

THE ROSY CROSS

AND

Other Psychological Tales

BY

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THE
RONBURGHE PRESS

3, Victoria Street

Westminster

TO ALL THOSE WHO LOVE ANIMALS,

AND ALSO TO THOSE

WHO STRIVE TO GAZE BEYOND EARTH'S MISTY VEIL,

Is this Book Dedicated



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The Rosy Cross

AN ALLEGORY

METHINKS I was in a beautiful country on the outskirts of a city most glorious to behold, for the buildings in it appeared to be made of precious stones, which shone in the brilliant sunshine with all the colours of the rainbow. I found myself on a vast open grassy plain, extending far away to the sea, for, in the distance, I could hear the splash of the waves as they broke on the shore, and I could see the coast line, and the bright silvery sheen of the water. At one side of the city were hills and valleys thickly wooded, but although there were no trees in my vicinity, and the sun was high in the heavens, I experienced no feeling of unpleasant heat, but, indeed, a most delicious sense of comfort and well-being. I found I was not alone, for, proceeding from the city, were crowds of radiant beings of both sexes, also children,

all clad in white shining robes. They appeared to float along, as their feet were almost always raised from the ground, and all were conversing happily, either in small companies or two together, as they wended their way in one direction towards the centre of the plain, where I could see only a mist of blue vapour rising. I joined the company, and seemingly floated along with the rest, and, on approaching nearer, I inquired of one who was close to me why he and all those bright beings had come there, and what was the meaning of the vapour. He answered, "Look and wait, so shalt thou know. This much, however, I can tell thee, that this smoke contains all the pure and holy aspirations which fly upwards to a far higher sphere than this lovely Summerland in which, for the present, we are sojourning—glory be to the great King! But see!" As he spoke the vapour cleared slightly, and in it I saw myriads of dazzling white butterflies, fluttering ever higher and higher; and oh, wonder of all, presently, as the vapour cleared still more, there stood revealed a mighty Cross composed of rosy transparent light, into the centre of which the butterflies disappeared. From the

ends of the arms of the Cross were stretched countless luminous cords of electric fire, which converged both towards the upper and lower point. The end towards the plain was concealed in vapour, and the upper end, which stretched far up into the blue ether, was at last lost to view in bright rings of electricity, which widened and widened, throwing over all an effulgence of light such as was never yet seen on land or sea. "What," I asked of another angelic being, who stood by me, "is the meaning of the cords of electricity from the arms of the Cross?" "Those," he replied, "are the inspirations from above, to earth; they inspire the souls of your musicians, poets, artists—in fact, all your stars of genius, and the lesser ones too; they also elevate the people of your world, and instil holy thoughts and love of right and justice into their minds, causing them thereby to perform acts of benevolence and charity; every great philanthropist you have is thus inspired. But look around and you will learn yet more." I obeyed him, and, my power of vision seeming to be much increased, I was able to look out on the sea, and, coming in to shore, I beheld a great number of boats, and in them

were people who appeared to be of every nation, accompanied by the white beings of this beautiful sphere, who landed with them and conducted them to the foot of the Cross. The faces of some of these strangers were good, but others bore hideous, malevolent expressions, which made me shudder. I noticed, too, that the pleasant-looking ones greatly resembled the bright beings, for they seemed more transparent and radiant than those with the repulsive aspect, and they also appeared to be overcome with happiness and delight—many of them finding friends and relations amongst the angelic inhabitants. The others, on the contrary, were in a wretched condition; some writhed in contortions, whilst all of them cried out that they were blinded by the light, and could not bear it. Strangely enough, too, they were unable to see the bright beings of the country, although most of them could hear their voices. One man of this class exclaimed, "They tell me this is heaven, if so, I will have none of it; I want plenty to drink as I had on earth, and money to spend on cards and racing. Oh, this awful light, it seems to pierce me through and through, and show up everything in my life that I don't care to

remember! Take me out of this, some of you, do you hear?" A voice answered him, "My friend, you have yet to learn that the kingdom of heaven is within you, and as your condition is, so will be your happiness; on earth your pleasures were wholly material; you thought solely of self, and hardly performed one kind action to man or beast; hence your misery now as a disembodied spirit in a world, the atmosphere of which is Love itself. You feel as much out of your element as a fish out of water, and it will take no end of time, training, and work, before you can reside amongst us. However, I am glad to see that your education is beginning, as conscience is already asserting herself by reason of the searching light which tries the spirit of man, and which none can escape. But come with me, and I will conduct you to a place where you will find yourself more at home for a season."

My attention was then drawn to a female who stood a little way apart, with another, whom she addressed thus: "Well, little did I expect to be in the same boat with you, or to meet you in Heaven, for I always understood you were an Agnostic, and that you never entered a place of worship.

Of course, you did a great deal of good, but as your belief was nil, I supposed, or, I may say, felt certain, you would go to Hell. Oh, this fearful light! How can you stand it?" A voice replied, "My child, your friend believed in nothing, because she was unable to obtain the convincing proof which her class of mind requires, yet she ardently longed for some full assurance of a future existence, and now, to her great joy, she is in possession of it, for she has left earth, and finds herself alive indeed, with her own personality; therefore is her spirit raised in gratitude to the Almighty Being, who, in His overwhelming goodness, has so blessed her. Her pilgrimage below was marked all along by kind and unselfish actions, with no thought of any reward, and her heart was pure, hence can she bear the light which is a cause of distress to you, and for this reason: you went to church, my daughter, as a matter of form, and you lived in no manner up to your professed beliefs. In patience must you learn differently in a lower sphere till you are able to stand the piercing brilliancy which blinds you at present."

Then I saw that all the new arrivals who complained of the glare were conducted round to

the back of the Cross, where was a gate of green emeralds, over which was written, in letters of yellowish fire, "In My Father's house are many mansions," and above, right across the arms of the Cross, was written, in letters of changing white and blue, "I am the Light of the World." Leading from the gate was a flight of white marble steps, and all the strangers were taken down them into a country which, on the whole, appeared to be rather gray, but which was lighter in some places. I then returned to the front of the Cross and saw that the brighter strangers were being led to the shining city.

It had already come under my notice that the inhabitants of this land could only raise themselves a certain distance from the plain—in fact, just to the centre of the Rosy Cross, and I now witnessed a new and strange thing, for some amongst them did rise higher, and at last reached the rings of electricity, where they were lost to view, and, as each one disappeared, there rang through the air strains of such music as I had never before heard. On asking of one who stood near what all this meant, he said, "I will tell you. You perceived that only some of those strangers

were able to see us; so it is with ourselves; not all have arrived at a state to be able to behold the glory of those who have attained to a more elevated sphere. None of us can rise higher than the centre of the Cross till our spirits are sufficiently purified, and when that time comes we soar upwards, never to return to this sphere except as angelic messengers. Further, if we do not each meet with our Affinity—the other half of the Divine Dual Angel—here, we surely shall yonder; know that True Love is Divine, and that the Almighty Ruler of the Universe has not implanted it in any heart in vain. This Summerland is entirely peopled with spirits from earth, and there are countless other spheres, many of them peopled with spirits from the other planets. I have myself progressed through various circles, and continue to learn. It surprises me much now when I think how puny man, in his pride, wrangles with his brothers as to what is Truth, for imagine what a faint glimmer of it can reach him at best through his materiality, when we disembodied spirits feel how little we still know; never can we hope to reach Truth itself till we find ourselves far up in those circles of electricity,

and approaching the central Sun. Look!" and suddenly the plain at my feet seemed to open in a circle, and through it I beheld night in all its mysterious splendour—earth and the planets beneath me revolving round their sun, besides other systems in revolution; and the air was full of grand harmony—the music of the Spheres. I could see the electric cords of light from the Rosy Cross transfixing our world, and as I gazed, wondering much, a voice whispered, "And the Earth shall be filled with His righteousness."

