighton, expecting that you are receiving the ovations of an operatic audience at Milan?'

'Ah! If I am to answer your expectations, that is another matter. At least give me time.'

'If Anna will give you time, I will give you opportunity,' said Mrs. Stanmere readily. 'Will you come with us to the Grange, and have some dinner?—five o'clock dinner, let me say; nothing else is possible during the festival week. If you will come, perhaps we may have the privilege of your escort for the evening.'

'You are coming into Kirk-Leighton again this evening?'

'Certainly, and every evening and every morning this week. Think of it!—of our unprotectedness! And then in charity accept a bed at the Grange till the festival is over.'

'You see, Mrs. Stanmere is asking you out of pure selfishness,' interposed Lady Anna.

'Yes, I see. But I like people to be candid. Candour is the most impressive thing going. I am trying to cultivate it; you would hardly be-

lieve how much cultivation it requires, if it is to be finished and artistic, rather than crude—if it is to be attractively effective rather than brutal. There is a crudeness about some people's candour that makes you shiver like an east wind.'

'I hope mine was not of that kind,' said Mrs. Stanmere.

'It was not,' replied the young man gravely. Then he turned to look into the face of the tall pale girl, who had arrested his attention even before he had seen that she was with his sister and her friend. But perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that in the first instance it was her dress that had caught his artistic eye, which was a little wearied by so much positive colour. There was something refreshing to him in the soft pearl-grey cashmere costume, with its trimmings of velvet of a darker grey, and relieved only by a group of small pale coral-tinted feathers on the side of the grey velvet hat.

'And her things are not only the right colour, they are the right tones,' he said to himself with a sense of unusual satisfaction; for though the days of acknowledged æstheticism had not arrived, the Renaissance of the nineteenth century had certainly its prophets, and Lancelot Wilderslowe was one of them. He had been heard to avow unblushingly that he always felt an admiring friendliness toward any woman whose dress gave him pleasure.

Was it this admiring friendliness only that was in his intent look? Surely there was some surprise also, some perplexity!

Lady Anna saw it all; and she saw, too, that in all probability Dorigen had never in her life come so near to the possession of that which we call beauty as she did at that moment. Yet what is the indefinable, evasive, inapprehensible thing? Surely we might call it by half-a-dozen other names, and yet leave it undescribed, and indescribable. There are some women who are only beautiful once for a brief hour in their whole long lifetime. You see it like a flash of sudden light, and then it disappears, and you wonder if any event will ever light up that dull and heavy face again. Others there are who are beautiful, and plain, and full of charm, and utterly uninteresting; in a word, everything by turns and nothing certain, and these are not the least fascinating. There is interest in only wondering, and waiting for the next phase.

On Dorigen Gower's face that day, and for many days, there was visible in unmistakable signs the influence of the exaltation wrought by the music—an influence effective for the dispelling of the natural and habitual taint of care. It seemed as if the life in her veins were moving more quickly, more gladly. A word, a glance,

brought the swift pink colour to a cheek that seemed to Lady Anna to be growing even rounder and fuller as she watched it, and a new expression dawned about the curved mouth, a new smile parted the coral lips. In that first moment Lancelot Wilderslowe turned to study the new face as he would have turned to study a new picture; but he did not arrive at a decision with his ordinary critical rapidity. It seemed to him as if he saw only a pair of dark blue-black eyes looking into his with a certain seriousness, a certain wistfulness. 'They are sea-blue eyes,' he said to himself; 'not sky-blue, but the deep, dark blue of the sea when the sun is down, and when one is drawn to watch it for the mystery that is there.'

Quite to himself he said all this, and more. To Lady Anna, as they moved toward the carriage, he said, in that impressively languid manner of his which seemed so much like affectation:

'What a lovely toilette that is of Miss Gower's! I shall remember those tones as long as I remember anything.'

'Oh! haven't you *yet* got beyond that sort of thing?' said Lady Anna, with a delicately derisive smile and some impatience in her tone.

'Let me cease to exist before I get beyond it,' was the almost irritating reply.

Mrs. Stanmere's invitation had been graciously

accepted, and the arrangement was convenient and satisfactory to all concerned. The mistress of Stanmere Grange was really glad to have the young man staying in the house. It was some three or four years since she had seen him, but she discerned at once that he was the same courteous, cultured, ready-witted, half-incomprehensible individual he had always been ; but she knew well enough that his character was not one to be summed up in any half-dozen epithets. He perplexed her, as he did most people ; but he also amused her, and she willingly accepted Lady Anna's assurance that he 'was less of a fool than he tried to seem.' Indeed, her own insight served her sufficiently well on this head.

He was in truth very much what he had been four years before ; and yet there were changes. Lady Anna perceived to her satisfaction that her brother-in-law was handsomer, more impressive than he had been. She had always felt toward him a certain amount of sisterly affection ; she had taken a deep interest in him, and in his doings, as he knew ; and therefore she had no motive for restraining her very natural pride in the somewhat distinguished-looking young man who took Mrs. Stanmere's place at the dinner-table with as much grace and ease as if he had presided there daily for years past.

Yes, certainly he was handsomer. There was more colour in the abundant yellow-red hair, which curved thickly on either side of the broad and high brow; his hazel-grey eyes seemed softer and deeper; the outline of the face was finer, more expressive of thought, even of capacity for suffering, if you cared to see it so. It was a face not without its contradictions, not without its sudden surprises, its suggestions of capability for higher things than had yet been made manifest.

A small dinner-party in a house where everything seems to go right of itself is a good opportunity for improving an acquaintance. It is usually a genial moment; and there are men whose brain seems to free itself as instinctively under the lamplight of the dinner-table, as under the sunlight that is by the sea, or among the hilltop heather. The faculties undergo a thawing process; and you discern through the medium of his own speech that your friend has more of human affinity than you had credited him with possessing.

It was a pretty room, prettier than such rooms were apt to be in those days. Who cared to invest a dining-room with charm? Yet there was certainly a charm about Mrs. Stanmere's dining-room that evening. It was lighted only

with candles, wax candles in pairs on carved oak brackets all about the room, and each one was shaded with a pale rose-pink shade, which softened and beautified a light that yet has nothing equal to it. The very flowers on the tables seemed lovelier for the mingled gleam and shadow in which they stood; and to make the hour pleasanter some strains of music came from the lawn, so soft and subdued as not to interfere with the conversation. It was only one of those small travelling bands, composed of harp and voice and violin; but the sound of it broke across the lights and the flowers and the friendly human faces and voices like the delicate and unobtrusive background which affords relief to a picture without claiming attention for itself. Yet the picture is better for the background always.

It was only 'Home, Sweet Home' the voice was singing. How tired we all are of it! How we affect to despise its banalities! And yet, how we listen and linger, and sometimes keep silence, though it be only a band on the lawn in the twilight.

'That is for you, Lance,' said Lady Anna. 'It is an attempt to make you confess that you are glad to be at Stanmere Grange rather than at Milan.'

'I am very glad to be at Stanmere Grange,' said the young man, looking up suddenly, and almost unintentionally, at Dorigen as he spoke. She was looking better than ever, he thought, in her evening dress of white cashmere, with a double band of pale pink velvet in Greek fashion across her dark head. She blushed as she caught the glance; and Lady Anna, who was sitting opposite, saw the blush, and shrugged her shoulders in the prêtty French way she had; and murmured something between the ferns and geraniums which sounded curiously like '*éprise*.' How wicked she could be when she liked! and how often she did like! And most of all, she liked to be a little mischievous when things went her way, and satisfied her. This evening she was more than satisfied.

'I am very glad indeed that you are at Stanmere,' said the hostess to Mr. Wilderslowe, not seeing, or not seeming to see, more than was meant for her vision. 'But you have not yet told us what brought you so unexpectedly to Kirk-Leighton?'

'The same attraction which has brought half the world here,' said Lancelot. 'I came on account of the music. I was in the North of France; and a friend was coming over, it is true; but it is quite possible that I should have come on alone.'

'I think you will not repent of having come,' Lady Anna said.

'I shall not repent if I hear no more than I have heard already. This morning's performance was worth all the trouble. . . . I need not ask you if you enjoyed it, Miss Gower?'

'I should hardly know what answer to make to the question if you did,' said Dorigen gravely. 'It had not occurred to me to call it enjoyment. And yet I suppose it was.'

'Enjoyment, and something more.'

'Much more. I think music makes one feel as if one lived one's ordinary life mutely; as if common speech was no more than speech with the tips of one's fingers. It says so little; it leaves so much unsaid.'

'Ah, I agree with you there,' said Lancelot, putting aside his languid, half-affected manner almost for the first time. 'I agree with you there. Music makes one feel, as nothing else does, the *inaccessibleness* of a human soul. So far from reaching your thought, I cannot reach my own. There is more in it than I know till music reaches it for me; and expresses it for me, as I shall never express it for myself in this world.'

'But the music makes you know and feel afresh that *it is there*, that inner and higher self

which you know so little about. It gives one, as it were, a something within one's self, and yet above one's self, to aim at.'

'Yes,' said Lancelot; 'and there is no saying what new side or phase of that higher self the next chorus or aria you hear shall touch and unfold. It is that unlocking and unfolding power which makes music so valuable to the poet, the artist, the man of thought.'

'Ah! now I understand,' Lady Anna broke in mockingly. 'Another poetic wave is rolling over you, or about to roll. You are feeling the premonitory symptoms; and you think the music will help in its development. What is to become of the poor art-wave? What does become of all those great waves that sweep over you? I suppose they go back to the sea from whence they came. . . . What is the new poem to be called? What is it to be about? And who is to be your publisher? And when precisely may we begin to hope for an early copy? Oh, do, Lance dear, exhibit some of that candour you spoke of so admiringly this morning!'

Serious conversation was done with for that hour; but though so little of it had passed, that little had served to withdraw one corner of the veil that was between two of the people who had spoken.

Dorigen felt that another thread had been interwoven with that manifold and already somewhat complex life of hers ; and the evening seemed fuller than the full morning had been. Her appreciation of the music was keener for the fact that another, an equally keen and more understanding sympathy, was flowing and running over by the side of her own. Lancelot's comments half surprised her, they were so full of technical and critical knowledge, and there was nothing of display in his manner of talking. He had the instinct which makes it a matter of pleasure to impart any special information to a receptive listener ; and Dorigen was at least receptive.

The first part of the evening's performance was Beethoven's Mass in D; a composition that in all its massive grandeur would have been but little intelligible to her but for the side-lights with which Lancelot illuminated the music when he had the chance.

'And think of it,' he said when the interval came, and people began pouring out of the hall into the cooler vestibule. The scene had been prettier than ever this evening, the lights brighter, the dresses gayer. The chorus-singers looked charming in their costumes—cream and scarlet for the contraltos, cream and pale blue for the

sopranos. They, too, were going out from the orchestra as Lancelot began again to speak.

'Think of it,' he said, 'of a colossal genius like Beethoven composing such a work as that, and all the while being worried to death by the smallest and pettiest of domestic worries! He spent about two years in the composition of the Mass, intending it to be performed when his friend, the Archduke Rudolf, was installed Archbishop of Olmutz; but, in spite of his efforts, he could not finish it in time. "Never before or since," said his biographer, Schindler, "have I seen Beethoven in such a state of absolute abstraction from the world." Yet all the while he was storming the heavens, so to speak, earth was pulling him downward in the most miserable manner. His journal of the time is pitiful.

'"April 17th. The kitchen-maid came. A bad day.

'"May 16th. Gave warning to the kitchen-maid.

'"May 19th. The kitchen-maid left.

'"May 30th. The woman came.

'"July 1st. The kitchen-maid arrived.

'"July 28th. At night the kitchen-maid ran away."

'And so it goes on, giving even more painful details of wrangling and haggling and storming

at servant-maids, until one wonders that it should ever have been possible to him to keep his mind in the solemnness and exaltation needful for such work even for one hour.'

'Think of it,' Lancelot had said, and Dorigen did think of it, then and long after, when she was far enough away from the Town Hall at Kirk-Leighton.

That evening passed on, and the week passed on, in delight, in acquirement, in rapid growth of outlook. There was no day but was a memorable day, and held enough for a year of slower living. The hours went swiftly, and it seemed as if their mere swiftness of movement drew events into the atmosphere of them.

There are periods of life when every glance is an event, when every word compels depth of listening and admiration as by influence of magic; the commonest experience of life is passed through with an earnestness that might become passionate with a little more development.

And the 'little more' waits ready—always ready—and the least of circumstances shall compel its aid while life is being lived at its flood-tide. The smallest movement, the least accession of rapidity shall produce results you have not calculated upon, and the very next day that shall break upon you shall astonish you with its power for evil or for good.

CHAPTER XVII.

'MEANTIME WORSE FATES THAN A LOVER'S FATE.'

'Never was ther garden of swiche pris,
But if it were the veray Paradis.
The odour of floures and the freshe sight
Wold han ymaked any herte light
That ever was born.'

CHAUCER.

IT is the mark of the one true love of a life, that it abides permanently.

It does not touch you only now when the music sounds, now when the flowers come, now when the children laugh; it is with you always, and underlies the meanest event as the greatest.

That a woman should prefer to wear this dress rather than that, is a perception and a concession; though there be no one present to appreciate the fineness. No one *present*, we say, knowing that bodily presence is so little in a true human love. It is the spiritual presence that suffices.

It was thought of Michael Salvain that was in Dorigen's mind when she put on her evening dress of pale primrose-coloured cashmere, and fastened the knot of pansies in her purple velvet girdle. It was not so long ago—no time or event that concerned *him* seemed far off in her mind—since she had wished, one evening, that her face had been such that he might have found it fair. She had been a child then; she was a woman now, and yet the old wish came, and lingered, and half-saddened her with the sadness of unsatisfied affection. It was not admiration she needed; mere admiration vexed her, and made her feel uncomfortable. This Lancelot Wilderslowe had been quick to perceive, and he kept his perception in mind for the most part; only now and then he trespassed a little. Yet they were good friends—wonderfully good, considering the recent date of their friendship.

A few days of gloom and sadness had fallen upon St. Dunstan's immediately after the Kirk-Leighton festival. Mr. Fairfax's frail health had given way suddenly one night; his wife's nerve and presence of mind had given way at the same time; and Lady Anna had tried to be as helpful as she could in a time of such great calamity. She had stayed with the Fairfaxes night and day till the end; and she was still greatly concerned for the prostrate widow and the two fatherless children.

So far as Lady Anna could perceive, Ermengarde Fairfax was utterly helpless and hopeless with regard to the future. During the two or three years they had been at Grancester they had managed to incur an appalling amount of debt; and Mr. Fairfax's friends had declared themselves either unable or unwilling to pay it. And yet Mrs. Fairfax's orders for mourning, both for herself and her children, were extensive and given without regard to cost. Certain things were necessary to her, to her own ideas of her position, and they must be had. Lady Anna was amazed, and compassionate, and perplexed, and indignant. And the mourning was good, and unspeakably becoming to Mrs. Fairfax. There were people who declared that she had never looked younger, more beautiful, more gracefully dignified than now.

This Lancelot Wilderslowe would not concede. 'Black is hateful,' he said with authority in his languid speech. 'A woman may in this unhappy country be *compelled* to wear black dresses; but surely no woman would ever do so of her own free will. . . . Miss Gower, I hope you don't like black?'

This was said with such an absurd earnestness that Dorigen could not refrain from laughing.

'No, I don't like it,' she said. 'I used to care

most for dark, quiet colours, but my taste is changing—it has changed. I like lightness and brightness. . . . But I think if I were unhappy I should instantly feel a wish for a black gown.'

'Then I hope you will find primrose cashmere permanently contenting,' he replied. 'I trust I shall never see you wearing black.'

These things were said with a meaning in his tone which did not escape Lady Anna; nor did a certain obtuseness on Dorigen's part escape her either. She wondered over the latter.

One evening—it was the last evening at Stanmere Grange—Mrs. Stanmere had thought it wise and right to utter a word of warning to her friend.

'Don't be alarmed,' she had said. 'I *may* be mistaken. But if ever I have seen a case of love at first sight, I am strongly under the impression that I have seen it this week.'

'I agree with your conclusions,' Lady Anna said quietly. 'But I am not sure that the love is mutual. I am greatly afraid it isn't.'

'Afraid!' ejaculated Mrs. Stanmere in amazement.

'Yes, afraid,' said Lady Anna. 'I know what you mean. I know what you are thinking. There is certainly the possibility that Lance might do better; but the truth is, every friend he has is afraid that he may do immeasurably

worse. I am surprised that he should have escaped so far. A beautiful face, if it belonged to a ballet-girl, would be as beautiful to him as if it belonged to a countess, and might lead him quite as far.'

'Then how do you account for the attraction in this instance? You don't consider Miss Gower beautiful?'

'No; she is not beautiful—she is not always pretty, but she is very often something more. Lance can see that something. I hope it will influence him.'

'And Dr. Wilderslowe?'

'Dr. Wilderslowe would be as glad as I should be. He has the highest opinion of Dorna; it has gone on growing ever since she came. She would soon be as a daughter to him. Indeed, she is almost that now.'