I looked around, expecting to find my guide, but he was no longer near me, and as the scene gradually faded from my view I felt as if my spirit were flooded in the lambent, roseate glow from the Cross, for a heaven of peace was over me, like the hush at twilight, whilst that Angel voice repeated again and again, in soft, melodious tones, these words—"Life everlasting, Life everlasting, do not forget," till they died away at last like an echo in the distance, and then there was a great silence.

The Land of the Deluded Ones

AN ALLEGORY

THE Wanderer had traversed many lands; had been scorched under tropical skies by the burning sun, and frozen in the icy regions of the North; he now found himself at the portals of the gate behind the Rosy Cross, and descended the flight of marble steps which led into the gray country. Wherever he looked there was mist of different degrees of density, and the effect was depressing in the extreme. There were trees, lakes, and rivers, but the foliage was dark, and no light was mirrored on the face of the water; dank weeds grew in abundance, and the flowers—for these were to be seen—were dark of hue and gave out no fragrance; there was a stillness in the air which made the wanderer inclined to cry out to relieve himself of the weird oppression caused by the intense want of life. No bird was to be seen or heard, neither any animal. Presently he

became aware of the presence of persons besides himself, but they appeared shadowy; some of them conversed in low, muffled tones, whilst others evidently fancied they were alone, for if any beings passed even quite close to them, they did not see them; and some complained bitterly of the solitude. There were no children amongst them. Now and again an angelic spirit would descend from above and whisper into the ear of one of them. Rays of white light always accompanied these angels, and they often managed to fix a ray to the person they addressed, and he or she was then drawn gradually away from that misty world.

Sometimes, however, the misguided inhabitants repulsed the bright beings, and turned a deaf ear to their teachings. This, however, was not often, and in time all would become less obstinate and able to leave their dreary abode. From the land of grayness, dark granite steps led down through black marble gates to a fearful-looking country, as black as night, illumined only by lurid red spots of brightness like burning coal suspended in the atmosphere, which gave enough light to show up all the horror of the place. Flitting

about were dismal horned owls which shrieked in a way to fill the soul with dread ; bats wheeled round and clung to the damp slimy rocks, over which muddy-looking water flowed or trickled into pools of pitchy blackness below. Huge spiders and other loathsome insects were everywhere to be seen, and rats chased each other round awful-looking caves, where serpents lay coiled up and glittering, and some with their wicked heads raised ready to dart at their prey—the fangs quivering, and eyes gleaming, whilst the fiery spots glared overhead and threw shadows into dark corners, where death's-heads grinned, and instruments of torture rested against the filthy moisture-reeking walls. Horrible figures, distorted likenesses of men, were everywhere to be seen, but hardly any in the shape of women, with the exception of a few most wicked-looking old hags ; all, male and female, were dressed alike in sable black ; their faces were terribly repulsive—every possible vice was stamped on them, but especially that of fiendish cruelty. Many of these wretched beings were gloating over their former misdeeds, for the Wanderer had the power of reading their minds ; others were indeed in a

pitiable condition, conscience was not entirely deadened, and their past wickedness seemed to eat into their souls like a hot iron ; they were, or thought they were, encircled by the victims of their cruelty ; round them glided the mangled corpses of those whose murders they had planned in cold blood. In vain did they endeavour to rid themselves of the fearful phantoms which kept forever with their range of vision. The Wanderer looked on in horror, and especially was he sickened at the sight of some who, while on earth, had been systematic vivisectionists ; their condition was appalling, for they were surrounded by an array of bleeding animals of all kinds—the blood constantly spurting out upon their former torturers. The Wanderer was aware that all this was illusion, but a ghastly reality to these beings. Those who on earth had delighted in killing and wounding harmless sea-gulls and other creatures, beasts or birds, not caring in the least if they left them all mutilated to die in agony—such as these felt themselves crushed and smothered with fur and feathers, which got into their eyes and half blinded them, and into their mouths and nearly stifled them ; and the pain

which those animals had suffered was experienced all over again in the souls of these wicked ones. Men who, in our world, had found their only pleasure in destroying women's virtue, were also here tormented by the sight of the wronged ones. The Wanderer asked within himself if the spirits of the cruel mortals had been sent to this Hell, or if they had drifted there of their own accord. An inner voice—yet apart from himself—answered him :

“None are sent to any sphere, but every spirit is irresistibly drawn to its own place; like to like is a law. If an embodied spirit persists in a certain course, he becomes more and more in affinity with the sphere to which that course leads; his aspirations and actions must tend either in a higher or lower direction; nothing in the universe is ever at a standstill; stagnation is unknown.”

The Wanderer asked again—“And must a spirit, once here, forever remain in this dreadful place?”

“Not so,” the inward voice again replied. “After long, long years of terrible remorse, and further years of patient endeavour to expiate

the wrong done, and, if possible, some act of reparation, may such a spirit rise at length to a higher sphere. Often does he first return to earth to try and prevent mortals from perpetrating wickedness of the same kind. The path back to virtue is hard indeed, when a soul has once become so encased in blackness that the impetus has been downwards only—magnetically attracted towards the dark realm of the deluded ones.

“That none are perfect, and that even the best and purest on earth must sometimes err, we know; but when an embodied mortal turns entirely from the electric thread of light, and lives wholly on a low and sinful plane, it is different. However, good must triumph in the end, even if ages should elapse, for evil has no reality, but is delusion.”

The Wanderer looked upwards, and he saw what before had entirely escaped his notice, for far above, in the roof of the hideous cave he had entered, was a tiny speck of pure white light, which shone like a diminutive diamond; so he knew that even for these degraded spirits, in their prison of sin, was there hope. At the

mouth of this cave rushed a fearful torrent, and tossed on its bosom were numbers of frightful, dirty-coloured boats, in which sat many wretched-looking beings in their black garb. The Wanderer found that the torrent rushed towards the earth, and that these spirits were impelled thither to re-visit the scenes of their life in the flesh, and he now knew the cause of hauntings, for he himself heard the dreadful noises these spirits made in houses by banging doors and throwing furniture about, their unearthly screams and yells in many cases frightening the inhabitants out of their wits. In one mansion he saw the appearance of a most wicked-looking old woman, which greatly alarmed the servants; and in another he beheld an awful-looking huge monster, arrayed in black velvet, at the sight of which a lady fainted. Both these spirits had been evil livers, and could not resist the longing to return to their former haunts. The Wanderer felt very much saddened after his unpleasant experiences in the land of the deluded ones; he was glad to return to earth. But a great weariness had taken possession of his spirit, which he seemed unable to shake off. He roamed forth a little way till he reached a peaceful valley,

when he laid himself down to rest on the mossy turf, with the soft breeze fanning his cheek. Lofty snow-capped mountains reared their crests proudly around him, and all Nature was still for awhile. But presently the wind arose, and the sky grew red and lowering; thunder rolled in the distance, and, coming nearer, burst at length with the roar of a thousand cannons, the sound reverberating from mountain to mountain. Forked lightning broke through the masses of inky clouds, and darted to the ground. One moment the landscape was plunged in intense darkness, and in the next was lit up with a weird and lurid brilliance. The Wanderer stirred not; he slept calmly on. The sky opened, and a vivid flash of lightning flew swiftly through the air like a quivering tongue of flame. It pierced the earth where the Wanderer lay, and encircled his head as with a halo of glory; there was an awful clap of thunder, and the rain fell in torrents. So the storm raged for a time; but by-and-bye it ceased, and all was still. A lovely rainbow then spanned the heavens, and beneath it reposed the Wanderer; a sweet smile was on his countenance, which seemed to be illumined from some inward light, or with the

impress of a pure departing spirit, catching, as it were, in its flight a glimpse of the blissful regions which awaited it. A pair of doves on a branch hard by cooed to each other, and gazed tenderly with gentle eyes at the Wanderer as he lay peacefully there, never more to wake in this world.