'Then success to your hope, my dear. I confess it has startled me.'

So far Mrs. Stanmere's good wish had certainly seemed to be in the way of fulfilment. The fact that Lady Anna had spent so much of her time at the Fairfaxes had inevitably had the result of throwing Dorigen and Lance very much more together than they might otherwise have been; and juxtaposition is potent, argue as we may.

It was more potent than Dorigen knew. She

was not alarmed for herself, nor greatly concerned in this instance. She was glad for the presence of the bright, absurd, cultured man, who had travelled half over Europe, who seemed to have read every book worth the reading, and to know something of almost every noted man worth the knowing. His power of description was very great indeed; his discernment not of the shallowest; and if in his appreciations he chose to assume a certain affected air of eccentricity, it was easily seen to be an assumption. Already Dorigen had learnt to smile at his half-foolish, half-feminine dissertations. They were not himself.

No, he had a truer self, a better self, a deeper self; and Dorigen was not slow to perceive it, not slow to appreciate it. It was a kind of tie between them, that each had depths only to be discerned by the other.

And each knew of the tie—one appraised it at its full value, the other gave it more than its value. This he did to his later sorrow.

But the time for sorrow had not come yet. Lancelot Wilderslowe had of late taken some pains to hide from the quick sight of his sister-in-law his belief that he had touched the crisis of his existence. He guarded the feeling as if he would guard it from himself. And yet he knew

he must betray it. He was anxious for the moment of betrayal with all the anxiety of utter uncertainty. He had not one look, not one word, to make him certain. And yet he hoped. Love is always hopeful. All best feelings are illuminated by hope.

This evening after dinner—a mild, moonlit October evening—he had no difficulty in persuading Dorigen to put on her cloak and hat and walk for awhile in the garden. There was nothing she enjoyed more than a saunter in the garden by moonlight; and Lady Anna was willing enough to accompany them. Lady Anna's foresight seldom failed her in small emergencies.

Have growing flowers ever quite the grace, the beauty, the mystery that they have when the moon is up? The shadowy outlines blend and are lost in the grey-green mystery of the foliage. The vague loveliness that is everywhere is full of promise, of suggestion. The leafy lines and curves and hollows seem as pictures, which you cannot discern clearly for the veil of night which is between you and them. Everywhere your eye rests upon some perfect but unattainable scene. If the night be still and the place silent, a sense of rest, of something beyond rest, comes upon the soul and stays with it; and for that hour at least you believe that this painful earth may have

some foretaste of the painless peace beyond. It is pitiful that these foretastes should be for some of us so few.

Dorigen's one desire at that moment was to be alone with all the strange, mystic beauty that was about her everywhere. Late autumn though it was, some pale roses lingered on the sprays; the luxuriant clematis had still its silver-white tufts among the fading green; the air was scented with the drooping mignonette. Hollyhocks—pale pink, creamy white, and golden yellow—stood tall and still, and full of a quaint grace all their own. Here and there was a late poppy; here and there a sunflower stood with its wide, bent head, drooping because the sun had gone, and taking no delight in the presence of the wan white moon.

There were always sunflowers at St. Dunstan's in those days, with many other flowers not fashionable, or noticeable in any special way. North, the old gardener, sowed them with the poppies, because all his life he had sowed some 'flowers o' the sun.' And the small, dainty French poppies were Lady Anna's own flowers. She liked to watch them coming into bloom in early June, and going on blooming till October. Every morning she went out to see what new variety had displayed itself since dawn. Here

there would be a tender, delicate, white, crumpled, gauzy thing, with a black Maltese cross at the very heart of it; there another, with pale, lilac-tinted petals and dark, green-tipped anthers clustering in the bottom of it, making as fine a contrast as you would see. The tints of red were innumerable—rose-red, coral-red, ruby-red, carnation-red; pink, with edges of white; white, with edges of pink; and others shot, and charged, and veined with tints indescribable. There was no end to the perpetual newness of them; and in Lady Anna's eyes no flower had a greater grace and beauty. The soft downiness of the foliage, the delicate green of it, the fine form of it, were smaller attractions, but they had their weight. And then she liked to watch the life of them—the first unfolding, the throwing off of the outer shell, the shaking free of the petals, the dancing in the breezy sunshine, the swaying in the ruder wind. And how they bowed their heads and wept in the rain, and seemed as if they could never smile or dance again. And yet, when the rain was over, they would rise and rejoice as if no storm had ever beaten off a single petal, or bowed a single stalk. For Lady Anna's sake Dorigen learned to love the dainty French poppies.

A few yet lingered, and Lady Anna stopped near them for a moment.

'Are you in a poetical mood to-night, Lance?' she asked, with less of mockery in her tone than might have been expected from the question.

'Why do you ask?'

'Because if you are, I want you to write me a poem with my own flower for a text. An intelligible poem, if you please; not like your favourite Browning's poem to the sunflower.'

'You mean "Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli?"' asked Lancelot.

'Yes.'

'And is it not intelligible?'

'Not to so mean a capacity as mine. Do you understand it, Dorna?'

As usual, Dorigen did not answer immediately.

'I think I do,' she said presently. 'That is, I think I understand the meaning of the poem, but not the history there is in it. One could not know that unless one had heard it, or read it.'

'Precisely,' said Lancelot. 'That is where the difficulty of understanding half of Browning's poetry lies. To understand it as it ought to be understood, one should be as well read as Browning himself, and in the same direction. . . . Have you ever come across the story of Rudel?'

'No,' said Dorigen, wondering why and where

Lady Anna had gone. 'No, I have never met with it. Please tell it to me if you know it.'

'I feel as if I had always known it,' said Lancelot, stopping near the woven boughs of a tall weeping ash-tree. Before them there was a small flower-filled lawn, and beyond that a great expanse of tree-studded pasture-land. The distance was still and white in the misty moonlight; white and straight as the boundary of the sea.

'I feel as if I had always known the story,' he said. 'And yet I only came across it awhile ago in a little old French book which I picked up on one of the quays of Paris.

'I hope Rudel was a real person.'

'Why, may I ask, do you hope that?'

'Because reality is so much more interesting than fiction.'

'It is often much more startling, much more difficult to believe. This story of Rudel's, for instance, must make infinite demands upon the credulity of the matter of fact. And yet to me it is as easy of belief as my own experience.'

'Are you trying to make me impatient?'

'No, I should not attempt anything so difficult. And I hope it won't detract from your interest to know that the story happened a long while ago; in the twelfth century it was. The hero of it, Geoffroi Rudel, was a prince of the

house of Blaye, and also a troubadour; and the heroine, the Lady Melisanth, of Tripoli, was the wife of Bertrand of Toulouse, created Earl of Tripoli when Palestine was taken by the Crusaders. The old French historian says that Rudel's interest in the Lady Melisanth was first awakened by the glowing accounts which the pilgrims to the Holy Land brought back with them of the Countess's goodness and loveliness. He had never seen her. That is the wonder of the story, and the beauty of it, to my thinking. Rudel's imagination wrought the whole of the tragedy from beginning to end. He wrote songs to her; he delighted to hear of her; he spent his days in dreaming of her. No one who knows the story could think the words that Browning has put into Rudel's mouth an exaggerated expression of his feeling. One might fancy one heard the man's passionate cry:

> '"Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
> Across the waters to this twilight nook,
> The far sad waters. Angel, to this nook!"

'But this was only the beginning of things. Rudel could endure to worship in silence and in absence no longer. He put on a pilgrim's habit, and sailed for the Holy Land; his passion growing on the voyage to such an intensity that, just as he was about to disembark, he fell down

to all appearance dead, utterly overcome by the strength of his emotion. The old chronicler tells the tale very simply, and leaves you to infer that the object of Rudel's voyage was known to his fellow-travellers, who sympathized with it so far that they ran to tell the Lady Melisanth how the troubadour had died of his great love for her; and then they induced her to come and see the man whom love had slain. She consented; discovered that Rudel yet breathed; but her very kindness was to be fatal. The man came to himself, saw, and understood that at last he was in the presence of his Angel of the East, and then immediately died at her very feet, less of love than of love's too great joy, it would seem. . . . That is the story of "Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli."'

There was a long silence when the tale was done. Some light cloudlets swept across the moon, making, by moments at a time, the dim, sweet mystery of the garden to seem more mysterious still, as if in accord with the mystery of life and love that was moving in the hearts of these two.

Was love really like that—a thing so intense, so faithful, and so fateful?

Was it like that now in this nineteenth century? Did not such depth, and greatness, and fervidness

belong rather to the days of Romeo and Juliet, of Heloïse and Abelard, of Rudel and Melisanth?

Dorigen asked the question only of herself, and she answered it to herself in that wordless way in which we do our swiftest and most emotional thinking.

It was a face that passed before her by way of answer—a strong, true, thought-worn, rugged face, stamped with faithfulness and truth for evermore.

Love and love's passionate fervour of love belong to no century, let the conditions change as they may. Romeo and Heloïse advertise in the agony column of the morning papers. Rudel has his poems nicely printed, and artistically illustrated, and you may buy them at the station-bookstall for three-and-sixpence. Yet there is no need to decry the age for its lack of force:

> 'This live, throbbing age
> That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires,
> And spends more passion, more heroic heat,
> Between the mirrors of its drawing-rooms
> Than Roland with his knights at Roncesvalles.'

It was characteristic of Lancelot, as well as indicative of the emotion that possessed him, that he divined, almost unerringly, what was passing through Dorigen's brain in that full still silence.

'Are you wondering over Rudel's love?' he

asked in low earnest tones. 'Are you thinking that men do not love like that in these days?. . . . Don't be too sure,' he added after a brief pause, and with just a touch of tremulousness in his voice. 'Don't judge till you know—till you have given some one who loves you a chance of proving his love.'

Dorigen felt herself start as with a sudden shock of surprise. Did he know of her love for Michael Salvain? That was her first agitating and absorbing thought. But Lancelot was taking her hand in his, and drawing nearer to her; and he was speaking again in the same moving, tremulous way.

'Don't think that because we only met the other day, so to speak, that therefore I cannot know either my own mind or my own heart. Remember how much I had heard of you from Anna during the past two years. I had almost as much desire to see you latterly as Rudel had to see Melisanth; and the instant I did see you I felt something that was almost remorse for not having come home sooner. . . . No, don't interrupt me yet awhile. I think I know what you would say. You are taken by surprise. I feel it; and love is never won that way. Your love will never be easily won in any way; I feel that also. But give me the chance of trying to win

it—that is all I ask. I will wait, I will be patient; I will try, and it will take all the strength I have, but I will try ceaselessly to deserve your love—to be worthy of you. I have never in my whole life before felt my unworthiness as you have made me feel it. Give me a motive—the strongest earthly motive I can ever have for beginning at once to live my life at the highest level I may live it. You cannot refuse me this! I ask for no promise, no privilege, only for a permission—permission to hope. You will say that I may hope for the one good life can give me?'

Dorigen had had no chance of interrupting him. Her first impulse had been to confess openly and instantly that she loved another, but second thoughts closed her lips from confessing a love that would certainly be misunderstood. No word of it had passed the girl's lips, even to one who was so true and intimate a friend as Lady Anna. Instinctively she had felt that it would be disapproved, ridiculed, condemned. No, her lips had been sealed concerning her love for Michael Salvain before; and they were sealed now. Yet she would not part from Lancelot leaving him under a wrong impression.

'I must not do that,' she said, speaking as agitatedly as Lancelot himself had spoken. 'I

must not let you make a mistake. . . . I cannot let you think that I might some time care for you in that way. It would be wrong. It is impossible.'

She spoke briefly and brokenly; but her words carried a certain conviction with them. Lancelot stood very silently looking out over the shining, misty, moonlit distance.

'Impossible!' he said at last. 'At least tell me why you use so harsh a word as that?'

'I did not mean it to be harsh,' she said, feeling that there were a thousand things in her brain at that moment that must be left unsaid. Her safety was in utter silence. 'I did not mean to pain you in any way,' she added. 'Please believe that! Tell me you believe it!'

'I believe that you did not mean it,' he said slowly. 'But the pain remains. It is inadequate to speak of it as mere pain.'

He stood silent awhile, but not a long while. Suddenly, as it seemed, he roused himself from the despondency that had fallen upon him.

'I shall forget what you have said,' he began with quick resoluteness. 'I shall altogether forget it. All shall be as if I had never spoken, and you had never answered. . . . Let us go. . . . I will trust the future.'

So he spoke aloud. As they went up by the

garden pathway he spoke otherwise to himself. 'You shall yet answer me in another and a tenderer way than this,' he said. And late that night, when he spoke of his unsuccess to Lady Anna, she encouraged his determination. 'She likes you now,' said his sister; 'that is, the earnest side of you. Don't let her see so much of the other; and, above all, neither worry her nor weary her. And don't, on the other hand, fall into the mistake of affecting indifference. Be simply quiet as a brother would be, and kind, and strong, and helpful. She will grow to need you in her life; and the need will grow to love. She is not of the sort that chooses willingly to stand up against the world alone.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

'THAT FAST FRIEND SLEEPS.'

'Surely when light of Heaven makes all things plain
Love will grow plain with all its mysteries.'
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

TO have learnt to dread a long, fair time of peace is a sufficient sign that the iron has entered into your soul, and deeply.

But the dread is not learnt easily, nor soon. Through long pain and disappointment there is amazement, with an underlying belief that this sad experience is exceptional, and must pass, leaving you with a life yet to be lived on favourable terms. But the years change all that; and you come to welcome the little fair spaces and times of peace with a trembling in your gratitude. After so much storm the calm seems unnatural; and you learn to pray that there be nothing ominous in its brooding.

Dorigen was far from having learnt this sad lesson when that last winter's peace fell upon her at St. Dunstan's; falling so softly, so sweetly, so brightly, that the days passed as if each one were a graceful idyllic poem, or brief drama to be acted and spoken with all leisurely touches of beauty, all fair accessories that art or music might supply. The poetry that was in the atmosphere made the outer world seem crude and cold and undesirable. That Lancelot Wilderslowe was there, living out his love-poem rather than speaking it, or writing it, contributed greatly to the grace and depth of the time.

He was following Lady Anna's advice, and waiting with a faithful and emphatic patience. All he did or said had emphasis in it, love's own unmistakable emphasis—a thing to lift the commonest life above its commonness, and to lend a new beauty to a life not common at all. It is the loveless life that is low and mean. Having nothing to rise by, it falls inevitably.

Human love holds out its hands and lifts you a little way—nay, a long way. Then, often, it leaves you, and the Love that passes human love comes down and finds you in the dark.

Though Dorigen was thus living in an environment of love and friendship, and the finest

kindliness, her own deeper emotions were lying very still. Lancelot did not touch them, or move them. The one who alone might have touched them was not there.

But of late Dorigen had heard more of Thorsgrif and of Michael Salvain than she had done before. A strange thing had come to pass in the ending of the year, at least it seemed strange to the few who could comprehend the details lying behind.

It had all been brought about very suddenly. Some three months after Mr. Fairfax's death, Ermengarde Fairfax had found herself with her two young children in an absolute strait for the means of life; and in an agony of reluctance and distress she had accepted Mrs. Salvain's offer of a home for herself and her little ones. To go back to her aunt's house in the ravine at Thorsgrif was to go down with Fortune's wheel indeed! But there was no alternative; and the wheel might go up again, even though it revolved about the homestead of her cousin, the Alum-Master.

It was not possible that a woman still so young, so clever, so beautiful, should lose faith in her destiny. She still clung to the skirt of every chance to which she might cling by means of pen-and-ink and the daily post. She wrote

bright, full, one might almost say fascinating letters; always seeming to know exactly the kind of thing you would care to have said to you in every event of life that might come in your way. She never wearied you. To see her delicate, facile handwriting was to be able to make sure of a gratification.

She wrote regularly to Lady Anna Wilderslowe, though it must be confessed that her reward was often meagre; letter-writing was not among Lady Anna's gifts. But Mrs. Fairfax had a pretty and touching way of professing gratitude, and never even hinted at disappointment. The sole delight left her in life, she said, was to receive a letter from a friend, and at once sit down to answer it out of that fuller heart and brain we all of us possess in the first fresh moment after reading a letter that has given either pain or pleasure.

So it was that all manner of little scraps of news concerning Thorsgrif and Hild's Haven came to St. Dunstan's. Many of these were purposely intended for Dorigen, and brought back the old life, the old place, the old hopes and thoughts and wishes in a way that seemed wonderful at times; and now and then wrought a passionate longing in the girl's heart to stand once more on the Abbey cliff with her hand in

her father's, as she had stood when she was a little child, and when she had wept because of her straitened vision, the result of an unregenerate heart and life. Ah, how it all came back again, with the sunshine, and the sound of the bells in the old church tower, and the flight of the gulls, and the sparkling of the sapphire sea! But she kept the vision and the longing in silence. Instinctively she feared to give any sign of being disturbed by aught in Mrs. Fairfax's letters.

Yet one morning a piece of news came that caused a sadness too great to be hidden. 'My cousin Michael says that Miss Gower will feel it greatly,' Mrs. Fairfax wrote; going on to tell how the Rector of Hild's Haven had gone somewhat suddenly to his rest. She wrote kindly, feelingly, with touching allusions to her own bereavement; and Lady Anna read the letter aloud to the end; not quite perceiving how her one listener had grown pale, being moved and grieved, but less deeply far than she would have been if she could have foreseen all that the loss of that one friend should come to mean for her in later days. None ever took his place so far as she was concerned; for none could have his early knowledge of her, his far-seeing insight, his unstinted faith, his power of generous en-

couragement. Michael Salvain was right: the loss was a great one.

It is trite, but certainly true, that misfortunes seldom come singly. Only a few days after Mrs. Fairfax's letter there came one from John Gower that was quite as saddening, and infinitely more surprising. Dorigen was in the conservatory when it came, making up a little sweet-scented bouquet of heliotrope and sweet verbena for Lady Anna, and the latter never knew what instinct prompted her to put Dorigen's letter into the pocket of her apron and keep it there until half the day was done, keeping it with a strong and certain feeling that she was sparing the girl. But so it was, and later Dorigen was not ungrateful. 'I wish you had kept it for ever,' she said with pallid lips, and eyes dim with bitter tears.

Letters from her father had always come fitfully, as was natural, considering the life he lived. There had been some improvement in his position. Of late he had been steward on board a large screw steamer sailing to Bombay, and his letters had been fuller and brighter in consequence. At least his daughter thought it was in consequence, not dreaming that there might be another reason for change in him. She understood the change better now, and her heart

sank swiftly, realizing all that it might mean. It was some time before she could speak of it, even to Lady Anna, though the latter was as anxiously sympathetic as a friend could be, knowing that the sorrow must be deep that could move one so little demonstrative as Dorigen to grief like this. By-and-by the words came; low, broken words, uttered with evident effort and pain.

'It is my father—he is going to be married again,' she said, looking into her friend's face with eyes blinded by tears. 'And it is to be so soon, so very soon. The wedding is to be to-morrow.'

In that first moment Lady Anna was relieved.

'Is that the worst?' she asked, and Dorigen replied quickly:

'No, it is not the worst. He is going to marry a widow—a person named Mrs. Cleminshaw—with three daughters. . . . . I shall be nothing to him now. . . . . He was all to me; but I shall be nothing to him—nothing ever again to my father. How shall I bear it?'

And again the words were broken and ended by tears—tears of distress that Lady Anna did her best to comfort.

'Don't say that even your father was everything to you,' she said. 'Surely I am some-

thing; surely after all these years we are all of us at St. Dunstan's something to you, my darling. . . . . And we may be more than we have been, if you will.'

And then it occurred to the little lady that this impending catastrophe might work largely toward bringing about the fulfilment of that wish of hers which seemed to grow with every day that went by. If Lady Anna knew nothing of the love that was in Dorigen's heart for Michael Salvain, she knew something of certain visions that the girl had had of the far-off future, a future wherein she had dreamed of living her own life of thought with no one to share it or interrupt it, save an elderly and somewhat silent father, who would be a comfort, and a stay, and no hindrance. It was strange how the two diverse dreams went on side by side, seldom clashing with each other, seldom interfering with each other. Would the time of actual contradiction, actual opposition, ever come?

Lady Anna, understanding only in part, set herself to wait for the development of new dreams—new plans. It should not be her fault if Lancelot did not take his desired place in those visions that Dorigen would be sure to reconstruct as soon as her imagination should have recovered its spring; yet there should be no

haste—no pressure. From the first Lady Anna had felt intuitively that in a matter like this Dorigen's nature was one that could only be wrought upon by time and patience, and a great and constant kindness. Now here was greater opportunity; and certainly Lancelot's kindness was unfailing, as unfailing as it was gentle and beautiful. It was not possible that so womanly a woman as Dorigen Gower should remain untouched, unmoved. So Lady Anna thought.

CHAPTER XIX.

ERMENGARDE.

'Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

MRS. SALVAIN had always had a strong affection for her only sister's only child; and it need hardly be said that she had received the young widow and her two little ones with wide-open arms of welcome.

Before a month was over Ermine had slipped back with all the ease and grace imaginable into the place she had occupied eleven years before. She had become, so to speak, a child again—a delicate, spoiled, petted child, for whom nothing was too good, no trouble or expense too great. 'I might have done worse than come back to

Thorsgrif,' she said to herself as she arranged her dainty possessions about the big best room, which had been given up to her as a matter of course. In a few hours she wrought a wonderful transformation.

Mrs. Fairfax was not slow to perceive that life at Thorsgrif was an easier and smoother thing than it had been in times gone by. The small daily and hourly renunciations were forgotten; the rooms, without being refurnished, had been refreshed and retouched in various little ways, possibly without great expenditure, yet giving proof enough that stray shillings were no longer objects of that reverence which has been termed 'superstitious,' and which may certainly come to have an effect upon the mind as untoward as that of any other superstition.

The changes were slight, so slight as in nowise to interfere with the pleasant quaintness that was about the old house, and in the old rooms everywhere. Ermengarde's appreciation of the place was greater than it had once been, when everything had seemed old-fashioned and dingy, and wanting in that 'style' for which she had so keen a sense. Now she saw with other eyes, and was not ill-content with the fate that had driven her back to Thorsgrif.

'It is delightful to find everything just as I

left it, Aunt Mercy,' she said on one of the wild winter evenings just after her arrival. Rizpah had taken away the tea-tray; Mrs. Salvain was knitting a little stocking in the lamplight; Joanna was showing some ancient picture-books to Zaré and Valerie, who sat near the table with their little black frocks and dainty white muslin pinafores, making the homely old room look more homelike than it had done for many a long year. Everyone was glad for the brightness that the children's presence made in the house; and Michael, who had seemed to take less notice of them than anyone else at first, soon found himself thinking of their comfort and their pleasure with all imaginable solicitude. Long before the summer came he had decided that if things continued to go well with him, it should be good for the two pretty, soft-voiced children, who called him 'Cousin Michael,' and made him laugh or smile a dozen times a day.

But it was yet winter. Christmastide was but just past, and Ermengarde was not so used to the new, still, untroubled life as to feel either quite settled or quite secure. But the various sorrows and anxieties through which she had passed had had curiously little effect upon her great beauty. It was not only that her shining golden hair still shone, and was still abundant—

not only that her pure complexion, pure and soft as a pink-toned sea-shell, still kept its purity and its look of youth. If you had known sorrow yourself in any way, you saw with even more surprise that her troubles seemed to have left not one trace on the expression of her features, nor to have dimmed in the slightest degree the lustre of her large, liquid hazel eyes. The face of her who sat there in her easy-chair by the fire seemed to look outward with precisely the same disengaged, untroubled glance that looked down upon you from the picture in the drawing-room. The tiny widow's cap and the heavy black dress seemed to add to her youthfulness rather than to take away from it. 'If it were not for the children I could forget you'd ever been away,' Mrs. Salvain said. And Mrs. Fairfax replied that she herself could easily forget at times.

'And it is delightful to find nothing changed,' she said in her clear, rare musical tones. 'You don't look a day older yourself, Aunt Mercy, neither does Nanna. And as for Michael, the only change that has come to him is a most curious and unexpected change. I never saw anyone so altered—excuse me for saying it—so improved. He seems younger; his very features seem less rugged, more clearly cut, and more finely and openly expressive. He looks as if

some—well, some refining influence had passed over him; lending to him the aspect that a man might have who had been studying closely, or fasting unduly, or writing a long beautiful poem. I can see the possibility of artistic instinct in him now as I never could see it before. I used to think that craze of his the most incomprehensible of crazes. Now I can easily see that the root of the matter is in him. . . . Is it that, I wonder, that has changed him? Do you think he is reviving that old dream, and keeping the matter secret?'

'No, it is nothing of that kind,' said Mrs. Salvain, with a smile. She liked nothing better than that anyone should sit and talk by the hour of her son, who was so good a son, and so kind always, and was making the end of her life even smoother and fairer than the beginning had been. 'No, it is nothing of that kind that has changed my Michael,' she said.

'But you admit that he has changed?' Mrs. Fairfax went on, pursuing the subject, and not solely for her aunt's gratification.

'Of course I do, my dear. Why shouldn't I? For three or four years past I have noticed that that old troubled look was gradually growing out of his face; it seemed as if the very lines were being smoothed away by some invisible

hand; and now he looks so quiet, so strong, so peaceful that I should think it was a pleasure to look at him if I wasn't his mother.'

'I suppose it's partly owing to the fact that things are going better at the works?' Mrs. Fairfax said, speaking in tones perfectly free from curiosity. She was a woman who had too fine a tact to misuse even the intimacy of relationship by an undue familiarity, especially by the vulgar familiarity which takes the form of unreserved interrogation. Even Michael, who saw less of her than anyone else in the house, approved of her fine reticence, and respect for the smaller and rarer courtesies of life. These things were part, a large part, it seemed to him, of her general power of fascination.

As a matter of course Mrs. Salvain had no hope, or knowledge, or conjecture, that she did not share with her niece, sooner or later. It was so pleasant to have some one to speak to who could understand and sympathize, and who had such a high opinion of Michael, and knew all about Dorigen Gower too. Mrs. Salvain liked to hear of Dorigen, and constantly sent messages to the effect that she was to look upon Thorsgrif as her home, since she could hardly look upon the house where her new stepmother lived as home in any real sense. And perhaps Michael

might like to hear something of St. Dunstan's also; but he never said so, and never asked any question concerning Dorigen—this Ermengarde perceived, as she perceived other things, which she understood perhaps even too clearly for the peace of that strange mind of hers, which had always a curious trick of fixing its thoughts and wishes upon the unattainable, finding, not seldom, that the unattainable became attainable enough if your will was strong enough.

'My desire, like all strongest hopes,
By its own energy fulfilled itself,'

wrote the poet, putting the prose finding of many a strong-willed human being into poetic phrase. But for how many of us does the fulfilled desire break in the tasting with the bitterness of a Dead-Sea apple! And, on the other hand, how often does a conquered wish prove to be the beginning of a conquest over Fate itself!

Ermengarde Fairfax was not a woman to attempt a conquest of this kind. The days went on, winter days yielding to a glorious spring, spring passing on into a yet more glorious summer, and life at Thorsgrif was found to be very good.

Michael did his best to make it good, having pity for a woman left penniless, and beautiful and unprotected, save for such protection as he

could give. Then, too, he admired infinitely the power that Ermengarde had of adapting herself to circumstance. No word of complaint fell from her lips, though she seldom left Thorsgrif Gill from Sunday till Sunday again. And she was not only content, but to all appearance happy in her contentment; happy and grateful, and tried always, in her own gracious and graceful way, to show how conscious she was that she owed all to the goodness and kindness of her cousin.

'Assuredly you will have your reward,' she said to him one summer evening. She was out on the terrace, with a scarlet shawl thrown over her soft black cashmere dress, and on her head a pretty wide-brimmed, feather-laden hat. Michael had found her there when he came back from Hild's Haven, bringing with him three or four monthly magazines, some weekly papers, and a parcel of books from the library. Ermine was really grateful. It was so much to her to have news of that outer world, the world of which she had had such an intimate knowledge, and of which she had had such a wide experience, considering her age and position. And she had always had real pleasure in trying to keep abreast of the general literature of the day. This it was not possible to do at Thorsgrif; but Michael did his best to prevent her feeling the distance there was

between her and greater facilities. It was the least he could do, he told himself.

'You will have your reward, Michael,' Ermine said, being moved to freer expression by various causes. She had been standing there alone while the sun went down. The tree-tops on the opposite side of the gill were moving against the clear light of the sky; the still, pale sea stretched away beyond the dark mouth of the ravine. There was a kind of solemnity in the peacefulness, a depth in the utter stillness that made for human yearning as music does, or the greatest and divinest poetry. Michael's mere footstep had made her heart beat with a new sudden warmth, and the glow of the warmth was on her face; there was a new gentleness in her eyes and in her voice, and her word of thanks came with a strange tremulousness from so self-sufficient a woman as Ermengarde Fairfax had always seemed to be.

'I often think I don't thank you for things as I ought to do,' she went on. 'But when you owe so much to anyone, and are always owing something fresh, the repetition of gratitude seems to grow hollow and meaningless, and therefore I accept things in silence often when my heart is too full for commonplace words. . . . But I think you understand me, Michael?'

'Of course I understand you. And since language is limited there must be monotony in the repeated expression of even the finest emotions. So let us conclude, once for all, that you are grateful, and that I am glad to earn your gratitude. . . . How is Zaré ?'

'Zaré is all right, thanks to Aunt Mercy. . . . How you do think of those children, Michael, and care for them! It is wonderful in a man so——'

'So what?' asked Michael, turning, with a smile on his lips, to look into the beautiful face beside him.

'Well, I was going to say so stern,' Ermine replied laughingly. 'But that is my old opinion of you. Do you know, I used to be dreadfully afraid of you before—before I went away from Thorsgrif. . . . You *were* stern then, Michael. But you are changed ; even Aunt Mercy admits that you are changed.'

'For the better?'

'Certainly for the better.'

'Tell me in what way.'

'Shall I?' said Ermine, the look on her face suddenly growing graver, more perplexed. 'Shall I tell you what I think of the change, and what I believe to be the cause of it ? . . . And then—then would you let me speak of something

I have wanted to speak about a long time, but have never had courage for? . . . Don't let me, if you think you wouldn't like it, Michael; I wouldn't offend or annoy you for the world.'

Her voice was growing tremulous again, and was burdened with an intensity which at once struck Michael Salvain as having behind it some dread, some charge of evil tidings. He hesitated, and change came upon his face also.

His thought had sped swiftly, as human thought will speed always, to the one who holds life's key. This word concerned *her*. It were better to hear it.

The silence was full. Emotion as a flood was rushing into it as the waters below were rushing to the sea.

'Have you any special reason for wishing to speak of this matter, whatever it may be, to-night?' Michael asked presently.

'Yes,' said Ermine, with marked effort and hesitation. 'Yes; I had not decided to speak of it now; I did not know that I should have opportunity. But my thoughts have been full of you all day, or at least ever since the post came in.'

'You had letters?'

'I had one from St. Dunstan's.'

'From Lady Anna Wilderslowe?'

Yes, from her.'

There was another pause, full of thought, perplexity, suspense. Mrs. Fairfax was not a woman to make a mistake from want of consideration ; but she was hardly in the mood for aught that could duly be called consideration now. It was long since she had been so completely at the mercy of any feeling or emotion as she was to-night.

For some time she had been drifting toward the present hour—not always passively.

If anyone had told her during that wearisome journey from Grancester to Thorsgrif that she would ever come to contemplate the possibility of remaining for all the rest of her days at Thorsgrif Gill, as the wife of her cousin, Michael Salvain, she would have held the prophecy as below contempt. But by slow and sure degrees change had come.

She had been wearied, more wearied than she knew, of fighting with the difficulties of such a life as she had made hers to be. The effort to 'keep up appearances' on means not sufficient for the actual needs of life had gone on too long to leave her untouched by dislike and dread of a return to the same experience. The peace of Thorsgrif had been as the peace of Eden to her so far, and her quiet, pleasurable, irresponsible

life left her nothing to desire but its continuance. If there were any wish unfulfilled, it was some small matter that Michael would arrange for her at a word. She would be glad, for instance, to have a new piano ; and the children's lesson-hour being distasteful, it would be a relief to have a governess ; and the old-fashioned trap, which was still in existence, was really too old-fashioned to be tolerated any longer. Pony-carriages were to be had for almost any price you liked to give, if you knew how to buy, and where to go for your purchase. But these were all trifles, the merest nothings, which had passed through her brain during the long, bright summer days, as such nothings will, if you happen to be unoccupied and to have no responsibilities, and no taint of them was in Ermengarde Fairfax's thought as she stood on the seaward end of the terrace after the sun had gone down that August night.

Michael Salvain was thinking also, thinking, recalling, almost suffering ; for to love is to have always the elements of suffering at hand, and Michael loved. There could be no doubt of it. And his love was not as the love of men in general. Ermine might be forgiven for saying to herself that, in spite of her aunt's assertions, there could be no love worthy of the name

between her cousin and Dorigen Gower. Had they not been contented apart for well-nigh four years—contented with absence, contented with silence. And was there not absurdity in the very nature of such an affection if you considered the wide disparity of age? So she had said to herself many a time, while yet conscious in her own heart of fear and doubt, and at times of something that was almost conviction. Michael was not as other men, and she had long ago discovered that Dorigen Gower was not quite as other girls of the same age and condition.

No, he was not as other men; he differed from them more widely than Ermengarde was ever likely to perceive. And yet she was not slow of perception. She saw now that she had struck the chords of pain and apprehensiveness in his soul, and she did not like the sight.

'You do not wish me to tell you, to speak of this to-night?' she said. 'It will be better. Believe me, I am not anxious to speak of anything likely to grieve you. It was only that I thought——'

'It is something concerning Dorigen Gower?' interrupted Michael rather brusquely, and turning a pale set face so that he could look into his cousin's eyes.