The Angel of Love

AN ALLEGORY

THE Angel of Love wended her way from the bright sphere in which she dwelt, to our Earth. She knew that long ago One had left His glorious home and had sojourned on our small planet out of His great love for mankind, and that many temples had since been erected in His honour, and, in fact, His name now resounded in every quarter of the globe, so she longed herself to visit Earth and see how man followed the example and teachings of the Perfect One. All white and glistening, she floated swiftly through the blue ether, and in a few seconds reached our heavy and murky atmosphere. Below her was a vast and splendid edifice with lofty spires raised heavenwards; crowds of people were hurrying to the different entrances, and she, all invisible to mortal eyes, entered too. The interior of the building was beautiful, and brilliantly illuminated.

At the end of it stood a grand high altar, upon which were myriads of candles; before it were many priests in gorgeous raiment. Boys were swinging censers, and the intoxicating fumes of the incense pervaded the air. The organ pealed, and the priests chanted the mass; their voices rose and fell, and the people bowed their heads, crossing themselves. Some seemed very devout, others looked about carelessly. The Angel could read the thoughts of their hearts, and she wondered at some things much, for she saw that many were there because they thought that so they would atone for much evil, and that when they went out they would go straightway and do more; and she knew that the grand service was all in honour of the Perfect One—that lovely music and the blaze of red and gold, and light. She left with the rest, and found that nearly all were hastening to another building where a bull-fight was going on. She went in, but only for a moment, for the horror of the scene was too great, and her pure spirit, unable to put a stop to such cruelty and wickedness, could not remain in its proximity. She saw the poor dying brutes, and as their spirits soared upwards to the paradise of animals, she

consoled herself to think that their misery was over for evermore. In the street a procession was forming—priests, banners, images, and lights. Out flocked the masses from the bull-ring; down on their knees they fell, making the sign of the Cross, and the Angel wondered how they could thus combine cruelty in their lives with a fanaticism which they thought was Religion, and imagined they were true followers of the Perfect One, and that in such a way did He mean them to worship the Great King—the Creator of the universe—His Father and theirs. “Wretched blind mortals,” thought she; “they know not that true worship lies in the love and gentleness extended even to the meanest and lowliest creature, the daily acts of goodness and kindness, the alleviation of pain; how far are they from God, for God is Love, and dwelleth not in temples made with hands.”

So the Angel sped onwards, saddened at heart, and presently she found herself in a huge city, which appeared to her to be dark and gloomy. She saw many temples, and found that the different pastors, although some amongst them were very good men, spoke and argued far more

about points of doctrine than about rules of life. She entered an immense hall where crowds of them were assembled to talk about what they *said* was the religion of the Perfect One; but when the Angel listened she did not recognise it—everything seemed to be dogma, form, and ceremony. These seemed to be most important, but nought was said about Love and Charity, and as the Perfect One had always insisted upon these, and had said nothing about ceremonies, she thought it very strange; and in the many sermons she heard, there was never any allusion made to the treatment of animals, which she considered was a great mistake, as the people of that town seemed to be very much in need of lectures on kindness to their dumb friends, for she saw many of the persons who had been praying driving away from the Temples in carriages with fine horses, whose heads were dragged up by tight-bearing reins, and the animals were kept standing waiting for their owners for any length of time with their heads kept in one strained position. She also saw ladies who thought themselves very virtuous, and who would do no work on the first day of the week, wearing the wings and breasts

of birds, often torn from them while nesting, to adorn their bonnets; but the darkest thing of all that she witnessed was the laboratory of the so-called scientific man, who tortured living creatures for what he pleased to call the benefit of humanity; and the real benefactor—the man who, as a follower of the Perfect One, had his soul full of love for his brothers, and keeping his life pure, and assisted by a circle of loving spirits—was really able to heal. This man lived hard by, despised and rejected, like his Divine Master, in a poor and humble dwelling; the great would have nothing to do with such as he—they scorned his gifts; they would not even give him a chance of showing that he possessed them; he was a Spiritualist—a medium, and that was enough for them. They did not know that the Perfect One was—in all reverence be it said—the greatest medium this world had ever known, and as unto Him, so came the poor and lowly to His follower, and he healed them.

The Angel went further, and glided into one of the luxuriously furnished apartments of a fine mansion. On a bed a lovely girl lay dying, and around her were gathered a group of sorrow-

ing relatives, overwhelmed with grief at losing her; and although the clergyman standing by assured them they would meet her again, and that she was going to Heaven, yet as he was unable to tell them anything definite about the next world, and could give them no proofs of its existence, his attempts at consolation were futile. They could not see the spirit body of their loved one gradually leaving the physical body, as could the Angel of Love, nor were they able to behold the bright celestial beings grouped above, ready to receive her. There were strains of unearthly music, and then—ah, see! the Angel of Love touches the anguished mother on the forehead; her spiritual eyes and ears are opened—she fancies she must be dreaming, for, lo! she hears the melody, and sees too the radiant angelic form of her daughter floating away out of the open window, surrounded by her spirit friends; and she could even clasp her child to her heart before she left, and feel her fond kiss returned. A great peace entered that bereaved mother's soul, for now indeed she knew that there was a future life, and the Angel of Love went from her presence in joy, knowing full well that she would

soon develop into a strong medium, and be able to receive loving messages from her daughter, and so would she and her family learn the glorious truth of Spiritualism, and aid in spreading it abroad—giving peace to many a sad soul still in darkness. So she left, and, passing through a crowded thoroughfare, she saw a poor little ragged boy selling matches. He had no mother, and his father drank, and sent him out to beg. To-day he had only met with rebuffs—one person even threatening him with a policeman; and now it was evening, and he dared not face his father or go to his wretched home. Poor little chap, he was faint with hunger; he had a hacking cough, and was perishing with cold. His teeth were chattering; do what he would he could not keep warm. On and on he sped through the night till he could walk no further; his strength seemed all gone, and at last, in a deserted place near a river, he lay down and cried piteously. All the time the Angel of Love had been hovering near him, and whispering comfort into his ear, though he knew it not, and now she soothed him to sleep. The moon shone coldly down, and bathed the child in her silvery light; the stars,

like gleaming jewels, looked at him too. So he slept on and dreamt that once more his kind loving mother, with her gentle face, bent o'er him; and his dear little baby sister, who had only gazed on the world for such a short time—he saw her too, and he felt no more cold and hunger. But where is he?—who has him now in her arms?—who is this beauteous lady in shimmering white, with the sweet face and the crown of lilies, and where is she taking him? Up, up they fly through the air; the stars seem much nearer. How strange it all is—how light and how different are his feelings now to those wretched agonising ones before he fell asleep. His head nestles on the lovely lady's shoulder, and she whispers softly: "Dear child, they call me the Angel of Love—you will never suffer more; I am taking you to Heaven, where you will find your mother and sister, and be happy forever." And the Angel began to sing a sweet song like nothing the child had ever heard, and it was echoed around, and grew louder and stronger and even sweeter. The air was all at once full of other bright Angels, and there was a glow in the sky like at sunset—all roseate and golden.

The child saw pearly gates which gradually opened, and before him was a garden full of roses of every shade, and clusters of white starry flowers with a sparkling diamond in the heart of each. Green trees waved in the balmy air, with birds gaily singing in their branches. A stream of pure water glistened in the sunshine, whilst on its mossy banks, and on wide-spreading dewy lawns, were crowds of beautiful children in shining garments, weaving garlands, and playing with fleecy lambs and other gentle animals. But above all, there were his mother and sister, just as they had appeared to him in his dream before leaving earth.

The Angel of Love now returned to her Sphere of Light, and related her experiences on our planet to the Angels of her circle, and how, from what she had seen, it almost seemed to her as if the Perfect One had descended to it in vain, for His teachings were so misunderstood and perverted, and so few followed in His footsteps. "Still," said she, "there are some who understand and follow, and for the sake of these, and for the child, I am glad the Perfect One went down to earth, for had He not done so, neither I nor the

other Angels could have found the way, for you know He has fastened a silvery thread from the highest sphere to the lowest. Some mortals cannot find it now, but as soon as they are Spirits we will show it them, and they will help those remaining on earth to find it. Evil is only shadow caused by ignorance which will wear away, and so I see that the bright streak of Light which binds Earth to Heaven is gradually widening."