She met the look with one of large pity and

tenderness, and while she met it she felt afresh her own power.

'Yes, it concerns her,' she said. 'It concerns her—and another: that other is Lady Anna's brother-in-law, Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe.'

Michael had turned his face away. He was looking out to where the last silver ray was upon the sea. A star or two had come into the pale heavens. The trees in the gill were rustling with that quiet surging sound which seems always in such perfect consonance with the sadder mysteries of human life, and the wavelets that were plashing and falling upon the sands took up the burden and carried it onward and outward as far as the ear could discern. The whole wide earth and sea seemed set to the sound of sorrow.

But Michael Salvain was conscious of none of these sounds or sights in that first moment. His strength was turned to such self-mastery as he needed. Several minutes elapsed before he spoke again.

'You have had this news from Lady Anna herself?' he asked.

'Yes; she tells me that it has been Miss Gower's own fault that the engagement did not take place sooner. Mr. Wilderslowe proposed to

her last October, and she refused him. I heard a little of it at the time.'

'And now she has definitely accepted him?'

The answer came with a touch as of sadness. Michael accepted it as certainly the sadness of sympathy.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Fairfax, looking steadily toward the pale, rigid, half-averted face before her.

That was the reply she made in answer to that question which had cost him so much more than she could either believe or understand.

'Yes,' she said simply; and if the letter in her possession would have given no such definite answer, it gave her every reason for believing that such an answer was only a question of a few days at most.

Lancelot Wilderslowe had broken the long silence he had kept, perceiving for himself that his silence and his patient devotedness were not unappreciated. But again the question had been left, as he considered, almost as unsettled as before. Almost, but not quite; and Lancelot being more hopeful, Lady Anna had written less dubiously than she should have done, so that certainly there was excuse for Mrs. Fairfax. And, indeed, her first intention had been to show the letter to Michael, and let him see and

judge for himself. . . . She could not show it to him now.

He did not wish to see it; the thought did not occur to him. He turned away, moving as a man suddenly blinded might have moved, not knowing which way he turned, not caring. He went downward through the gill, and away out over the sands by the slowly-receding tide. Darkness was gathering; out of the north the clouds were rising. He had to pass the spot by the wrack-fringed stones, where once he had seen a small white upturned face lying, shrouded in dark hair that moved with the lapping tide as the seaweed moves. A moment he stopped now, and bowed his head upon his hands; then again he went onward, always onward by the falling tide.

Nothing shall so minister to your worst anguish as a quick and keen memory—a memory that can not only reproduce for you the face you have lost, but can show you with all the vividness of reality every expression that face has ever worn for you; that can bring back every glance with all the love it had and all the faith it had. The possession of such a memory is sorrow's last and deepest secret, for its working is not under your control. You shall not refuse to look upon the visions it prepares you; you

shall not refuse to listen to the words it repeats in your ear with such crucial exactness of tone and inflection. No faculty that you have is less at your bidding than your too ready and perfect memory, and if you have known a great grief you shall cease to wonder at that wise man of old who prayed rather to be taught the art of forgetting.

To Michael Salvain, as he walked in the shadow of the night that was under the dark rocks by Thorsgrif, there came as in one unbroken vision the days that he had lived since that day when he had gone down into Wharram's Yard, and coming out again had felt that sure, if sudden, sense of a new and sweet influence which his soul should no more lose utterly, though that pale, wistful, weary face, with the trouble about the mouth of it and in the depths of the sea-blue eyes of it, should no more be lifted to look sadly or gladly into his eyes again.

In that hour compensation had begun for him; the darkness and loss of his previous life had instantly seemed as but fitting preparation for it, and from that first day till this the days had grown in hope, in beauty, in goodness, and greatness of living.

The night deepened, the clouds gathered and

blackened, the tide fell to its lowest ebb, and yet Michael Salvain went on over the rocky beach. He had left the stones he knew and the wide pools of water that were familiar to him, and though he was aware when he passed the point of the great dark nab beyond Hunswyke, no thought of turning back came to him. As one unknowing what he did, and uncaring, he obeyed that impulse which drove him onward, always onward, by the sad falling tide.

By-and-by the wind rose, and came in the wild fitful gusts that herald rain and storm, and a little later the rain came down, dashing madly and impetuously upon the lone figure that walked there. He was aware of it, but it was as nothing to him, being so much less cruel and pitiless than the storm that had come down upon his soul. So he still went onward, always onward, by the drear falling tide. Only once in the stress and strain of his agony did his lips part for the utterance of words. He spoke as men speak in the delirium of the onset of fever, half knowing that they speak, but wholly regardless of the thing spoken. So they may but utter something out of the brain's many wild wanderings, there is always a sense of relief.

'I cannot put it away from me—that day, that face, that voice,' he said, still going onward in

the darkness and the pitiless rain. 'Oh, child! child! why did I meet you? Why did you look into my face with those wistful, troubled eyes of yours? Why did you grow to me, cling to me, and look to me for friendship?—nay, I thought, I thought certainly for more than that! And I fought with my love, with my passionate love, and I fought against yours, and all for your own sake, till my heart was wearied and wounded within me. And at last I yielded, and that also I thought I did for your sake, thinking that you should know that whatever happened to you in that outer world there was human love awaiting your return. And I spoke; out of the great pain and passion of my heart I said a word, and I heard your answer—I hear it now as plainly. "*I will not forget,*" you said, with drooping eyes, and pale face, and firm, pale lips that were truth itself. "*I will not forget,*" you said, and though it is so little to repeat, it was as strong as an oath to me, since it was you who said it, and I thought it was as binding. Though I said it was not to be binding at all—not upon you—I felt certain you would hold it so, as certain for you, my darling, as I was for myself. And all the while I have lived on that word, and grown on it, hoping to grow so as to reach that height on which you live always, and so be worthier of you. And I have waited

patiently, thinking of late that the end of my waiting was near, that I would seek to make an ending with the coming of another spring. . . . And now—now it is over. Your heart has turned to another love, and what good will my life be? Oh, what good will this weary life be now? . . . I cannot live it! . . . I can never live it! . . . How should I live a life so broken as this of mine?'

And nought made answer. The tide had turned, and was coming in with a fuller, wilder sound in its rising and falling; the wind rushed round about the masses of fallen rock with a sad, dull moan; the rain went on beating as if with a great and bitter despitefulness.

Still he went onward, but silently, as one who stayed from his sorrow to listen. But there was none to make him any answer.

CHAPTER XX.

'FROM THAT DAY MY HEART IS WEARY.'

'Just when we're safest there's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

JOHN GOWER'S marriage had taken place in the spring of the year. He had stayed at home a few weeks—not the old home by Wiggoner's Wharf: he could not have borne to begin a new life there. He had taken an odd, out-of-the-way cottage in a corner of Tenter's Close; it was old and ill-built, and inconvenient in the extreme; but the new Mrs. Gower had professed herself very well satisfied with it. Poor woman! she was doubtless glad to have a home of any kind, and this was at least as good as any to which she had been accustomed of late.

That was the beginning of it all, her friendlessness and helplessness, and John Gower's sympathy. Coming home from a long voyage, he had had to find her out, and give her the last messages of her husband and her only son, both of whom had suffered shipwreck, and had been picked up in an open boat at sea after many hours of exposure. They were in a dying state when they were taken on board the vessel in which John Gower was sailing, and hearing that they came from the neighbourhood of Hild's Haven, he had offered to convey any message they might wish to send, and, moreover, he had promised William Cleminshaw that he would look to his widow and his three fatherless children. . . . That was how it had all happened; and those who blamed John Gower most yet admitted the kindliness of heart which had doubtless influenced him.

Still there was everywhere among the few who knew him surprise and wonder. 'What would his own daughter say?' people asked; and old Than and Miss Rountree hoped that Dorigen might never have to come back from St. Dunstan's Rectory to live under the same roof with Lyddy and Thomasin Cleminshaw.

'It 'ud kill her,' old Than said, 'te ha' te live among all that noise an' untidiness an' low-lived

gossip. Crainie Cleminshaw 'ud be the death of her in a week.'

But, of course, Dorigen knew nothing of the Cleminshaws. She had written to her father a brief letter, difficult to write, and very unsatisfactory when it was written; it was more unsatisfactory still when it was gone beyond recall. And since that time there had been pain at her heart whenever she thought of him, and the kind of yearning that people have for the dead.

As the days went on, the pain and the yearning seemed to grow rather than to fade or to change in any other way.

'I shall take her to Malvern for a month,' Lady Anna said to Lancelot one August morning, 'and you can follow us a few days later.'

And Lancelot seemed quietly to agree; but even as he spoke he was making up his mind to try once more to win some word of assurance before there should be any other change. And that same evening he spoke again, so gently, so tenderly, and with such deep change visible in him and in his humility, that the girl's aching heart was for a moment touched, touched not to yielding, but to a less emphatic and decided refusing. And later, Lady Anna had rejoiced

with him over the significance that was in this. It was on the following day that she had written that unwise letter to Ermengarde Fairfax.

They went, as Lady Anna had decided, to the Malvern Hills for a month; and she had the satisfaction of seeing Dorigen grow stronger and brighter day by day.

'She is quite herself again,' Dr. Wilderslowe said to his daughter when they came back. 'She is quite herself, and I am glad of it, for I am wanting her help greatly. I want her to arrange some manuscripts for me, and I am going to try to persuade her to re-write some portions of the work I did last year.'

'Is she equal to that?'

'Quite equal, my dear. She has a style of her own, which is not usual at her age, and, moreover, it is one of great promise.'

'Then I suppose you have quite a winter's work prepared for her?' said the little lady, feeling rather proud and pleased, and also grateful to Dr. Wilderslowe for his kindly discernment. 'Well, I'm not sorry. She is happier when she has plenty of work, especially work of that kind. It will make another winter pleasant to look forward to.'

Another winter! How peaceful it looked, looking upon it in the light of the winters gone

by at St. Dunstan's! And what pleasantness there was in it, with beauty of many kinds, and much love and tenderest solicitude. No fancy that Dorigen had—and she had acquired not a few—was forgotten or ignored. Favourite dishes made their appearance with undue frequency; favourite chairs were kept for her; favourite walks and drives were taken. The books she best liked were read aloud; the music for which she most cared was played again and again.

'Aren't you afraid of spoiling her?' asked an old neighbour one day.

'No,' said Lady Anna. 'I think there are a few natures that are the better for a little spoiling, if only it doesn't come too early in life, or too late. I have a fancy that I am making my experiment at exactly the right moment.'

Dear Lady Anna! If you could have had but one glimpse into the future of your spoilt child! And that future was nearer than anyone knew. Even as she spoke these words a letter was on its way to St. Dunstan's, a letter that changed utterly the prospect of that winter that was to have been so full of peace, so full of beauty, so full of all good.

Mrs. Salvain had written the letter, perceiving for herself, in the light of recent events at Thorsgrif, that her son could not do it without

more pain than she would have him feel. Ermengarde Fairfax shrank from the task utterly.

'It is too terrible!' she said. 'Write yourself, Aunt Mercy. Write to Lady Anna, as the oldest friend Miss Gower has there. Never mind your tremulous handwriting; mine would be tremulous if I had to write a letter like that.'

'It is too terrible!' Mrs. Fairfax had said. And yet, was it terrible at all, that euthanasia on the harbour bar at Hild's Haven?

It was not a storm—that was part of the pathos of the scene. The sun had risen that October morning with a vivid and beautiful brightness, and before he was fairly risen upon the earth a little fleet of some nineteen fishing-boats had gone out into the roads, with two men in each, or three at most, whose work was to win their own bread and the bread of their wives and children from the great watery waste that seemed now so bountiful, and now so cruel and stern. Some of the older men there had doubts of that glorious morning.

And at noon, or a little past, the town lying in the hollow between the cliffs, bathed in the glow of the blue, breezy sunshine, was startled by hearing the signal-gun fired at the coastguard station. For very curiosity the people flew down

the piers, to find to their astonishment that the lifeboat was being launched, and ropes with life-belts suspended to them hung across the bar from the one lighthouse to the other.

'What does it all mean?' asked a lady who was a stranger to the place, and who stood near one of the capstans, holding a wide-brimmed hat, which the rising wind would have carried away. And another lady, who was not a stranger, tried to explain what was happening.

'The wind has risen suddenly,' she said, 'and, as you may perceive, the sea is beginning to make rather rapidly, and they are afraid that the fishing-boats may not get in. There is a strong 'fresh' as we call it, running out—the result of the week's heavy rains—and that, meeting the incoming tide, causes a heavy swell on the bar. I fear that the boats will have a bad half-hour.'

It did not look very bad to many in the crowd assembled on the piers. The lifeboat hovered about just outside; the fishing-boats came valiantly on, dropping their sails when they touched the broken water. Then began the tug of war, for the boats were heavy, and the men few; yet they threw off their jackets, set themselves to their oars, and came onward splendidly. It was a thrilling moment when the first boat shot in between the piers, and encountered that

meeting strife of waters; and a murmur of relief mingled with the admiration that was expressed when the difficulty was surmounted and the boat safe in the shelter of the harbour. Then instantly all eyes were turned toward the others. They were coming on—small boats, large boats, shabby boats, gay boats, but all of them with men on board; and few could resist the stir of satisfaction which spread on the pier as each one passed safely under the rope and the suspended life-belts. . . . So thirteen came in, without accident or special threatening of any.

And still the lifeboat remained outside, waiting and watching for the others. Four or five were coming in together. One was far away—so far that only the rough red sail could be seen with the naked eye. But the weather was not growing worse in any way; perhaps the breeze was even slackening a little; and the sun shone on as brightly as an October sun could shine, and the blue sky that gleamed over the blue, turbulent waters did not awaken any fears. There was even beauty in the scene; with brightness, and just enough excitement to keep the crowd oblivious of its dinner-hour. The last boat was rushing swiftly for the bar.

And the others were coming in. One man shouted a word to his little son on the East

Pier as he passed under the rope. That boat was safe. Another came with more difficulty, one of the men being very old and frail. Then came a little, black, dirty-looking boat, that was evidently not a fishing-boat at all, being short and wide, and having an odd misshapen look, even to eyes not critical of such craft. There was only one man in the little tub, and he was as unlike a fisherman as his boat was unlike a fisher's boat. Yet he came on, and bravely up to a certain point. Once he half-turned to glance at the sympathetic faces that watched him. None of the fishermen had done this.

He was coming on all alone in the small boat, and a great white wave was sweeping round the angle of the pier. The water of the river met it, and clashed, and the spray flew upward as it had not done before that day. . . . And under the spray was seen plainly the upturned bottom of the small black boat.

As the white foam of the wave spread with a soft, seething creaminess upon the blue-grey water of the harbour-bar, you could see the figure of the lonely rower, far enough away from the life-belts had he been capable of reaching ou for one. But he was making no effort.

Another second, and effort was made for him. Life-belts with ropes were flung from both piers,

but it was soon seen that he made no attempt to seize them.

The lifeboat was dashing onward to the harbour-mouth with the speed of a winged thing; but the man had disappeared when a sailor dropped down the ladder that was in the side of the East Pier, and swam out strongly, and reached him as he came to the surface. He held him there till the lifeboat came up, and some of the crew leaned over, and drew him on board.

And just as they would have drawn out the brave sailor, he dropped from their sight and went down like a stone. By-and-by he rose to the surface again; but the thing was like a stone that they drew out of the water.

The lifeboat came in swiftly.

There was a crowd at the landing-place, men and boys who knew the name of everyone in the boat. 'It is Aaron Gilderoy,' they said, speaking of the dirty-looking little man who had been so nearly drowned, but was now sitting up in the boat, and looking very wretched. 'It is Aaron Gilderoy, the jet-worker, who failed, and ruined John Gower in his failure.'

And a moment later, when the sailor who had saved him was lifted out from the lifeboat—lifted and carried tenderly to the nearest house, as

men carry the dead—there was a strange look in the face of some who stood by ; a look as of surprise, and wonder, and great pity.

They had seen the drowned, pallid face of him who lay there in the arms of some of the crew of the lifeboat. It was the face of him they had just spoken of.

'*It is John Gower himself!*' they said, whispering, as of some mystery too full of awe to be understood.

And a little later it was told everywhere that a man had laid down his life, not for a friend, but for one who had done the deed of a bitter enemy. Quite consciously that weary, much-tried life had been laid down for this man.

Those who stood on the pier by John Gower (who had only come home after a perilous voyage on the previous evening) testified to his recognition of the one man in the small, frail boat. He had both pitied him and blamed him for his rashness as he watched him coming in over such a sea alone.

It was his pity that had delivered him to peace.

This was what Mrs. Salvain had to tell to John Gower's daughter—telling it with tears, and ill-spelt words, and infinite compassion.

'If you come home for the funeral you must

come to us,' she said. 'Michael will meet you at the station and bring you here; and I will have your room ready for you, dear. Send a telegram to say by which train you will come.'

* * * * *

Only a few months before Dorigen Gower had shed tears—tears of the bitterest—over her father's second marriage. But no tears came now. She sat still, and pale, and stricken.

But three weeks ago she had received a letter from her father—not a bright or hopeful letter, such as she had expected to receive from one beginning life afresh, as it were. It had touched her as being written out of great weariness and much depression.

'I am going home for a month or so,' he had said. 'And I would have been glad if you could have come home for awhile at the same time; but I will not ask you till I see how things go. It is my first home-coming since the spring.'

Nowhere on the page was there any cheerfulness, any confidence, or hope. And the conclusion of that last letter from her father ran thus:—'If anything should happen to me, do not forget my wife or her children. I have told them that, though you are young, you may be depended on in an emergency. I do not forget what you were to me when you were little more

than a child. Be as helpful to them, if they should ever need your help.'

And now, before a month was over, he had left them, leaving them suddenly, and they would be alone.

There was no time, none, in which Dorigen might ponder over the probable change in her own life—the beautiful, peaceful, unvexed life she had lived so long ; none in which to conjecture what the new life would be. Her world was suddenly upheaving beneath her feet.

It is that that so often makes death terrible, the way in which it changes all the conditions of life for the living. Not only the missing face and voice, but the broken-up home, the altered circumstances—these gather about your thoughts of that new-made grave.

'I don't see at all why you should go,' Lady Anna said, holding the girl's hand in hers, and speaking with kind and gentle seriousness, yet with a touch of vexation underneath. She hated that anybody about her should be troubled, distressed. 'I see no need for your going ; no use in it. What good can you do? You will certainly make yourself ill. I know you will come back a mere shadow.'

'Come back!' the girl said, speaking as one in a dream ; 'I shall never come back. . . . They

will need me, as he said. I must never leave them. . . . I shall not come back.'

Lady Anna kept sad silence awhile. She would not argue, or urge any plea at this moment; it would be like arguing with a sick person. But later, when they spoke of the matter again, she found Dorigen was stronger, that her outlook had more of reason in it.

'I must go,' she said, speaking quite calmly. 'I must certainly go now. If you can arrange it for me, I should like to start in the morning; and I shall go to my father's house, not to Thorsgrif. I will write to tell—to tell Mrs. Gower to expect me.'

'And you will come back again before Sunday?'

'I cannot promise. . . . Do you think I would stay away from St. Dunstan's one hour that I might be here?'

'You are happy here, child?'

Then it was that tears came—hot, blinding tears. It seemed as if only now could she see the happiness, the peacefulness, the good of a life that had had all of life's best in it without care, or thought, or responsibility of hers. And then there was the kindliness, the love, the solicitude, the protection, the human warmth that had wrapped her about from the very first unto this

very last, without lessening or change of any kind. It had been but four years of her life that she had passed here; yet the eighteen that had gone before seemed always the smaller, and fainter, and less impressive half. Here her soul had grown, her faculties had been awakened and developed, her knowledge of life widened. It seemed as if the atmosphere of the place had penetrated through every fibre of her being. Nowhere else would the sun shine as it had shone at St. Dunstan's; nowhere else would the flowers grow in such rich profusion; nowhere else would the church bells sound through the quiet of a summer's Sunday as they sounded there. Life had been all Sunday. . . . What would it be now?

CHAPTER XXI.

'MUCH IS TO LEARN, MUCH TO FORGET.'

'Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?'
COLERIDGE: *The Ancient Mariner.*

IT could not but be a sad, strange home-coming. Dorigen had neither eye nor heart for the October glories of the vale through which you must wind and turn before you reach Hild's Haven. The bracken was red and gold among the faded heather; the trees in the hollows below the moor were 'burning themselves away' in colours of flame and fire; there was a soft, sunny mist upon the hills. But to look upon nature's beauty when your heart is sick is like looking upon a friend who offers you an affection which you cannot return. The glance that should

move you is a weariness; the word that should win your soul leaves you wishing for silence.

It was the first journey she had ever taken alone, and the sense of her wider loneness struck her whole soul through with its unaccustomed pain.

One was taken, many were left; but upon him who had gone alone had she any claim. The last strong and binding human tie had been broken. Others might offer kindness, shelter, protection, but there must always be consciousness in the acceptance. Even that kindness upon which she could most certainly count was not hers by natural right; and it could hardly be that after an absence so prolonged, a silence so complete, she should think of meeting Michael Salvain without something that was almost trepidation. Yet she scarcely understood the stir that was in her heart, underlying all the sorrow and the pain of her loss. The very sense of that loss caused her to feel that it was good to have one rest, one human stay upon whom she might lean through the darkness that had come upon her. It was rest to think of him, and comfort, and satisfaction, and yet—yet that unaccountable tremulousness stirred and grew as her journey came to its end.

He would be there, at the station—of course

he would be there, and he would go with her to that house of sorrow which she hardly knew; and he would be with her when she had to pass through the ordeal of meeting the stranger who was her father's widow, and the unknown girls to whom she would have to be as a sister. . . . Ah! the pain of it all; and Lady Anna's late roses drooping on her lap seemed in some unaccountable way to deepen the pain.

Twilight was coming down quickly. The clatter of the ship-builders' hammers had ceased; but there were the craft in the river, and the old red-roofed houses on the other side, and towering above all, the Abbey on the hill-top. It was an emotion too keen to be joy, even had there been no great grief underlying her presence there. All the old life rushed back. St. Dunstan's was a dream. The stress and effort of a painful awakening had come.

There was a face on the platform that was no dream-face.

'It is you, Uncle Than!' the girl said, half-sobbing, and putting her two hands into the old man's with agitation. She hardly recollected that the throbbing fervour of the moment was not for him. 'It is you,' she repeated, hardly knowing what she said, and the old man turned with the tears running down his face and a look

of perplexity in his eyes. He recognised the voice, though the tones of it seemed changed, and the tall, slight, elegantly-dressed woman who stood before him, with her pale face on a level with his, was strange to him for a moment. But it was only for a moment. He saw and understood.

'Ay, it's me,' he said. 'An', eh! but I'd never ha' known you if you hadn't spoke! I'd never ha' known you for little Peace! . . . Yet, bless her, the face is the same—ay, it's the same bonny face. Bless her then!'

It was old Than who took her home to the house in Tenter's Close; going with her in the cab, and speaking by the way of the sad event which had brought her back to Hild's Haven; telling her details that had not been told in Mrs. Salvain's letter. She could better bear to hear them from Than Rountree than from anyone else.

He talked a good deal, and said many things, but there were many that he refrained from saying, more especially after he had failed in his endeavour to persuade Dorigen to go home with him to Salthouse Garth, where his cousin was half expecting her.

'Well, well!' he said. 'It'll only be for a day or two. The time'll get over'd somehow. I

doubt it'll be a bad time. . . . But, there ! I'll say no more. . . . For his sake 'at's gone, I'll say no more.'

Dorigen's heart did not sink at hearing this, as at another time it might have done. They were going up the narrow lane toward the cottages which stood in those days at the corner of Tenter's Close. 'It's the one nearest this end wi' the lights i' the winda',' old Than said ; and then the cab stopped by a little gate in a low stone wall ; a door was opened, and in the light that fell across the darkness two figures stood.

'It's her—yes, it's her,' said a girl's voice, speaking in an excited, chirping way. And then a quieter but more sullen voice said :

'Hold yer tongue, Crainie ; and don't be such a fool, if you can help it ! . . . Fetch another candle !'

'Fetch it yourself !' said the chirping voice ; and the owner of it, a short clumsily made girl of seventeen, came forward as she spoke, and held the door of the cab while old Than stepped out, and turned to help the tall, silent, trembling figure behind him.

'How d'ya do, Dorigen?' said the girl, offering her hand, and speaking in a tone that made even Than Rountree feel as if his heart stood still in sheer surprise. 'How d'ya do, Dorigen ? Come

in! Mother's got tea all ready for ya. An' we've the dressmakers, makin' black, you know. The funeral's the day after to-morrow. . . . Come in!'

The scene in the narrow room was not one to be taken in at a glance. The place seemed full of people, dimly to be discerned through the smoke of paraffin lamps. A tall, thin woman came forward: she was wearing a dark dress, her face was sallow, her small, keen eyes were sunken; perhaps with weeping, Dorigen thought, as she held out her hand, which Mrs. Gower took with a certain diffidence, a certain surprise in her quick glance, a certain deference in her manner.

'How d'ya do, ma'am?' she said timidly; and to Dorigen, the greeting of her father's wife was at least as painful as the greeting of his stepdaughters. The girls were all three of them there.

'This is Thomasin, my eldest daughter,' Mrs. Gower said, indicating the girl with the pert tone and manner, who had been addressed by her sister as 'Crainie,' a sobriquet given to her in her childhood because of her voice, which at that time had been supposed to resemble the cry of the sea-bird known on the north coast as the 'crainie,' or 'lintycock.' The resemblance no longer existed, but 'Crainie Cleminshaw' was a

name to which people were too well accustomed to admit of its being discarded for the more respectable Thomasin. The girl had been considered even as a child of seven to be a popular character in the fishing village where she had been born, and in the neighbourhood of Tenter's Close she had already acquired a notoriety for which it might have been difficult to account in accurate language.

Of all this Dorigen knew nothing as yet. She was only conscious of a feeling that was more akin to dread than anything else, as she looked at the girl's countenance, which was audacious rather than bold; vain and weak rather than bad. Her sister Lydia was a contrast to her in all points, or nearly all.

'This is my second daughter,' Mrs. Gower said, looking at a pretty blushing girl of sixteen, with sullen curves about a handsome mouth, and large grey eyes that looked anywhere but in your face.

'An' this is Matty, the youngest,' she said, drawing forward a little dark-haired, brightly-smiling girl of eleven, who had carried Dorigen's bonnet-box and umbrella upstairs, and now was timidly waiting for the handbag she carried. 'She's a useful little thing, is Matty,' Mrs. Gower added, bursting into tears as she spoke. 'Your father *was* fond of her, an' good to her; he was

good to them all. . . . But come upstairs, come away upstairs ; you'll be tired. An' I'm forgetful, it's no wonder I should be forgetful. . . . But I'll try to do the best I can for you, ma'am, for *his* sake. I know he thought there was no one i' th' world like you. . . . Things is rough, not like what you've been used to; but I'll do the best I can."

They went up the narrow enclosed stairs. There were apparently two or three rooms on the landing.

'We will wait,' Mrs. Gower said through her tears, and pointing to a closed door as she spoke, 'we will wait till the dressmakers is gone, and the children in bed ; and then I will go in with you when all's quite quiet. You'd like that best, I know. . . . An' oh ! but you do look white an' wan ! Sit down, ma'am, sit down here by the table; an' I'll send you a cup o' tea upstairs. It'll be better than goin' down where there's so many ; an' neighbours dropping in every few minutes. An' will ya have a bit o' fire ? Matty 'll soon light it if ya will.'

It was not, however, Matty, but the irrepressible Crainie who came chirping into the room with wood and coal.

'Let me help you off with yer cloak, Dorigen,' she said, with quickest readiness. 'It *is* a beauty;

why, it's lined with quilted satin all through! It's cost some money now, has that cloak. An' your dress *is* nicely made; more stylish than any I've seen here. You can have your black one made like it, with crape instead of silk for the trimmings. An' I should like mine just the same. It would be nice to be alike, bein' sisters. An' we're the two eldest, you know; an' the two younger ones could have theirs made alike; only I expect Lyddy would want something better than Matty. She's awfully selfish, is Lyddy.'

Dorigen's silence, or rather her speechlessness, was not much noticed. Her head was aching, her heart was aching, her whole soul seemed to sink as the moments went by.

The one great sorrow and loss was for the moment overlaid by all this confusion, and strangeness, and unexpecteness; and it was and additional grief and weight upon her brain that it was so overlaid. At any time her too keen sensitiveness would have suffered under such an experience as this; the sudden intimacy forced upon her; the painful servilities mingled with real kindness, the equally painful over-familiarity mingled with most evident goodwill. The very furniture of the shabby, untidy little room struck upon her with a sharp sense of incongruity. It had been brought from the house by Wiggoner's

Wharf; most of it had been in her own room; and yet she was not glad to see it in this new and very different atmosphere. All the old life came back at the sight of the ancient oaken drawers with their handles of wrought brass, the old life that had been so formal, so decorous, that had been lived so straitly by unwritten rule. It seemed as if the very chairs and tables knew, and regretted, and refused any longer to look their best. They looked dull and changed; the whole house seemed full of a strange dejection, a strange loneliness. It was an hour of desolation, the first of many, if not the worst. Dorigen seemed to feel certainly that the note struck in that hour was the dominant of the days to be.

And yet presently she became keenly conscious of self-reproach. Crainie had lighted as big a fire as the tiny grate would hold; it was blazing and crackling up the chimney. And the small table where the tea was set looked sufficiently tempting; though she saw with a sudden pang that the china was part of what her mother had been wont to term her 'wedding set,' and that it seemed to have seen hard service.

'I've had *my* tea hours since,' said Miss Cleminshaw, pouring out a cup for Dorigen. 'But if you like, I'll stay here while you get yours, then I can bring you anything you want, you know;

and I can be unpacking your things for you if you'll give me your keys.'

Just then there was a tap at the door, and Matty would have come in with Lady Anna's roses in a tumbler of water, but Miss Cleminshaw prevented her entrance.

'You can't come in here,' she said hastily. 'I'm going to do everything for Dorigen myself; so you can go an' get the boots cleaned to be ready for to-morrow. An' you can take Dorigen's too if you like, only don't do them so badly as you do mine sometimes. Now then, go along, an' get them done.'

'She isn't a bad little thing, isn't Matty,' said Miss Cleminshaw, coming back to the fire, and sitting down cosily upon the rug. Dorigen had not seen the girl's face so plainly before. The round blue-grey eyes looked up in the lamplight with a curious mingling of defiance and desire for friendliness in them, the features were unformed, and not pleasing; but the fine, soft, pale brown hair was abundant, and would have been beautiful if it had been well kept. Altogether she was a perplexing personage; restless and vicacious to a degree that might become trying in the extreme.

'Matty isn't a bad little thing,' she repeated. 'She does nearly all the work of the house, and she likes it. Now I don't. I don't like house-

work of any kind ; an' mother says I ought to marry a gentleman. She would like both Lyddy an' me to marry gentlemen ; an' she says that perhaps you'll stay at home now, an' keep a school, an' edicate us, an' then we can help you till we get married. We haven't anything to live on now, you know ; but mother says she's sure you'll never let us want for anything. An' if I was to marry a gentleman I'd never let you want. . . . I do like you, Dorigen! I'd do anything for you! You are nice!'

There was no reply on the lips of the pale silent woman who listened. What reply would have been possible in that moment? Not the quickest imagination could have preconceived the pain and stun of all this unprecedented misery.

The unpacking was a long process, and apparently an enjoyable one to Crainie. Every article was commented upon, inquired about, and for the most part admired. But Dorigen was very weary, and her longing for rest and relief was growing too evident to be ignored.

'You sit down, an' I'll finish,' said Crainie. 'I'm very handy—don't you think I'm handy? An' isn't it kind of me to help you like this? But I've a lot of kind ways about me—don't you think I've a lot of kind ways?'

Oh, the sense of deliverance when that chirping voice was silenced for the night! Not that it could be forgotten; neither the tones nor the words that Thomasin Cleminshaw had uttered that evening were to be forgotten.

But two days had passed since he who lay in the next room had gone out from his home with words of kindness on his lips, and in his tired much-worn heart the kindest of kind intentions.

There was, so it seemed, a lifetime of thought, of experience, of emotion, between this sad night and that sad morning on which his daughter had parted from him, yet it was all obliterated now that she sat alone and thought.

She had seen him. The beauty, the majesty of the dead face had moved her to tears, wild and bitter, and, for a time, inconsolable tears. But there was a strange intermingling of pride in her grief. To be descended from one who in death could look so noble was, even in that moment, a cause of gratitude. She had remained alone while in the room; and had placed beside the folded hands the roses that had grown in the garden at St. Dunstan's Rectory. By-and-by, when the household was asleep, she would go back there and watch through the night. He should not be alone. She would return to her

own room with the first ray of dawn, so that there might be neither comment nor surprise.

He was hers, and she was his, though thrice three step-daughters with their widowed mother had come between.

She could not understand; here even her sympathy was perplexed and deadened, yet she would believe. She would believe that he had cared for them, thought for them, worked for them. And she would take up his caring where he had so suddenly left it off. His own expressed wish was with her now, it should remain with her. It should be her life's law till her life's ending, if need were.

* * * * *

The day of the funeral went by; it was even as the night of her arrival had been, a time of keen pain, of keen shame, of confusions, sympathies, yearnings, perplexities. Later they told her that Michael Salvain had been there; that was the sole alleviation that she had.

And the days that followed went by in sadness, in loneliness, in anxiety, in ceaseless wondering as to life's next step. It seemed to Dorigen that when Michael came all would be made plain on the instant. He would advise her, restrain her, urge her to all that was right and wise. But the days went on, and Michael

Salvain did not come, and the heavy autumn hours remained heavy. What new grief was this that threatened a life already so overburdened with new griefs? Were sorrow and disappointment in the very air of Hild's Haven?