The Mirror of Destiny

A FAIRY TALE

FAR away in the forest stood the little house in which Darby and Joan lived. One wintry night, ten years ago, when the wind whistled through the leafless trees, and the snow fell quietly down—softly, softly, covering the ground as with a white pall, the old couple were sitting in their cosy kitchen; the fire burned brightly and threw out a warm glow; a small oil lamp stood on the table, and that and the fire lighted up the room. The floor was of red tiles, scrupulously clean; shining pewter and china pots, jugs, and plates were ranged on shelves, or hung on nails driven into the white-washed walls, which were also adorned with cheerful coloured prints. In one corner stood a grandfather's clock, which kept up a pleasant tick, tick, and on the mantelpiece were curiously-shaped old-fashioned ornaments in painted porce-

lain, and a little Swiss barometer, consisting of a hut in which resided a small man and woman, who respectively came out according to the state of the weather; the little gentleman had now put in an appearance, the lady evidently objecting to the snow. Darby and Joan were half dozing; he had an open Bible on his knees, but his eyes were shut, and the horn spectacles seemed to be in danger of slipping off his nose; she had been knitting, but the click of the needles was not heard now, the knitting rested in her lap, and a small black kitten played at her feet with the ball of wool. The pair felt warm and comfortable; the wood crackled as it burned merrily away, and the flame flickered and danced, lighting up the figures and kindly furrowed faces of the old couple.

Presently there was the sound as of a child's cry; it was repeated, and Joan started up to listen. Was it her imagination, thought she, or only the sighing of the wind? But no, there it was again, quite unmistakably clear this time, so she called out to Darby, rousing him and telling him what she had heard. The sound seemed to come from the direction of the house door; Darby unbolted it, Joan standing close by, looking over his

shoulder. A gust of wind blew in myriads of snowflakes, and there, on the threshold of the door, lay, covered with their downy whiteness, a little child, blue-eyed and golden-haired, half perished with the cold. Darby lifted it up and placed it in the arms of his wife. She took it, and having warmed and fed it, was rewarded by a sunny smile; so the old couple kept the waif and reared it.

Ten years had since then passed over her head, for it was a girl, and she was now the sweetest little creature imaginable, both in appearance and disposition. No traces of her parentage could be found, and the worthy pair were unable to discover who had left her at their door on that stormy winter's night; the only clue, if any, to her identification being the name of Lita worked on her clothing, which was of fine quality; so that was the name by which her foster parents called her.

Lita was a curious child, much given to day-dreams. She never played noisily as do most children, but loved instead to sit and muse by the fireside, or else in the summer curled up on the low branch of a tree, to which she would

climb and remain perched there for hours, listening to the woodpecker, watching the birds and squirrels, and ever and anon losing herself completely in dreamland. She would go back and relate such wonderful things to her grand-dad and grannie, as she called them, that at first they were inclined to scold her for what they termed her imaginative nonsense, but as this seemed to hurt her sensitive feelings, they had no longer the heart to be cross, and so left her alone to dream of her sweet fairy-land. Sometimes, too, she would wake up from her sleep and say that she had seen a lovely angel, and she would declare that before she slept, beautiful white lights flashed before her eyes, and that if she woke up early in the morning she saw such pretty pictures of all kinds. Her foster parents thought it very strange, but as Lita was not at all afraid of these curious experiences, and, in fact, seemed to revel in them, they did not disturb themselves about the child, who was always good, happy, and healthy.

One glorious morning in July, when all Nature was decked in a garb of beauty, Lita sallied forth into the green forest, the grass under her feet was strewn with variegated wild flowers,

and overhead the trees formed a cool shady bower ; the air was full of the melodious song of birds, and all seemed peace, joy, and harmony, which entered Lita's soul, so that she sang like one of the feathered songsters herself, as she tripped gaily along. She walked till she was tired, and presently came to an open glade, shaded in the centre by one huge wide-spreading oak tree. On one side of its massive trunk was a hollow, and into this Lita crept. It appeared to be of vast extent, and the entrance only was dark, for a little further on Lita could see that it was as light as day, so that she was not afraid, but, determined to explore, went boldly ahead. Once inside, she was able to stand and walk erectly, for the fissure was of great height ; how far up it stretched could not, however, be perceived, for it ended above in darkness. The child soon found herself on a path flanked by rocks but open overhead to the sky. This path ended abruptly, after a short distance, at the base of a hill, where there was a door, which Lita did not notice at first, as it was of the same colour as the soil. Her curiosity was rapidly increasing, and she looked about till she found a bolt, which

she easily unfastened, and the door swung back on its hinges. Before her was a long passage, the floor composed of stone, and walls and roof alike glistening with stalactites, and lighted in some way which Lita certainly did not understand, for she saw no lamps; yet there was a soft brilliancy everywhere. On she went, and after what seemed to her to be a good distance, she arrived at a gate which was covered with ivy. Lita pushed it open and found herself in a delightful garden, full of winding flowery walks. She chose one of them which soon brought her to a velvety lawn, up and down which marched a number of quaint-looking little people, who mostly wore peaked caps and pointed shoes, and garments of every imaginable hue. The gentlemen among them, on seeing Lita, made the most profound bows, and the ladies smiled a gracious welcome. Lita observed how they stamped their feet as they marched along; and they all cried out to her—"Come, Lita, and help us to stamp." She came forward to join them. One of the little ladies held out her hand for Lita to take, which she did, and she saw how all the company held hands as they proceeded.

"Plant your feet down firmly, and exert your will," they said. "Why do you stamp?" she asked. "Look down," they replied in one breath, and everywhere on the mossy turf she beheld fiery jets springing up and forming into words such as these: "Revenge," "Dishonesty," "Avariciousness," "Malice," and many more, and as fast as they flamed up, the little people stamped them down. The jets of fire which rose highest, and were most difficult to extinguish, formed the word "Cruelty."

In many places where the fire had been trodden under, lovely white flowers sprang up, and in the centre of each was written in glistening dewy letters of azure blue—"Love," "Honesty," and, in fact, all the words which typified just the reverse qualities of those terrible fire-written ones.

"When you return to your world, mind you continue to stamp with all your might and main," said the little people to Lita, "then you will help us to abolish evil; we require helpers much."

"Why, am I not in my world now?" she asked.

"No, you are in the Land of Dreams," they replied; and approaching her from one side of the lawn was a fairy-like creature, arrayed in

palest mauve, of a gauzy transparent texture, with a spangled veil, studded with moons and stars.

“Come with me, Lita,” she cried in a silvery voice, and she led the child to another part of the garden, where roses, lilies, violets, lavender, and every sort of flower bloomed, and where was a spacious bower, composed entirely of trailing jasmine, clematis, and myrtle, under which danced lovely little fairies, entwining themselves with garlands, whilst others sat around weaving them, singing meanwhile in a cadence which rose and fell harmoniously. “Dream sweetly on, oh children of earth ; slumber softly and peacefully, ye virtuous ones ; so shall we weave happy dreams.” In the distance could be heard the sweet tones of the harp and guitar, as unseen musicians accompanied the singers. Lita was quite entranced with the charm of the scene and the music ; but the mauve fairy touched her on the arm and drew her quietly away through a glade which stretched down to grassy meads besprinkled with daisies, cowslips, and poppies ; a winding stream wound its way towards a glassy lake a little further on ; the sun shone on the water and glinted through the trees,

throwing lights and shadows on the fairylike scene. Sheep, cattle, elephants, lions, and animals of every kind were to be seen browsing contentedly, or roaming in calm enjoyment of their liberty. Ethereal little people sauntered about, followed by dogs, cats, and monkeys, whilst pigeons, canaries, and doves perched on the hands of others. Swallows wheeled around, and there was a soft whirr of wings in the air, as myriads of birds flew hither and thither, and soared upwards, whilst the trees were full of the melody of their joyous voices.