CHAPTER XXII.

'AND HENCEFORTH IT IS NIGHT WITH ME.'

'I did love you once.'
'Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.'
Hamlet.

A MONTH went by — a whole long month of perplexity and dark pain. Lady Anna's letters coming daily, and filled with affection, solicitude, longing for Dorigen's return, were not altogether the alleviations they might have been. St. Dunstan's Rectory, with all its peaceful beauties and refinements of life, was brought too sharply into contrast with life in Tenter's Close, a life that was daily growing more unendurable as the first novelty of Dorigen's presence there wore away. The strain of keeping up to that first evening's height was too great. As soon as conscious effort was needed, the need was fatal. The

descent had been gradual, but it was very complete.

And yet all this was as nothing to the heavier troubles that were beginning to weigh so ceaselessly upon the girl's brain ; for she was yet not more than a girl ; and the experience of her two-and-twenty years had not been such as to prepare her for taking upon herself the burden of a whole household, as day by day she became more certainly aware that she was expected to do.

She said nothing of this to Lady Anna, and there was no one to whom she might turn in such a matter. Old Than and Miss Rountree shook their heads gravely, and spoke sympathetically, but they were powerless to help, or even to advise. Mr. Kenningham, and other people she had known, were dead ; others were estranged by absence. Daily the sense of loneliness grew to be more and more an oppression.

And still Michael Salvain came not. She had waited for his coming with the sense of sureness with which she had waited for the coming of a brother if she had had one. But by degrees the sureness had given way to fear ; and the fear had turned to a great aching and yearning. . . . What if he were changed, and could not bear to

show her the change? But surely he must know that she could endure even that better than she could endure this strange silence that grew and pained her by night and by day, and was fast breaking down the spirit within her by the unutterable weight of misery it wrought. She could make no plans for her own life, or the lives of others; she could set herself to no work, she could see not even one step before her till she knew the worst. It was the worst that suspense was preparing her for.

She seldom went out of doors, not wishing to be out if anyone should come from Thorsgrif; but one mild November afternoon she went with some flowers to the grave where so much of her life's best love was lying. . . . That was the one peaceful spot on earth, the one bitter spot, the one sweet spot. Gladly then and after would she have shared its perfect peace.

A little later she wandered on over the winding road in the deepening afternoon. The last red leaves were quivering in the rays of the golden sunset; the river below was running slowly onward to the sea; before her the great purple hills and hollows stretched outward and upward to the distant horizon. The quiet of the scene was unbroken. It was good to be there.

But by-and-by, as she went down into the hollow of the wood, she became aware that the solitude was not solitary. A gentleman on horseback was passing the little red-tiled cottage by the bridge. She perceived him, and her colour came quickly, and as quickly fled. She was white as the whitest snow-flower that ever grew when Michael Salvain stopped his horse and dismounted. She discerned quickly that he, too, was paler than she had known him of old.

Their eyes met and spoke such truths as eyes alone may speak at times, and Michael took the girl's trembling hand with a gentleness he could not change. Yet there was a chill restraint in his greeting—the greeting she had waited for for years, imagining all its tender, passionate details, lingering in thought over his coming, his love, his full outpouring of assurance for all the days of their future life ; and in his manner there was a certain strong quiet resolution that seemed to strike her through with its hard impassiveness ; and whatever fear she had had was at once turned to a dark certainty. Her eyes drooped from his changed countenance, and her heart throbbed on as if each beating might be its last effort.

She stood there, tall, and frail, and tremulous, in her heavy black dress and mantle. Her lips had no smile, her dark blue eyes looked darker

and more full of life's deeper shadows than when Michael had seen her last. This was but natural; his few words of condolence were charged with most earnest sincerity. But there was no tenderness in them; his grey eyes seemed to look down upon her with something that was almost disdain replacing his kindness. It was as if he were using an effort so great that an unconscious sternness grew out of it.

'My mother has been sorry to be unable to call upon you,' he said. 'One of Mrs. Fairfax's children has been ill, and she could not easily leave her. But she would wish me to say all that she would have said herself. And having offered her condolence with my own, I will offer her congratulations also. It is not often that one has to do both in a breath, so to speak. But let me do it, Miss Gower, for old sake's sake . . . I trust you will be as happy as you deserve to be . . . Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe should consider himself fortunate."

It was the outcome of the natural limitations of Dorigen Gower's temperament that in this strong crisis of her life she should be struck as by a sudden paralysis to utter helplessness. A hot tide of colour poured over her face and neck; she could feel it to the very tips of her fingers as a smarting of the nerves of the hands. This

subsided, and she made an effort to speak, but the effort was vain. She stood in utter silence.

'And since we are speaking of such matters,' Michael Salvain continued, with a calm voice and carefully chosen words, but with a strange expression of pain on his broad white forehead—'perhaps, since we are speaking of these things, I had better make a confession that concerns myself—myself and Mrs. Fairfax. We are not keeping the matter secret in any way, but we are too obscure to make any sensation in the neighbourhood, so you may not have heard of it. . . . We are not to be married just yet, perhaps not till the spring.'

That was how Michael Salvain spoke. The story might have been told another way.

Is there not some proverb or aphorism about catching a heart in the rebound? . . . Is it the heart that is so caught? or the whole jarred, broken being whose heart seems dead for ever within him?

Michael Salvain had not offered his heart to his cousin, nor his heart's highest regard. And he had done wisely.

There had been no deliberate forethought with him. One evening—it was but a few days after that night he had spent among the rain-swept and wind-swept rocks at Thorsgrif—he had been

standing by the little gate that led outward from his own terrace to the furzy common beyond. His cousin and her children were there, and Ermine was speaking touchingly of her own loneliness and their probable future unprotectedness. Her beautiful eyes were filled with unfallen tears, her whole expression and attitude were full of a strange beseechingness. Had the children caught some sympathetic touch of it all? A farmer was passing by, sauntering homeward in the warm pink afterglow that was upon the land with rake and fork over his shoulder.

'Good-night! good-night, sir!' he shouted heartily; and as he went out of sight little Valerie looked up into Michael Salvain's face with her pale, wistful eyes, and with wistful words on her imperfect little tongue.

"Dat's Lizzie Burnett's father,' she said, putting her tiny hand into Michael's. 'We haven't dot a father.'

And at the child's words, Ermine had burst into a wild passion of tears, such tears as Michael had never witnessed in his whole long life.

And what was left to him but the service of comforting one who so evidently cared for his comfort, and was so greatly in need of it?

'You know something of what I have suffered,' he said, when he had succeeded in soothing her

grief a little. 'And it may be that my own suffering makes me more keenly alive to yours; it may be also that in trying to make life a little brighter for you, it will come to be less dark for myself . . . I cannot tell . . . I give you all I have to give. Will you take it? Will you trust to time for its growth to something more?'

That was how it had been brought about; and though Dorigen knew nothing of all this, she knew something—much more than she knew that she knew—of Ermengarde Fairfax. And she had known Michael Salvain; she had trusted him, and she had loved him. She might not understand, but a thought, swift and sure as an instinct, struck her brain. Mrs. Fairfax had misinterpreted, or rather mistranslated, some word that Lady Anna had said. And she had done this for reasons of her own. The idea became instantly as a settled truth.

Michael Salvain had never offered his hand to his cousin had he not done so in the belief that that summer's day in Thorsgrif Gill had been utterly forgotten or ignored. Of this Dorigen was certain as she stood there in the hollow of the little wood by the river's edge. Naturally, very naturally, her first impulse was to tell to him simply and plainly the real facts of the case. It seemed impossible that she could let him go

back to Thorsgrif believing her to be engaged to marry Lancelot Wilderslowe. And yet a great, an infinite pity swept through her, coming swiftly as the suspicion of the truth had come, but with twice the overmastering force of that. That was but an idea, this an emotion.

It was not only pity ; the reluctance to give pain that had been hers always was mingled with it, and here, if she spoke, she must cause so much more than mere pain. It seemed as if a woman—a lady of such presence and power as Mrs. Fairfax—might hardly bear the shame that detection would bring, and live.

And yet another thought came with rapid weight. Was it not very conceivable that a man should choose to marry a woman of such beauty, such grace, such fascination as Ermengarde had, in preference to one so plain, so insignificant, so slenderly endowed with attractions as she herself was ? Years ago she had wondered that Michael had not cared for his beautiful cousin. Doubtless he cared enough to make compensation now.

She would not disturb his love, or spoil it, or mar it for an hour. Her own love was strong enough and pure enough for love's highest and holiest use of sacrifice. Her first lesson in renunciation had come from his lips. She had

never forgotten it. She would not forget it now.

All this had passed in a very brief silence. Her resolution was made even as she lifted her face, and looked steadfastly into Michael Salvain's face.

'I congratulate you,' she said, speaking in a voice as firm and calm as his own. 'I congratulate you, and I wish you every happiness. I will write my congratulations to Mrs. Fairfax.'

'Thank you,' he said, with the same chilling courtesy of manner as before. 'Perhaps we may have the pleasure of seeing you at Thorsgrif. Do you remain at Hild's Haven long ?'

'My plans are hardly formed with any definiteness yet,' she said, speaking as people speak to strangers whose curiosity is stronger than their good-breeding. This she said, and thus she said it, though her heart sank and faltered at his mere reference to that future which lay before her, lying as the desert lies at sunset before the traveller who faints for the need of human help, human nearness.

Michael Salvain was beginning to recover from that scattering of the perceptive faculties which so often happens to a sensitive man under the influence of any sudden shock or surprise. His insight was returning. He saw that this

woman before him was not the happy and assured woman he had expected some day to meet. He remembered her recent sorrow, and he did not undergauge it ; yet he was convinced that there was more behind. Was it poverty ? Was it perplexity? Was it care for those who had certainly a right to look to her caring? His nature was of too nobly human a cast to permit of his putting these thronging questions aside.

Though Dorigen Gower had been all but a stranger to him, though love for her, or even admiration for her, had never entered his heart, he could not have passed by on the other side without effort to discern whether she might have need of any help of his. Though a thousand emotions and distastes and expediencies had bewildered him with their crossing threads, there was yet in him a chivalrous grandeur of sufficient force to lift him above them, and above all difficulties connected with them. He could no more have left a woman to the chances of war with a cold and unseeing world without inquiry, than he could have stood by to watch the slaying of a human being in the street without remonstrance.

'I will not ask you to confide the nature of your plans to me,' he said, answering her last coldly restrained remark, and speaking with a

certain unconquerable emotion which she could not but perceive. 'But although many changes have taken place since I offered my friendship and you accepted it, I do not see that that old bond need be quite broken unless you wish it. Friendship of any helpful kind is not so common as it might be, and friends are not always at hand just when one may need them. . . . Thorsgrif is near enough to Hild's Haven to permit of my being of service to you if you should need my services at any time.'

She would have thanked him, but the word failed on her lip, and he saw that it did. He saw more than that in the wondering, appealing glance she lifted to his face. If she might have spoken—spoken out of the truth and understanding that was in her, she would have said:

'I perceive, and I accept your friendship; I accept it for this world and for that which is to come. I know you now, and here I discern the largeness that is in your nature and its rare nobility; but you will not know me, nor understand until the hidden things of this world are made plain in another. . . . You would help me, though your faith in me is dead; you will watch over me, though you believe that I am unworthy of your care; you will be my friend, though you feel I am too slight and frail a thing for friend-

ship. . . . I can wait, I shall wait the better for having the crumbs from the table of your human, loving kindness. . . . Yes, give me, by all means give whatever you can give ; *but not now* —not just now. . . . . For a little leave me ; leave me to regain my own strength ; to recover my own vision. . . . For a little, leave me !'

These things she might not say—not then ; but she made reply to his words.

'You are very kind,' she said calmly enough, yet with a restraint that was all too evident. 'You are very kind, and there is no one else ; now that Mr. Kenningham is not here, there is no one else. If I need help, if anyone can help me, I will ask it of you.'

'Thank you,' he said, taking her offered hand in his gently. Then he said 'good-bye,' saying it with a new depth in his gravity, a new wonder, a new fear, a new agitation. All these strove with the yearning, passionate tenderness that had awakened within him by no fault of his own, no concession. He was still strong to fight. There should be no concession.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN AN UPPER ROOM.

'Nor mourn, O living one, because her part in life was mourning.
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning?'

'THE inspiration which God vouchsafes to a soul which He visits,' writes Pascal, 'is an extraordinary view and perception, by means of which that soul sees both itself and all else from a wholly fresh point of view.'

It is almost always sorrow, some new, keen, wounding and blinding sorrow, that sets wide open the gates of the soul for this high influence to enter in.

Not till the heart is emptied of all it held dear, disappointed of its last cherished hope, left desolate and alone, burdened and humiliated to the

uttermost, can one clearly perceive that there is yet something remaining, something to be desired, something to hold with a gratitude which is an ecstasy, if it be given.

This perception did not come all at once to Dorigen Gower. That night, when the house was still, and the clock ticked loudly on the stair, and all the world that she knew of was silent and asleep, she sat alone in the small attic, at the back of the house, which was the one room she cared to have. From the window she could see the south side of the Abbey, where the great arches stood in the pale grandeur that the moonlight heightens; and she could hear the wind that was wailing plaintively across the green upland fields that were between the Abbey and Tenter's Close. She was glad for that—that nought save the grey-green, treeless pasture-land was there.

That first hour had been an hour of voiceless, stirless agony—the agony of knowing that the one love her life had ever had, or ever could have, had been betrayed. No tear came; no moan; her heart had no cry. She blamed no one. No movement of scorn or hatred stained her soul. The power to think, to realize, came slowly. The first conscious thought she had was a perception that this thing that had happened was not for her

wholly an evil. It was her destiny, and could not have happened otherwise. She had had to taste of love, to know its sweetness, its highest capacity for faith and trust. Now she had to drink to the dregs its last bitterness. And yet even this might be well. There was strength enough and light enough left within her to perceive that this inevitable negation of her one warm human hope might be well. It *might* be; and yet the pity of it! Ah, the pity of it!

The hour that followed after was strange, and the conflict of it strong. Her heart stirred rebelliously, demanding the human good that a human life may have ; yearning for its rest, and peace, and sweetness ; and refusing to perceive that life could be lived at all in such utter loneness as remains to a woman who has been denied the power of forgetting. She might never forget—this she knew. Time would not even bring alleviation. In every hour of solitude or depression—and they would be many—the keenness, the sharpness of this stroke would come back upon her with its full power to pain, to crush, to break the spirit within her.

'And yet,' said some voice that seemed to speak from some colder and sterner height, and still to speak constrainingly, 'and yet you can acknowledge now, and shall acknowledge with

infinitely more emphasis in the days to be, that this dividing of your life was needful for that life's highest good. There is nothing new in your experience,' the voice continued. 'Remember the poem over which you pondered to find its true meaning. You are living that meaning now.'

'High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

'He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!),
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
Then notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes as he sat by the river.

'"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river),
"The only way since gods began
To make sweet music they could succeed;"
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed
He blew in power by the river.'

Yes; she was beginning to understand the poem. Full understanding might not come till later, not till the slow passing of the years should prove the completeness of the sacrifice.

The reed should be proud, say the people, being chosen and fashioned for a musical instru-

ment. But being a reed it remembers the river, and the white and golden water-lilies that float on its deep, cool bed ; and the dragon-fly that pauses to dream above the limpid waters ; and the murmur and stirring of the other reeds that were so near. The river is the reed's one home.

'The true gods sigh for the cost and the pain,' says the poet. Yes ; and they know that the sacrifice that is in a human life is the measure of that life's height, and depth, and breadth, and intensity.

She remembered as she sat there that years ago, standing on the cliff-top in the twilight, Michael Salvain had been the first to strike within her that chord which lies somewhere in every human heart, the chord that resolves the mystery of human pain. She had not comprehended then, nor later, the response that her soul had made so readily. She had had, as it were, a prevision of the spiritual strength and the spiritual beauty to be won out of suffering—to be learnt through renunciation. The influence of the vision had never departed wholly.

Later, the strain and the stress had been lifted from her life by no wish or will of her own. Every natural human desire that she had had been gratified ; her instinct for things beautiful and refined had grown by what was provided

for it to feed upon. Her higher tastes and pleasures, her intellectual leanings and yearnings had been satisfied to the uttermost. She had seen the good of life, enjoyed it, appreciated it; and yet all the while there had remained within her the spirit to ask, 'To what purpose?'

Now, to-night, looking back over her life from that 'wholly fresh point of view,' she saw that the seemingly scattered years, the seemingly purposeless changes, events, joys, sorrows, negations, had all tended to this one hour. They had been parts of a design that was perfect in its unity. That design was the teaching of renunciation—of an absolute, and solitary, and sorrowful renunciation.

How renounce a joy never tasted? How sacrifice a good never enjoyed or desired?

She had not only tasted, she had drunk deeply of the cup of the wine of human joy, and her appreciation had been keen above the ordinary measure of human keenness.