Lita had fallen into a reverie, quite overcome by the beauty of the landscape. She was roused by the voice of her fairy guide, who remarked to her: "This is the paradise of animals: hither do they all come from your earth, and so are those that have cruelly suffered made happy for evermore; but we must be moving onwards," and she accompanied Lita to the banks of the stream, which they crossed by means of a rustic bridge, and then, after proceeding for a short way through a shady avenue of limes, they found themselves in an Italian garden, where stood a most splendid building composed of glistening white alabaster,

crowned with two majestic towers of immense height. The fairy approached the door, and knocked with the massive gold knocker; it immediately opened, but of itself, for not a creature was to be seen, and she and Lita entered. The child looked around her in wonder, for she stood in an enormous hall, the floor of which was entirely tiled with amethysts and topazes; the domed roof was of opals, and suspended therefrom were lamps of diamonds, in which blazed electric light; the walls were of looking-glass, so that the whole interior was one dazzling brilliancy. The diamond lamps were reflected again and again in their wondrous gleam, and the idea of vastness caused by the mirrors was overwhelming. Lita felt unable to move or breathe; she gazed till it seemed as if she could gaze no more, when the fairy took her by the hand and drew her to the upper end of the hall, where she pointed to the wall, and said: "You shall view your life in the mirror—look!" Lita obeyed, and first she saw herself as she was then, when a cloud obscured her reflection, which, on clearing away, revealed the figure of a handsome young man, by whose side she knelt, as a young

bride, before the altar, where a priest was giving to both his blessing. The vision faded, and then appeared across the mirror a line of white light, which started from a mass of gray rose-tinted vapour, to which it returned after having formed in its course almost a complete circle, and both the beginning and end of that line were hidden from view. By its side ran another line of darker hue, springing from the same cloudy mass, and finishing alike there; and Lita could see her double, first as a child, then as a grown woman, and later as old, walking in the bright streak, yet sometimes wavering towards the darker one; and near her was ever a veiled angelic being, whose brightness shone through the concealing drapery; and something told her inwardly that the lines meant life, with the choice betwixt good and evil which is given to every mortal; and that the veiled figure was her good guardian angel. The fairy evidently divined her thoughts as she stood pensively there, for she said: "This is so, Lita, and the rose-tinted vapour hides the entrance to the land beyond the sunset—the Spirit World—to which every soul returns at last."

"And where are my parents?" asked the child.

“Your mother, my dearest, was a forsaken one, and is already in that happy land awaiting you; as for your father,—see!” And again the former picture faded, and a new one was presented in the glass. Lita now beheld a proud, scornful-looking man, with cold eyes and a cruel mouth, mounted on a prancing, high-mettled steed. He passed out of sight, or, rather, vanished—clouded over, followed by a retinue of obsequious retainers.

“He is a great nobleman,” said the fairy, “and must repent and suffer much remorse before he can enter the beauteous country beyond the sunset.”

Suddenly it seemed to Lita as if she were raised from her feet, and floating upwards past the gleaming lamps and through the sparkling roof of opals. There was a murmur in her ears like the flow of water, mingled with the ringing of deep-toned bells; and now she was flying amidst rosy clouds, away, away, to the land beyond the sunset; and she began to whirl round and round, faster and faster, whilst the sound of the bells changed to a loud clang, and the murmuring waters to the roar of a mighty storm-tossed ocean; and then she awoke to find herself reposing on

the green sward, under the waving branches of a tree in the forest, whilst over her bent the dear, kind foster-parents she loved so well, with tears of joy dimming their eyes as they said, in one breath—"Darling, we have found you at last; we called, but you did not hear; we searched through the forest till past midnight, and as soon as it was light we came out again." And it was dawn; the grass was covered with dew, which clung heavily on the leaves and flowers; all Nature was beginning to awake. The birds shook themselves, and fluttered chirpingly about; and the child appeared like the enshrined Spirit of Purity as she passed along homewards with her foster-parents, pondering on her wondrous night in fairyland, as she went with her sweet face turned towards the glorious sunrise.

Dagmar's Vision

AN ALLEGORY

THE fire burnt brightly in the grate, and Dagmar sat close to it—as near as possible—and, regardless of her eyes, gazed and gazed at the blazing coal, staring into the depths of the lurid red mass, for the black fuel had almost all undergone the usual glorifying transformation; but above, on the top of this glowing furnace, were placed two logs of wood in the form of a pyramid, and around these the flames flickered, danced, and rose merrily upwards, casting light and shadow over the spacious apartment; for the day was drawing in, twilight was merging into evening, and Dagmar, with her dreamy nature, preferred the solitude and the semi-obscurity of this old library to the soft brilliancy of the efficiently-illuminated drawing-room, where the rest of the family had already assembled, and were comfortably seated, with their books and their work, in proximity to shaded lamps.

These good people were more industrious and also more prosaic than the romantic little Dagmar. Besides, they had attained the age of reason, and, alas! had perhaps passed it unobserved. Doubtless they were desirous of improving their minds, and, indeed, there was room for a good deal of improvement, for they were somewhat commonplace country-folk, dense and tiresome as those are apt to become who have rarely travelled, and who have not gained sufficient knowledge of the world to expand their ideas and take them out of their narrow groove. It was one of those mysterious problems which can never be solved by any human being, how this maiden of eighteen summers should possess such a curiously different character and disposition from those of her belongings, for she did not resemble either her parents or her sister or brothers in the least. She seemed to have been shaped and cast in another and a finer mould altogether. They were ordinary, whereas she was the very reverse. She perceived at a glance what her family took ages to grasp and understand with much toil; so that if she was a wee bit lazy, she was not greatly to be blamed. Things also which were

entirely hidden from these worthy rustics were clear to her. They beheld only the shells and husks, whilst her vision penetrated the fleeting and unreal outer covering, and reached the true inner meaning—the soul. Country-bred, clinging perforce like a little limpet to her native rock, she should have been the same as her kind, and kept to the unintellectual low plane where they dwelt in such unaspiring contentment; but such a mollusc-like existence could not satisfy Dagmar's spirit, which soared higher and higher, far away from mundane things. Her small head was constantly filled with wonderful thoughts—thoughts of the distant past, of the present, and of the veiled future. She tried to think of the time when all was chaos, of the creation of our planetary system; but what mortal can hope or dare to fathom such a dread, mysterious secret? In awe she would pause, and finding it impossible even to muse on such a stupendous event as the birth of our earth—for it caused her brain to reel—she would turn with a sigh of relief to the grand and beautiful knowledge of life as she experienced it in herself, feeling that, after all, the beginning of time or matter concerned her not, nor, indeed, the

former state and condition of her spirit. It was with the great "now" that she must deal to the best of her ability, and with the "hereafter," which she felt so certain would follow. Ah! the destiny of the human spirit. How she loved to dream of that all-engrossing, enthralling theme; and angel whispers assured her that immortality was no myth, but a sweet and glorious truth. Was it fancy, or could she occasionally in reality pierce the gloom and behold a reflection, though shadowy, of the splendour of the spiritual world? Fair, innocent child, needless to say that she was misunderstood, as is the sad fate of all such star-like natures; for the world cruelly and coldly rejects those around whom the soil does not closely adhere, and such terms as "mad" and "deluded" are oft applied to the wisest and best.

But we left the little one with her blue orbs intently fixed upon the fire (and it is to be hoped, reader, that you will not do the same, for it is ruinous to the eyesight), and, by-and-bye, she saw quite distinctly before her a beauteous city, in which were buildings magnificently designed, of a style of architecture with which she was un-

acquainted ; the walls of the houses were of every conceivable hue, and appeared to be composed of one slab of shining stone from the roof to the ground ; the windows were enormous, they extended from the ceiling to the floor, and were divided into four panes, which opened and shut horizontally outwards ; the roofs were very slanting, and were all exactly alike, and apparently made of malachite. As for the streets, they were paved with turquoises, and there was a remarkably raised footpath on either side, of white marble, slightly roughened to facilitate walking, for otherwise the pedestrians might have slipped and fallen. The city was very populous, and the inhabitants all beautiful ; the men possessed fine figures and noble countenances, and the women were all, without exception, young, lovely, and graceful, with the sweetest expressions imaginable on their faces, denoting every good quality. Dagmar never knew how it happened, but presently she found herself in this curious, unknown town with the rest. By her side was a queenlike woman, who turned smilingly towards her and said, as she pressed her hand cordially, "Welcome to the land of reality. You may not know me, but I have

seen you often, and often have I been near you. I am called 'Sympathy.'

"Oh, sweet Sympathy," replied Dagmar, "oft-times I have longed for you till I was sick at heart, but you came not."

"Yes," said Sympathy, "I heard you, and I assure you I came quickly, but it was very hard to make you aware of my presence; shall I tell you how to feel and know that I am with you? Listen. You are a good girl, but you live too much for yourself; you are full of lofty resolves, of high and noble ideas; this is all virtuous and right, but it is not enough to wish, one must 'act.' When you are lonely, and friends do not seem to understand you, or if they appear to misjudge you, if, when your heart is bursting with affection, you are met with chilling coldness, when you are dying for a response and it comes not, then do what I say; endeavour to forget yourself, and to think of those who are far more unhappy, more unfortunate, and unloved than you are: concoct some little plan for their benefit, and put it into practice; never mind how small and trivial it is, do it—don't only have it in your mind; or the poor animals, try to help them; now attend

to my words. When you have accomplished your little task, which I believe you will find a pleasure, this is what will occur. You will know, without the slightest doubt, that I am with you: a great calm will come over you, your own small troubles will seem paltry and mean in comparison with those you have witnessed and done your best to alleviate, and a peaceful sigh will escape you when you feel that I am near your heart, and something will whisper softly to you that all the good ones in your earth love you, for you are bound to them by a mystic cord; and, besides this, you will have the certainty that all that have gone onwards, those grand spirits who have for ever left their earthly shrines, are looking down on you with kind eyes full of affection, and that some are ever around you, floating and hovering over you, whilst the silver thread of sympathy binds these immortals to you in a strong, yea, most mighty, unbroken chain, which the tiniest work of true beneficence draws tighter and fixes on your spirit with a more intensely powerful grip of connection—literally dragging you heavenwards, for with every good endeavour the links spring closer and contract, thus bringing you nearer to the spheres of Light,

from whence a faint glimmer reaches you already. Child, you are living in eternity now; do not waste the precious moments in sloth, but *act*.

Dagmar, meanwhile, was quietly weeping, for she was much touched by Sympathy's words, and she felt that she had indeed been a dreamer only. The good woman's eyes filled with tears also, for her heart beat in unison with that of the young girl, and her soul was full of a deep yearning compassion as she mused on the opening life, with the long years of trial and temptation in the future, for Sympathy could perceive and read human destiny in a mirage—in fact, she beheld it clearly in the "Akâsa," or Astral Light, which is difficult of explanation to the uninitiated, and she was well versed in all the varying intricacies of existence on our planet, so well named by a great writer, "The Sorrowful Star." There was silence between the two for an inconsiderable space of time, the silence of complete understanding, for each comprehended the other. Presently, under her friend's inwardly soothing influence, Dagmar recovered her composure, and, becoming less pensive, began to forget herself and to look about her once more with redoubled interest. She noticed that

numberless golden chariots were rolling by; the drivers stood upright in them, and never touched the horses with the whip, but simply flourished and cracked it in the air. The animals were high-spirited creatures that flew along like the wind, and were, all of them, pure milky white, with long silky tails; they wore neither blinkers nor bearing-reins, and had large gentle gazelle-like eyes, which were almost human in their pleading and intelligent expression. The charioteers sang as they drove in one direction, in a seemingly endless procession, whilst from the windows fair ladies flung down roses to them, and waved their gossamer, cambric and lace, scented handkerchiefs; the drivers would then glance upwards with ardent and admiring looks, and their songs would grow more sweet and tender.

“Oh! where are they going?” asked Dagmar.

“Come, we will follow them,” replied Sympathy. and they walked, keeping to the marble pavement, till they reached the end of the principal street, which wound round and round constantly, always revealing fresh beauties in the way of fine edifices and delightful courts, in which were palms, statues, and fountains, and so they at length arrived at

the massive brass gates of the city, the portals being surmounted by gorgeous eagles of the same metal, with eyes of sparkling rubies, and they passed through and found themselves in the open country. Dagmar was entranced with the splendour of the landscape which met her view; she stood on rising ground, and therefore could see for miles and miles. Lakes, streams, and forests lay at her feet far and near, and beyond, in the horizon, there stretched a range of mountains, whose peaks, when not entirely hidden from view amid billowy fleecy clouds, were crowned with snow, burnished and tinted with a deep rich shade of rose, in the rays of the sun that was midway betwixt noon and the hour of setting. The high road appeared to lead straight as an arrow to the base of these distant sublime altitudes, and along it sped the glittering chariots, creating an imposing spectacle in their vast number, for the very foremost one even could be seen away ahead on the white track, which stood out hard and clear, as if firmly pencilled by the hand of a draughtsman. And, above, the air was full of fluttering doves; they were of every hue, from the darkest grey to the purest alabaster, and flew after the

chariots, perching upon them, and upon the drivers' arms, so tame were they, Dagmar continued to gaze, as if spellbound, on the scene, which captivated mind and senses; there was a wondering wistful look in her eyes, like that beheld in a child whose faculties are beginning to awake. The waving branches of the trees swayed gently to and fro in the balmy breeze, on which was borne the intoxicating perfume of rare flowers, with which the turf was bestrewn, and which clustered and climbed in lavish profusion in hedges and natural bowers in a wild sweet way, untrained and untouched by man. And now there was the sound of a silvery-toned clarion which rang out loudly with a sharp and penetrating tone; three times was the call repeated, and it proceeded, without doubt, from the first charioteer, who had disappeared from view at the foot of the mountain range, for just there the road gave a turn, and was hidden by a clump of trees.

"Ah! he has entered," exclaimed Sympathy, as the note of the clarion died away in the distance, and at the same instant there was heard the shout of hundreds and hundreds of voices, for every

charioteer cried "Excelsior!" and the cry became a swelling roar. It was carried from mountain to mountain, and re-echoed back again, and upwards through the limpid blue ether the word "Excelsior!" resounded. Where would its soul-stirring, vibrating resonance find at last a resting-place? The waves of atmosphere, thus put in motion, where would they cease to move? Higher and higher the voices were raised. To what mystic and holy circles in the universe did those trumpet-tongued braves desire admission for this their grand harmonious and yet plaintive invocation; A joyous cry it was, straight from glad and grateful hearts, but in it was mingled a strain of melancholy, almost imperceptible, yet present. It denoted the overwhelming knowledge of imperfection, and the striving of the soul to gain more light and purity, as it stretched itself in fervid prayerful longing towards the Infinite.

"I pray you tell me the reason of all this?" said the girl, clutching hold of Sympathy's arm in her impatient excitement.

"Yes, I will explain it to you to the best of my ability; and I must also endeavour to suit my exposition to your youthful understanding and

limited knowledge of the world, for naturally many things are to you, in your inexperience and ignorance, as sealed books; and, therefore, when you ask me for an explanation, you set me by no means such an easy task as you may imagine; but I will do my best to enlighten you, dear one," replied Sympathy.

"Yes, do; I am dying to hear all about it," said Dagmar, eagerly.