And what remained? What might remain to a woman, the penniless daughter of a drowned man whose life had been a failure, and who in dying had inevitably laid upon her a burden that would surely be greater than she could bear? No touch of blame entered her thought—none of querulousness. Her poverty, her burden, her

loneliness, her heart's wild yearning sorrow—these things were the conditions of her life, to be accepted, endured, fought against with what strength she had. No yielding was possible. One life was ended. Even to-night another life must be begun.

Dark as it looked, she must face it faithfully; she must look into it, not 'to fancy what were fair,' but to find out what might be. Yet at every step her musing took, the prospect seemed to grow more blank, more bewildering, more appalling. For a time her heart sank within her; and whilst it was low she knelt, and as she knelt there came a Presence to that upper room.

It was not a strange Presence. Once before in a time of sorrow it had come upon her, and a Voice had spoken with her openly. In the time of her heart's wealth she had not known it.

All her life she had waited, pondering in her heart the visitation of her childhood, and the call she had heard later on the wind-swept height had deepened the reverent assurance of a fuller message to be delivered. Now, a third time, she was aware of the nearness of some crisis in her spiritual life.

'*While I was thus musing the fire kindled*,' said the Psalmist; and it was grief that had led him to muse. There was no conscious preparation.

The sweet singer of Israel sat or walked alone, brooding in his own heart quietly, silently, dumb with silence; but his emotion was stirred, and his heart grew hot within him, and at the last he spake with his tongue.

Here, if anywhere on written pages, we have a genuine history of a genuine inspiration. There are others in that same Book.

Isaiah, the seer, when the visions were unfolded to him, was dismayed; 'fearfulness affrighted him.' Daniel, under the same circumstances, 'fainted; and was sick certain days.'

David saw no vision, save such as his own thought presented to his own imagination; stirring his grief, awakening his strongest and saddest emotion. But within him fire was kindled, fire that brings light and heat, fire that dispels coldness and darkness, fire that purifies whatever atmosphere it burns in. These changes wrought, his emotion became audible; song became not only possible to him, but a necessity of the hour. He sang his great prayerful pleading psalm because he could not have spoken it, or written it in the common speech of daily use. His sorrow being deep, his need urgent, his aspiration high, his longing to speak to God intense, it was inevitable to him that his speech should be poetic. So we touch the very soul of

poetry. So we have glimpses of the very source and fountain of inspiration.

Even thus was Dante's 'mystic unfathomable song' produced. 'The very essence and material of the work are themselves rhythmic,' it has been said. 'Its depths and rapt passion, and sincerity make it musical—*go deep enough* and you will find music everywhere.' Yes, it is always 'out of the depths' that poetry comes, if it be true, and living, and of any permanent value. Is not 'In Memoriam' itself a proof that sorrowful, passionate prayer is the deepest poetry left to us? Yes, 'out of the depths,' the depths of sorrow fused in the kindling fire of the spirit till the flame sweeps upward with that rhythmical beating which becomes musical before we know it. This it is to write a true poem—to feel that it is uttered in your soul's hearing, and that you do but reverently listen.

There was reverence in Dorigen Gower's listening. When she rose from her knees she took her pen and wrote; and when she had ended she knew that there was a poem written. Later, she entitled it

'A SOUL'S RENUNCIATION.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

'THE NEW LIFE COME IN THE OLD ONE'S STEAD.'

'No, I have nought to fear! Who will may know
The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
It be so?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct striving,
Because its nature is to strive? . . . . Is it for human will
To institute such impulses? still less,
To disregard their promptings?'

ROBERT BROWNING: *Paracelsus.*

IT has been truly said that there is no courage so great as the courage of ignorance.

For instance, a youthful surgeon, with an imperfect acquaintance with the arterial system, may operate with far steadier nerve than his older and wiser colleague. The danger he has

not knowledge enough to dread cannot daunt him. He undertakes his task with a readiness he may shudder over when it comes to his later recollection.

Something of this fine courage we all of us have in the beginning, and the gift is beneficent. We may marvel, when the flood has been passed, at the audacity which led us down into it; but by that time the audacity, with all its strength and all its splendid indomitableness, is gone. We have tasted of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and our eyes are holden no longer. With sight comes shrinking and dread, and prayer to be delivered from further testing.

Speaking of Dorigen Gower, it would perhaps be more correct to say that her courage was the result of scant experience of the life she had to live, rather than of scant knowledge. *She had to live it*—this was her conviction. But it did not seem to her that the decision was hers. Light had been given—light for which there had been long watching, long waiting, and the mere idea of refusing to be faithful to that light seemed to her as a sin that might have never forgiveness.

No choice was given to her after that night which she had spent alone, yet not alone, in her own narrow room.

Later there came a day when she sat looking backward with amazement over what seemed the blind, daring temerity with which she had put aside every consideration of poverty, of ignorance, of inexperience, of sore hindrance, of utter obscurity, and had said to herself, 'I will live my own life—the life I was born for and made for, the life I am drawn to and impelled to. Therein lies my work and its reward; surely one part of its reward will be bread, bread for me and for those who look to me for more than bread.'

This she said, knowing that Mrs. Browning had also spoken, and that after long experience the poet had written plainly:

'In England no one lives by verse that lives.'

And Dorigen knew enough to know that this was true. She remembered Chatterton and Otway; she knew that Wordsworth had declared that for nearly twenty years his poems had not paid for his shoe-strings. She was aware that Tennyson himself had had to wait for ten years before a slowly appreciative public had demanded a second edition of his first small volume of poems; and that after many years of almost ceaseless production, Robert Browning 'could not but ruefully remember how expensive his

books had been to his sympathetic and uncomplaining father.' And, to balance all this, what had she?

What, indeed, had she? Fire from off the altar has no deeper mystery than this, that you shall foresee and foretell its burning, and yet you shall walk into it resolute and undismayed.

'There will be strife,' she said to herself; 'there must be strife—long, and sore, and bitter. I must prepare for it, for disappointment, humiliation, complete loneliness, keen poverty, perhaps even want itself, and sharp hunger. But these I can bear, these I will bear—God helping me.'

Later, when all these things and others came upon her, stroke upon stroke, with the sharpness of steel, she remembered that calm forecast.

Day by day, month by month, year by year, proved only the inadequacy of even her worst foreboding. No imagination could have wrought itself into the harsh depth of the years that followed upon that crisis of her life.

No, she had no special knowledge to set against her knowledge of the experience of others. She had not even knowledge of herself, of her own powers. All had to be tried. The one thing she was conscious of was the passionate desire for expression—the passionate sense of

something to be expressed. That that something was beyond her, above her, in her ordinary moments she was well aware; but in moments not ordinary it would strike through her. She was but an instrument, to be 'struck and moved to sound by invisible hands' and in ways unseen.

The least she could do would be to wait in patience, in calm faith, for the higher hours wherein her life would lie.

To such as she a measure of encouragement is seldom wanting at the beginning. It might seem as if no lure were needed, yet it is usually given.

The poem which Dorigen had written in the silence and anguish of the night of her sorrow was accepted, and paid for with most unexpected generosity. And after its appearance in beautifully illustrated pages, a kindly intimation was given that the editor of the magazine would be glad at any time to see poetry from the same pen. If confirmation had been needed, it was surely here!

So she bent herself to the way of the new life in Tenter's Close, putting aside with pangs keen enough the temptations which came from St. Dunstan's Rectory. Lady Anna understood when she had read the poem, which she had

seen and liked before she knew that the feigned name was the *nom de guerre* of Dorigen Gower.

'I perceive now,' she wrote—'I perceive and understand many things which have always puzzled me. . . . I wish you success, my child; but I have a decided feeling that you had better have been contented with a lower kind of success. I shall never like to think of you as

> '"A printing woman, who has lost her place,
> The sweet safe corner of the household fire,
> Behind the heads of children."

But I do not give up hope yet, neither does another I know. However, you shall make your experiment, dear.'

All that winter Lady Anna's letters used to come dropping down into Tenter's Close, keeping up a slender thread of connection between the old, fair, beautiful life and this that was so increasingly unbeautiful. The testing of poverty is a most ruinous testing for minds of a certain class. The idea of making it dignified or graceful seems an absurdity not to be attempted. Only when there is sufficient money for more than the needs of life may there be sufficient care for the things that make for the true peace and harmony of life. The first touch of negation crushes out the slight feeling for decorum that

was never an instinct, but a mere desire, with its root in a vain ambition.

And inevitably there was poverty in Tenter's Close. Dorigen tried with what strength she had to use wisely the money which Lady Anna had declared was owing to her; but it is a difficult matter to regulate an expenditure which you do not yourself expend. And there was no one to second her own desire, no one to see with her eyes, to hope with her hope. With a certain tremulous shrinking from her task, Dorigen spoke to Mrs. Gower of her intention with regard to the future, and the poor woman looked up in surprise; but she made no objection.

'Well, you know best,' she said. 'I don't doubt but you're clever, an' it goes to my heart to see you sweepin' the floor an' washin' the breakfast things, for I know you do it so as to spare Matty a bit. But what can Ah do? Ah've no strength left myself, and them two older gels o' mine isn't nut te say good te deal with. They're masterful, an' they don't like house-work. They care for nothing but gettin' their best things on o' week-days, an' goin' gadding about among such as theirselves. I'm at my wits' end wi' them, to tell the truth. And there's their best black frocks an' their new boots done for already. They've told me to ask you for some money to

get new ones; but Ah said Ah shouldn't. Lyddy's got it into her head 'at you've a sight o' money somewheres. She said she'd seen a box full o' sovereigns up i' your room.'

'Do you know what Lydia was doing in my room?'

'No; not unless she went up to do her hair, as she does sometimes when you're out. She says you have such beautiful brushes an' things. Poor child! She's niver seen nothin' o' t' sort afore. It's natural she'd like to have the use o' them a bit. They'll be no worse, ya know.'

It was difficult to receive this in silence; but the difficulty was surmounted. Lydia should be spoken with alone. She had been spoken with many times already, and entreated and persuaded to many things; but her handsome face gave no sign except the sign of a silent disdain. With Thomasin it was different. She would listen and question by the hour, while Dorigen strove to raise the girl's ideas of true living a little.

One wet Sunday evening, coming in from church with Matty, Dorigen found Thomasin by the fire, alone, and in tears. This was unusual; and when Matty had gone to bed, Dorigen set herself at once to find out what the trouble was.

It was not a difficult matter to win the girl's

confidence at any time ; and now her experience, so far as the past few weeks were concerned, was poured out in a very torrent of tearful words. It was 'a love affair,' of course. She had been engaged, only three weeks ago, to 'a gentleman, quite a gentleman.' And he had written her two letters, and sent her a locket with his hair in it, and given her a beautiful engaged ring. And now it was all over ; the gentleman had wished to have his letters and his presents back again ; and what could be said in such a trouble ?

'I'd got everything settled in my own mind,' said Thomasin, sobbing pitifully, 'where we were to live, an' how many servants I'd keep—I was only goin' to have two to begin with. An' I was goin' to have a blue silk dress for afternoons, an' a lilac one for Sundays—quite a pale lilac with a little satin spot. I like spots better than stripes, don't you? An' now it's all off. I do believe he's taken a fancy to Lyddy. She is pretty, I know. An' I don't know how it is, but lots o' folks takes a fancy to me, an' they make a great fuss about me just for a few days, an' then they don't care for me no longer. What's the reason of it, Dorigen? I'm sure I'm kind. Don't you think I've lots o' kind ways about me?'

What was to be done with a nature so shallow, so vain, so abnormally vivacious?

A few words were said, earnest words enough; but the sole reply, uttered in Thomasin's most chirping tone, was sufficiently disheartening.

'Oh! go on, Dorigen,' she said when the words were solemnly ended. 'Go on. I *do* like to hear you talk! It's beautiful!'

By-and-by Dorigen went upstairs with aching heart and head, and a bewildering sense of perplexity. The burden was already growing very heavy.

Yes, it was heavier than anyone might have dreamed, if there had been any to dream of her life at all. She had thought that from that unforgotten night the love that was in her heart would trouble her no more; that it would be silent and sorrowful, not rising up again at all to disturb her heart's peace. But her thought was mistaken altogether.

More than she knew, her love was her life; and made yet her life's sweetness out of all its great bitterness. 'I would not put it away from me if I could,' she said to herself in her lonely hours. 'I will keep it always, that I may be always wishing for his greater happiness.

'"If there be anyone can take my place,
And make you happy whom I grieve to grieve,

Think not that I can grudge it, but believe
I do commend you to that nobler grace,
That readier wit than mine, that sweeter face.'

'No; I grudge you nothing. I would alter nothing if you are truly happy; truly at rest, not even troubled by the thought that I may have trouble. You shall never see that I have. I will take care that you shall never see me sad, that you shall never see one sorrowful look on my face that you can connect with yourself, nor one look even of recollection in my eyes. At least so far as this I may spare you, so that you shall not even dream that you are spared.'

She was aware that Michael's offer of friendliness and helpfulness had not been an idle one. She was aware, too, that he would not forget; but she was glad that for awhile he seemed to forget. She understood the restraint, and waited for time and him to end it. The most perfect human affection, whether it be of love or of friendship, is ever the most patient.

Out of this patient pain that was not all pain, as out of other things that had seemed to have nought else save pain, there came many a piercing cry that set itself to the music of rhymed words as it came from the soul. So those poems were written which went out into the wide world, and had such strange experiences, and made for

themselves here and there a place and a name that was of more value than she knew till later. To

> 'Love your art,
> And, certain of vocation, set your soul
> On utterance,'

is to find surely that what you have of spiritual magnetism does not fall to the earth. The poem you have lived and suffered shall live again in the soul of sufferers you may not meet or hear of; but their sympathy shall come in subtle ways, and strengthen you when you need its strengthening. The most intangible ties are ever the finest and most precious.

It was on one of the nights of that winter—one pale, placid, moonlit night—that there came to her the desire to write a poem into which she might put more of her strength, and more of her life, than she had yet attempted to put into any written thing.

She was, as before, alone in her attic-room when the thought came, or rather, it should be said, the inspiration.

The strange household below had ceased for awhile from being strange, and slept the enviable sleep of the irresponsible.

It was worth while sitting late, were it but for the perfect peace, the grateful, unaccustomed sense of being unfretted, undisturbed. The calmness so

gained in the night was often as strength for the day that followed. And this night was even more than calm. Its great beauty was something to uplift any soul not of the earth earthy.

Dorigen sat by her window; the moonlight fell upon the Abbey walls and archways, with that soft lucent glow which seems always to steal into the inmost soul and to bring with it there a desire for some better thing, some purer life, some higher deed than any we have yet achieved. And to Dorigen the towers of the ancient ruin had always a message of their own. She had not yet forgotten, nor could she forget, that Sunday morning when she had sat at her father's feet among the fallen masonry, and had listened there to the story of the royal and noble Hild, and the yet more impressive story of the Inspiration of Cædmon.

Other stories of that same day she had read and heard since then; and the time seemed to live in her mind with a far greater freshness and vividness than any time more recent. And surely there was nothing in history so especially fitted to enchain and enchant a human soul that had in itself *something* of that same poetic fervour that Cædmon had; *something* of that same desire for the life of spiritual renunciation which had moved the great and holy Abbess of Streonshalh to the

founding of the monastery known throughout Christendom for its purity of aim, its wide and high intellectual development, its deep and fervent effort to attain the higher life.

Ah ! what it must have been, that long-past day, that one should deem it an advantage to live near the ruin of the building that marks the spot where those great lives were lived, those faithful prayers prayed without ceasing ! Nothing good can die.

Might not something be done to make that day live again for some to whom it was as dead as though it had not been ?

'A truth looks freshest in the fashion of the day.' And so it is with a history, the story of a life, a legend. A flash of new light shows you things in each undreamt of before.

If the story of Arthur and his knights could make you idyls of such fine mood and tone, surely then there might be another idyl made to tell the story of the beautiful lives of Hild and her saints !

And that winter's night, while the moon was sailing slowly over the Abbey towers, and the distant wail of the rising wind coming up from the sea, 'The Idyll of Saint Hild' was begun in an attic in Tenter's Close.

Where and how was that poem to find its ending ?

CHAPTER XXV.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW.

'My heart's a coward, though my words are brave,
We meet so seldom, yet we surely part
So often ; there's a problem for your art!
Still I find comfort in His book, Who saith,
Though jealousy be cruel as the grave,
And death be strong, yet love is strong as death.'

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

FROM the first week of her return it had been of the nature of an indulgence for Dorigen to step out from the gate of the tiny front garden, and pass along the hillside to the bottom of Monk's Close, and so down into Salthouse Garth to Than Rountree's little cottage. It was not more than two or three minutes' walk ; and since it could be achieved without going down into the street it was very tempting. There was always a moment's peace at old Than's, a moment's homely care and affec-

tion, a moment's deliverance from contentious words and unseemly ways of living.