"Well, you will require patience, for the tale may be somewhat long and wearisome, 'child," answered the queenly woman. "Listen, then," continued she, bending towards her hearer with tenderness. "Concealed by that mountain range is a far fairer land than this land of reality, so fair, in fact, that you could not look upon it with mortal eyes: but by prayer, that is to say, by aspiration and by ever living up to your highest ideal, you may indeed obtain just a faint glimpse of its beauty. A rent will be torn in the veil that hides it from you, and for a second you will see, yet hardly know that you are seeing. The world I speak of is the land of love and wisdom; there hate, cruelty, vice, and false love have no dwelling-place; here they enter only to be shown up in

their true colours and to die, but yonder they can gain no admission, for they have all to pass into this land of reality which bars the way to that pure sphere, as you shall learn. Now, consider your earth for a moment. Folks there say that they 'love' many things. Now, no love is true and real unless combined with wisdom. Do you follow me, child? and are you able to distinguish the false from the true? For instance, if a man is avaricious and cares for gold so much that he can think of next to nothing else, do you find wisdom and love there? Ah, no! He kindles a red fire around his spirit, which burns and scorches him, and is, in very truth, the allegorical fire of hell; and, alas! only when he perceives the error of his ways does he experience the pain of it in all its awful intensity, for then it blazes fiercely and becomes a fiery ordeal, because awakened remorse and regret for past misdeeds cause terrible anguish, and the pangs thus engendered are far more torturing than the tiny stabs and pricks of a wilfully stifled conscience, which, half slumbering at times, asserts its rights during a career of flagrant vice and sensual selfishness; and that hell fire, which the man in his blindness and madness has himself kindled, will

burn and smoulder hotly for years in your world, or in the after life (if repentance only begins then) till the spirit has purified itself; and when that poor mistaken one has outlived the past, and has done his utmost to retrieve it, then will he indeed praise God for the blessed gift of immortality; as he gazes enraptured on the wondrous light which continually flows over the dark earth and its adjoining spiritual spheres from the most holy Christ circle, and when he is able to behold the shining electric cord, which, descending from above, passes even to the lowest depths of the drear abodes of the depraved, the spirits in prison; thus furnishing them in every case with a means of escape, and from thence leading upwards through brighter regions, till it is lost beyond the highest point of heaven known to the freed spirit of mankind. And just as there can be no real love without wisdom, so can there be no wisdom without love; for if the literary man, the scientist, or the statesman, does not possess a compassionate, loving soul, which embraces all creation, he must needs be cold, unsympathetic, and often cruel. And now for the love between man and woman. Without wisdom it is unworthy of the name, and

is but a selfish, fleeting, and contemptible passion. This you will discover, in a measure, when you are older, although you can happily never thoroughly comprehend or realize the loathsome hideousness to which false, sham love may descend. No innocent, pure woman could do that, but this much you can know, that wherever wisdom does not go hand in hand in sweet companionship with love, that love is worthless and transient. If you are unable to respect and reverence the object of your priceless affections, and do not feel raised and soaring aloft in loving him, if he appears sordid and grovelling, instead of aspiring like yourself towards higher things, be sure that you are making a sad mistake and wasting your regard. Alas! that love and wisdom should be so seldom met with in combination on your globe. When they are, the angels rejoice! You notice the doves! These are all the different kinds of love flying towards the beautiful land, but, as I told you, all cannot enter there. They will arrive at the base of the central mountain, the highest in the range, where there is an enormous cavity, at the entrance of which grows a marvellous tree, that remains winter and summer the same. Its foliage

being ever green, the leaves possessing the smooth, glossy appearance of the most lovely enamel, besides exhaling a delicious and invigorating fragrance; the doves all flutter around this tree and perch upon its branches, and the charioteers, alighting from their chariots, immediately employ themselves in separating all the dark birds from the light ones, the true loves from the false, for being inhabitants of the land of reality, this is their work, and they have the gift of discovering falsity. The first charioteer who reaches his destination invariably sends out that martial clarion call which you heard, and he has the right of taking all the lovely white doves he can find off the tree, and he carries them into the cave, where he sends them through a clear crystal casement that opens out of the wall opposite the mouth, straight into the land of love and wisdom, for they are the real loves. Then the rest of the charioteers shout 'Excelsior!' for they are overjoyed that their companion should, by his punctuality in starting, and by his prowess in driving, have gained this privilege, for jealousy is unknown in this country. All the other charioteers take the remainder of the doves, gently disengaging their

claws from the twigs, to which they cling rather tightly. Those that are very dark possess neither love or wisdom, and shrivel and die at once in the captor's hands. The lighter ones, having a tinge of both virtues in their composition, usually die not, and all that survive the ordeal are borne into the cave, and sent through a wide shaft in the floor of it, back to your earth, to live on in that murky atmosphere, and to improve if possible. The aperture in the floor of the vast cavity is surrounded by a high railing composed of opaque amber, and in the most remote corner even there is no darkness, for the whole interior is brilliantly illuminated by a natural phosphorescent flame, which neither singes nor burns, and is believed by us to ascend, perforating the centre of the mountain and flaming out of its summit, for the crest, though hidden from view, seems to glow resplendently through the concealing snowy clouds, which are constantly irradiated, forming a kind of nimbus. The mountain is called Purity."

Sympathy paused, and as Dagmar was silent, and appeared to be overcome with wonder at all she had heard, she continued :

" And so you see, dear, that it is not only spirits

which are immortal, but every good quality and thought also. Their home is in the land of love and wisdom, and there they reside for evermore. Thoughts are entities and realities as well as deeds. As for illusive love and foolishness—the latter being the nearest approach I am able to give you to a definition of the reverse of wisdom—they will soon perish, for evil is utterly shadowy and unreal, and cannot last. All sin, every form of vice and cruelty, are the children of delusion, and are the fatal result of a lack of love and wisdom. When at length man becomes more spiritualized, and, in truth, civilized, then will all this outcome of gross and savage ignorance cease; then at length will miserable humanity be raised and transported with heavenly rapture at the marriage of love and wisdom, for they shall reign supreme on your planet, and men and women will live so wisely below that each and all, on quitting their earthly tenement, will immediately rise to the angelic regions, instead of being compelled first to reside in lower spheres for a time, by reason of their inability to bear the strong light, and on account of the fearful discomfort which the rarefied, mountainous, spiritual

atmosphere of those pure realms causes them in their present condition of transition and imperfection. Now remember what I say, dearest Dagmar, and think of it; and don't forget to *act*."

And these were the last words which the young girl heard. She found that the gracious Sympathy was vanishing, and becoming as vapour, and the glorious landscape was disappearing also; and presently all had faded, and there was darkness. Where was she? She rubbed her eyes, and then opened them widely. She was sitting in the chair in the old library in front of the dying fire, in which there was just an almost imperceptible flicker, and a maid was approaching her with a lighted candle in her hand.

"Well, I never, Miss! You must have gone to sleep. Your pa and ma, and Miss Joyce, and Mr. Horace, are coming down to dinner."

The young woman's face expressed great astonishment as she delivered this speech:

"Yes, I believe I have been asleep, and dreaming. I will go and dress at once, Pearson," replied Dagmar, as she rose and left the room in haste.

Her brain was whirling, but the sensation was a delicious one, for the thoughts which caused the tumult were deliriously witching and entrancing. She went up to her own apartment, and made some alteration in her simple attire, for she loved simplicity and whiteness. Then she joined her family at the evening repast, and entered into ordinary conversation on the topics of the day and hour. It was impossible to think quietly over her unusual experience till bedtime; but that night, when she laid her head on her pillow, she recalled her wondrous vision to her remembrance in all its beauty, and the beloved sweet Sympathy stood out as lifelike as she appeared in the dream.

And Dagmar grew to maturity, and became a noble woman and an honour to her generation. She was very unassuming and modest, by no means giving herself her due or the very least credit for her great and good thoughts and deeds.

She encountered her full share of trials, but she bore them bravely; and many and many a time did she feel Sympathy's presence whilst she pondered on her never-to-be-forgotten teaching.