There was little change in the quaint home in Salthouse Garth. The harpoons and the krenging hooks still hung on the wall ; the albatross still spread its wide wings across the top of the door. There was, alas! some change in old Than himself; his lame knee was more lame ; his fine colour had faded to the paleness of age, and his grey hair had now come to be of snowy white. But even those were not such serious matters as the change which had come somewhat suddenly upon poor Miss Rountree, who went no more to St. Hild's Mount, or to the new houses upon the cliff, where her services had been in such ceaseless demand. But, to her great satisfaction, she was not forgotten ; and no greater pleasure could come to her now than a visit from one of the Miss Chancelors, or from Mrs. Joseph or Mrs. Christopher Alatsonne. It was not only that these ladies brought flowers, and grapes, and dainties of various kinds ; that was a small matter ; but that they should come and sit by her, and talk to her, or read to her, and 'treat her quite friendly,' as the poor little woman said: this was real consolation to a person of Miss Rountree's mental constitution. To know herself respected in these her later days by the people she had held

in reverence from her youth was an alleviation in the hours of her greatest suffering.

Her disease was one that left her many hours of perfect freedom from pain; and then for many hours her pain was very great. There was fear that the end might come suddenly.

As a matter of course, Dorigen went more frequently to Salthouse Garth than ever—this to the perplexity of the Miss Cleminshaws, who had a fine contempt for old Than; and who had never forgotten that when they first came to Tenter's Close Miss Rountree had placed them at a distance, and kept them there by the mere severity and dignity of her manner. The little woman had seen enough to enable her to understand something of what Dorigen's days among them must be; but by tacit agreement her home-life was seldom spoken of. Old Than would shake his head and sigh, and stroke Dorigen's hair as he had done twenty years before. And Miss Rountree would hold her hand caressingly, and drop little hints of some small alleviation which the future was to bring. But they did not talk in her presence of that unpeaceful life which it seemed to them she was trying to live so bravely.

Dorigen seldom went to Salthouse Garth till toward nightfall; and one evening when she went she found Miss Rountree quite excited.

'I've had a visitor to-day, my dear,' she said. 'A new visitor; and, oh, so nice! Try to guess who it was. I will give you three guesses.'

For one moment Dorigen thought that Michael Salvain had been there; but Miss Rountree would not have spoken of him as 'new.' Then there came across her brain the recollection of a letter she had received a while before from St. Dunstan's.

'It was the new Rector,' she said with a smile; 'and his name is the Rev. Francis Thesiger; and Mrs. Thesiger is second cousin to Lady Anna Wilderslowe, and they have half a dozen very merry, and very clever, and very charming daughters.'

'Well now!' exclaimed old Than. 'Did ever anybody hear the like o' that?'

'Oh, the world is very narrow, Uncle Than, I assure you! You only have to go about in it a very little while before you find out how narrow it is. . . . But tell me about the Rector. He is an elderly man, and very grave, is he not?'

'Well, yes, he is grave,' admitted Miss Rountree. 'But he can smile, and that in a very humorous way. You should have seen his face when Than told him how he came to be lame. He got him to repeat all the story of how he jumped on to the back of a fast whale, and then was sent spinning across the ice. And——'

It was a little curious that they should have been speaking of the Rector just when that interruption came. It was a knock at the door; and when old Than opened it he drew back politely.

'Come in, ma'am; come in,' he said in his best English. 'Yes; this is Miss Rountree's. Please come in.'

The young lady who entered was younger by some two or three years than Dorigen Gower. She was tall, full in figure, and had an exquisite glow of health on lip and cheek. A typical English girl, you would have called her, with her soft rippling brown hair drawn away from a low wide forehead; and blue eyes that sparkled to the lightest word she uttered; her smile was one to be remembered if she favoured you with its full winningness.

'I'm the Rector's daughter,' she said, 'and papa wished me to run across with this. I don't know what it is—something in a basket. I'll take the basket back, if you please. But don't hurry; I'm not going just yet. Shall I sit here beside Miss Rountree? I'm sure this *is* Miss Rountree. . . . Oh, thank you very much'—this aside to Dorigen. 'Thank you; but I won't take your chair.'

'Dorigen can get another chair,' said Miss

Rountree, who was beginning to seem a little excited.

'Dorigen!—I beg pardon!' exclaimed Miss Thesiger, turning with quick surprise. 'Pray pardon me! The name is so unusual; and mamma had a letter the other day from a cousin who lives near Grancester, and she told us to look up a friend of hers—Miss Gower, Dorigen Gower. Do say it's the same!'

'It is the same,' said Dorigen quietly, and with a faint flush of mingled pleasure and pain. 'Lady Anna told me that she had mentioned my name to Mrs. Thesiger.'

'Mentioned your name! I should think she did! There were pages and pages about you. I don't remember exactly what she said; I didn't listen much, but I heard enough to make me think you would be about the most formidable person we were likely to meet in Hild's Haven. I believe mamma herself was half afraid, though she isn't much given to fearfulness, as a rule. . . . I shall go back, and read that letter over again, and then describe you from my point of view.'

'Hadn't you better wait a little before describing me?'

'Oh no! I can tell them what I've discerned this time, and leave the rest to be added after:

Lady Anna told us you were very clever, but I shan't find that out, because I'm so stupid myself. You will have the advantage of me there, you see; you can sound the depths of my ignorance. Do you dislike ignorant people?'

'Not because they are ignorant. But don't be under any mistake with regard to my attainments. "Clever" is the last word that should be applied to me. I don't possess a single accomplishment.'

'Can't you play?'

'Not a note.'

'And don't you paint?—or draw?—or carve?'

'I can't do one of those things.'

'What can you do?'

'I can read and write.'

'Arithmetic, of course.'

'Not any arithmetic.'

'Then, after all, we may be very good friends,' said Miss Thesiger, with evident relief. 'I shall come and see you to-morrow, if I may? Do you live near Miss Rountree?'

'We live in Tenter's Close,' said Dorigen, who had by no means strength of mind enough to utter the words and picture the place to herself without a feeling of something that might be termed 'false' shame, though it might have been difficult to say exactly where the falseness lay.

To have been dowered with instincts that crave passionately for a seemly and orderly life with more or less of gracefulness in it, more or less of amenity, and to find yourself compelled to live on terms that preclude gratification of such instincts, is a sufficiently depressing and deteriorating thing, and renders you liable to general misconstruction as few other negations can do.

Mere poverty would have had no especial sting for Dorigen Gower; she knew that the narrowest house was wide enough for a simple and dainty refinement. It was the slatternly confusion that jarred upon her soul, the disorder of the household ways that hurt her, the low bickering that tested her patience and her strength beyond what she could well endure. And this was a cross that in these days had for her no inscription.

She could not find the use or meaning of the sting that pierced her when Gladwyn Thesiger came to see her. Miss Thesiger had to pass across the end of the kitchen where Matty was washing the dinner-plates on one table and Mrs. Gower making tea-cakes on another. Dorigen had been in her own attic-room all the morning, Thomasin and Lydia were in the tiny sitting-room altering a dress, and Lydia was standing on a chair that Thomasin might the better

arrange the puffings and flouncings. It was not the dressmaking that caused the sting, but the untidiness of the two girls and their surroundings. Mrs. Gower's best widow's cap, with its long gauzy strings, was lying in the middle of the table; Thomasin's hair-pins were on the little sofa, and her brush and comb on the window-sill, with a half-empty cup of tea, and a pot of yellow pomade. The looking-glass had been fastened to the casement with a string.

Gladwyn Thesiger saw it all at a single glance; she had come for the purpose of seeing and trying to understand, having made up her mind decisively before she left Miss Rountree's that previous evening that there was something about Dorigen Gower which she wished to understand. During the morning she had learnt something of Dorigen's history. Mr. Gerard, one of the three curates of Hild's Haven, had been Mr. Kenningham's curate, and he remembered how the latter Rector had spoken of her. And, of course, he knew all about her father's second marriage; and he told the story of John Gower's noble sacrifice of his life for the man who had injured him, in a very effective way, so that Gladwyn came to Tenter's Close with a wider knowledge than Dorigen supposed her to possess.

It might have eased her pain a little if she had known all that was in Miss Thesiger's mind.

Dorigen was not confused, but she had a pale, pained look, as if she were feeling it all too acutely for confusion. Of course, no apology or explanation could be made. Fortunately Crainie and Lyddy took instant flight, though Crainie said afterwards that she '*did* wish she had stayed to be introduced.'

Miss Thesiger watched them as they went without betraying any surprise; she betrayed nothing but a warm desire to be friendly. There was no touch of condescension in her manner; nay, rather was there deference, and a perfect unconsciousness of any social or other inequality.

'Not that there is no inequality,' she said to Dorigen on a later day. 'There is difference enough between you and me, but the superiority is not on my side, and I am well aware of it. It is a condescension on your part to make a friend of me.'

To-day she did not speak quite so plainly, but the attitude of her mind was touchingly evident.

'I've read Lady Anna's letter again,' she said. 'I told you I should; and now I know what it was made me think you would be formidable. . . . . But she doesn't appreciate your poems half enough—papa says so. He could hardly

believe that one in *Wingard's Magazine* had been written by a lady. . . . . But there now! I see you don't like that side of your life to be touched upon—not to your face. Have I offended you?'

'Not at all,' said Dorigen, still blushing deeply, and trying to smooth the sudden contraction of pain away from her forehead. 'Only I am not used to hearing my efforts spoken of.'

'And you don't like it?'

'I don't know yet whether I like it or not. I think a great deal would depend upon the person speaking—probably quite as much as upon the thing spoken. A word might be like wine to one, or it might be like wormwood; and I am not speaking of praise or blame. . . . I had hoped that no one in Hild's Haven would ever know.'

'They don't know. . . . I mean to spread it everywhere.'

'You will not be so unkind.'

'Why should it be unkindness? Why should you live in this secluded way when you might have friends everywhere? Why shouldn't you be known and appreciated among your own people. Don't you care for their appreciation?'

'More for theirs than for any other in the world. But wait, please wait.

'"Let be my name, until I make my name."

I have done nothing yet, only dreamed of what I may do; and I think even my dreaming would come to an end if I felt that it was being watched and talked about. Absolute silence is the first condition of work with me, and, I should say, with many others. I know that Goethe himself declared that he could never create anything if once he had spoken of his purpose. I can understand that perfectly. . . . Besides, I have other reasons, and strong ones, for wishing to remain in all possible obscurity at present. Promise me, please, that you will not betray me!'

It was quite easy to discern the strong reasons, and Gladwyn Thesiger gave the desired promise unhesitatingly.

'I must tell papa what you say,' she added, 'or he may be speaking of it all to some one. You can explain matters to him yourself when you see him. And that reminds me, mamma said I was to ask you to come to luncheon on Saturday. She would have written a note, but she was very busy, and we don't stand much upon ceremony at the Rectory. Say you will come!'

'Thank you, it will give me pleasure to come.'

The Rectory of those days was a little outside the town, and stood on the brow of a hill half hidden by some of the finest old trees in the neighbourhood. From the windows there was a

perfect view of part of the winding valley of the Esk, with the purple moorland hills beyond, darkling to the lightest cloud-shadow that passed, frowning gloomily in storm, standing with solemn serenity in calm, but never keeping quite the same aspect for three hours together.

'It is a perpetual delight to me to watch that ridge of moorland,' said the Rector, placing a chair for Dorigen by the drawing-room window. He was an elderly man, with a sprinkling of white in his dark hair, a quiet look of thought and prayer on his worn face, and a most exquisitely simple courtesy of manner. There was no one in the room when Dorigen went in but himself and Mrs. Thesiger, a tall, handsome, picturesque-looking woman, with somewhat grand manners, tempered by the kindest of kind eyes, and a smile as winning as that of her eldest daughter.

'This is very good of you,' she said, taking Dorigen's hand, and speaking in clear musical tones. 'Especially is it good of you to come on such a windy day, when you have that terrible bridge to cross. It ought to be covered in, as the bridges are at the railway stations. But of course that would destroy even the little picturesqueness it has.'

'You must show Miss Gower some of your sketches, Georgina,' said Mr. Thesiger, bringing

a large portfolio from its rack. But just then the door opened, and some five or six tall girls came in with their hands full of primroses and daffodils. Gladwyn came up to Dorigen with a kiss, and Mrs. Thesiger introduced her younger daughters. They were bright, handsome, merry-looking girls, with not apparently a touch of shyness among them.

'There is a test for your memory, Miss Gower, Mrs. Thesiger said, when she had mentioned each by name, 'Enid, Herta, Mavis, Thyra, Juliet.'

'We should be introduced with our specialities tacked on to us,' said Gladwyn. 'Then people might have some chance of remembering. Enid, the musician of the family, the only one; Herta, the family poet; Mavis, do make haste to distinguish yourself in some way; Thyra draws, and Miss Juliet does all the flirting.'

'No,' said Juliet, who, being only eleven years old, was the plaything of the family. 'Oh no, I only do the little flirtations that Gladwyn hasn't time for.'

When luncheon was over, Mrs. Thesiger had some very natural pride in going over the contents of her portfolio with an appreciative visitor. They were water-colour drawings, landscapes, or flowers for the most part, and on the margin of a few there were pencil-notes by no less eminent

a critic than Ruskin himself, who had evidently been almost as much surprised as delighted by the tender handling, the soft ethereal colouring, the fine sense of the mystery of distance, and the splendid drawing visible in some of the architectural subjects.

'*I have seen nothing so good since Turner*,' Professor Ruskin had written at the foot of a beautiful drawing of Lichfield Cathedral; and though here and there he had not hesitated to qualify his praise, the praise remained generous and gratifying. It was a very pleasant hour that was spent in looking over Mrs. Thesiger's drawings, and not unprofitable.

The visit was pleasant altogether, and seemed as if it might be the beginning of new alleviations.

'You are not to wait to be invited any more, except for special occasions,' Mrs. Thesiger said kindly, when Dorigen stood on the terrace steps at the last moment. 'The garden will be looking better by-and-by, and I shall be glad if you will come and see my girls as much as you can. And if you are too tired to see any of us, or not in the mood for us, come and go about the grounds just as you please. And my husband told me to say that you were welcome to any of his books.'

It was difficult to understand so much kindness and goodness coming from people who only a

few days ago had been utter strangers. And there could be no doubt as to its genuineness, its perfect disinterestedness. Lady Anna's letter might have done something to secure such consideration; but it was easy to see that it had not done all. It was not mere social warmth, but human warmth that had been about her, and was about her still as she went down the avenue of leafless trees that led to the road. She could hardly remember the time when she had felt so peaceful, so hopeful, so encouraged to renew that hard fight to which she was returning. There was a certain placidness on her face, a certain contentedness when she lifted it to the face of a gentleman who was driving by somewhat rapidly.

Michael Salvain stopped instantly, and got down from his dog-cart, holding out his hand, and looking into Dorigen's eyes with some wonder.

'I was going to your house,' he said, lifting out from under the seat a small covered basket. 'This is from my mother, and the flowers are the first she has raised in her new greenhouse. I was to bring them to you with her love.'

'Thank you, and thank her, please. But why doesn't Mrs. Salvain come to see me?' Dorigen asked with all her old half-childish simplicity of speech and manner.

'She intends to come some day soon,' Michael replied. There was a great deal behind that he could not say. With all her easy-going amiability, Mrs. Salvain had found it hard to forgive Dorigen quite completely. Her son might profess his content with things as they were, but he did not profess it often or loudly, and Mrs. Salvain was not deceived.

Michael could not help wondering in the brief silence that passed how it was with Dorigen now, and how much longer she must stay in Tenter's Close before Mr. Lancelot Wilderslowe came to take her to some more fitting home. He could not ask the question, but he saw that even as she stood there a swift change came over that pleased, placid look which had been on her face but a minute ago. Indeed, it hardly seemed the same face, so touched with care, with anxiety, did it appear to be now. It was pain to him, keen pain, that he could not get behind either the one mood or the other.

He ought to have turned and gone on his way, but it was difficult to do that, as difficult as it was to connect her in his own mind with that newer and happier life which he had been led to believe was awaiting her in the future. It was strange how persistently his imagination refused to realize her happiness.

He could not imagine her life in Tenter's Close with the Miss Cleminshaws; but neither could he for a moment see her as the wife of the man who had been so cleverly described to him by Ermengarde Fairfax. Even as he stood there he sighed for very perplexity.

He broke presently from the reverie which had held him.

'I am very rude,' he said. 'But you will understand that meeting you, seeing you look less—less happy than I had hoped, has made me thoughtful for you, and you will not forget me if there is aught that I can do?'

'No; I will not forget. . . . I have been feeling afraid that some estrangement might grow up between us.'

'And you do not wish that?'

'Assuredly I do not wish it. . . . Let me speak even more plainly—I have other friends, new friends and old; but always when I think of that human happiness which I hope to find in friendship, I think first of you.'

Michael Salvain was a strong man, and his strength had been tried in various ways of late, but it had not been strained more than it was at this moment. There was a sudden pallor on his face, an uncontrollable quivering about his mouth as he raised his hat, and gathered up his reins

again. Dorigen was left standing by the road-side overcome by the contention of the feelings that were at war within her heart. The one emotion that was victorious was a passionate yearning for the love of Michael Salvain.

END OF VOL. II.

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