And never, never was the visit to the land of reality obliterated from Dagmar's memory, and she desired ardently and humbly that on leaving this earth she might experience the felicity of finding herself *at once*, without first tarrying elsewhere, in the land of love and wisdom.

The Mystic Veil

AN ALLEGORY

HE was a great thinker of noble thoughts, leading to acts of benevolence and mercy; and he was sad with the deep sadness that those only know who feel intensely. The cruelty of the world tore at his heart-strings, and his soul grieved and fretted, not for his own sorrows, for he had no time to consider them, but for the sorrows and sufferings of the human, and more especially of the brute, creation. He longed to free the oppressed, and right the wrongs of this earth; and before him was ever a grand ideal of a perfect and purified humanity. He was poor, only a priest of the Roman Church; therefore, he had not the power of wealth to depend on, and to assist him in carrying out his schemes of philanthropy, but only the magnetic influence of the pure and lofty spirit which shone through his countenance. At a casual glance he seemed as

other men, as other black-gowned priests, excepting that his figure was strikingly tall and commanding; but upon closer scrutiny, and as soon as his voice was heard, it would be found that he possessed some peculiar quality, hard to define, which made him as different from his fellows as a diamond differs from common glass. What matter, then, the colour of his eyes or the shape of his features? Father Zaron was his name, and he had many friends amongst the laity and his brother priests; but some of the latter were jealous of his wonderful influence, and scoffed at him openly, calling him "Visionary Reformer," besides applying other terms of ridicule to him, for unfortunately the cloth does not transform a man into an angel, as is well known. But Father Zaron cared neither for praise nor for blame. He just went quietly on his own way, doing all he could to alleviate misery and pain, and his sympathies, as already mentioned, were chiefly with animals, their utter helplessness appealed so strongly to his chivalrous nature. He would actually manage to gain an entrance to the Physiological Laboratory, and his masterly and authoritative pleadings, coupled with the power

of his wonderful personality, saved many a sentient creature from torture, and changed the views of the hard and cruel scientist. He also instituted reforms in the slaughter-houses, and whereas his brethren were completely taken up with their Aves and Paternosters, and confined their energies to the bringing in of lambs to the fold, he employed all his energies in doing real, sensible, and lasting good. His was indeed a true vital religion of the Spirit, in which superstition found no resting-place, and all the ceremonies were to him as so many wrappings enveloping the Truth, which he felt with certainty could never be grasped entirely by man whilst still in mortal form. Then, before the altar Father Zaron prayed with such fervour that his soul seemed almost as if it were drawn out of his body, and wafted up on angel's wings to heaven. Each prayer he breathed and uttered contained, for him, an aspiration for more light. Words which, by others, were repeated mechanically, were for him ever fresh, and enshrined the most beautiful and holy thoughts, which the majority neither saw, nor, had they seen, could have comprehended with their earthly minds.

He was of a spiritual mould but seldom met, and he lived more in heaven than on earth. He had wonderful visions and dreams, in which he beheld beings in dazzling raiment, denizens of brighter spheres than this; but he did not often relate these experiences, but preferred to keep them to himself. One evening he was in the pulpit; the church was crowded, as was always the case when he preached. His theme was the cruel treatment of animals. He mentioned the poor omnibus horses, and deprecated the thoughtless manner in which persons entered and left the vehicles on all parts of the route without considering what a strain it was on the animals to have to pull up and start afresh so constantly. He then spoke of the cruelty of cabmen, carmen, &c., in lashing their jaded horses in the way they did; and how the police stood stolidly by without moving a finger, whilst the public rarely bestirred themselves to put a stop to these acts of inhumanity. "And have you ever noticed the wistful, sad expression on the faces of some of these wretched horses?" continued the Father. "An expression perfectly human in its intensity of suffering, and which once seen can never be

forgotten. That look on the face of man or woman means that all joy in this life has fled for ever, and that henceforth all is one overwhelming heartache and pain." Presently he turned to the subject of "caged birds," and he remarked: "I happened to pass a bird-shop yesterday, and I felt sickened at the sight of the miserable captive songsters in those small cages. They reminded me forcibly of the soul kept bound and fettered—chained down, my brethren and sisters—by the iron bands of selfishness, sin, and materialism." His voice, so wonderfully clear and melodious, and with such a velvety softness in its varying vibrations, changed in its tone as he spoke. It grew harder and fiercer with the force of his indignation, and at length his words burst forth in a thundering volume, which almost terrified his hearers. Their eyes were riveted on him, and a shiver passed through some of their frames as, spell-bound, they listened, held almost entranced by his magnetic personality. "By the mystic holy cross," he exclaimed, "I adjure you to rouse yourselves, and break from this terrible mesh of deadly self-seeking." And as these words passed his lips his countenance became

all at once transfigured, and, to the amazement and consternation of the congregation, there appeared above him a white, cloudy mist, which gradually grew into a majestic figure clad in glistening, snowy robes, and with a face so heavenly and sublime that it would be impossible to describe the features. The whole was one transparent brilliancy of light, which shone through and around it, and which also streamed down from a cross of gleaming white lilies—fair flowery emblems of purity. This symbol the figure held high aloft in its right hand, whilst the left hand rested as if in blessing on Father Zaron's head, he meanwhile being perfectly unconscious of the glorious splendour that surrounded and crowned him, for the rays from the cross seemed to culminate in a resplendent circle of white flame, in the form of a nimbus. Immediately there was a panic amongst the congregation. Some rushed, shrieking wildly, from the edifice. Others fell on their knees, and, amidst cries and stifled sobs, implored the Virgin to save them from the last judgment; but these soon rose from their kneeling posture, and hurried frantically to the doors with the rest, as if the

devil were at their heels. Once outside the walls, they grew somewhat calmer, and, forming themselves into groups, discussed the extraordinary occurrence with hushed voices and terrified mien and gestures, ever and anon glancing furtively towards the entrances of the church, as if expecting some fearful apparition to emerge therefrom. As for Father Zaron, he could not understand the meaning of the strange conduct of his flock. He remained quietly in his place for a few moments, looking on wonderingly at the curious and irreverent scene, and then, making the sign of the cross, he came down from the pulpit and passed along in his calm, dignified way towards the vestry. His progress was, however, impeded by a gentle touch on the arm, and on turning he found beside him one of the acolytes—an innocent, sweet-faced little boy—who was looking up at him with an expression of beseeching and wondering adoration in his large, heavily-fringed blue eyes. “Oh! Father,” he exclaimed, his voice trembling with emotion, “the lovely angel that floated above you with the cross of lilies—I saw him—how could the people be so afraid of him? I felt that I loved him at once,

and when he vanished——” “So, Albert,” interrupted the Father, “it was an angel that helped me with my sermon; and I know, child, that he would not be a cause of dread to you, for you have told me how you often dream of angels and of beautiful gardens full of flowers. Go on, Albert, in the path of righteousness you have so wisely chosen, and you will grow up to be an honour to manhood; and when at length your time to leave this world comes, you will find that your dreams have come true, and that they but foreshadowed the grand reality.” He patted the child’s head, murmuring “God bless you;” and, as he walked on, said musingly to himself, “It was surely my guardian spirit who manifested himself thus—him that I have so often seen. Heaven is nearer than we think. Oh, that I were more worthy of the favours bestowed so lavishly upon me. How can I show my gratitude enough? Only by work—work to the end.”

The church was now nearly dark, and there was only sufficient light from the candles remaining on the altar and from the dim glow of the everlasting lamp to show up the colouring of the

handsome stained glass windows and the figures of the Saints depicted thereon; for a few seconds Father Zaron remained there in deep contemplation, when suddenly there was a gust of cold wind which extinguished the lights and only left the lamp still burning, so that the interior of the building was plunged in almost complete darkness, when all at once there appeared a shower of bright starry lights, some gyrating in rapid motion and others fixed and seemingly suspended in the air, changing the shadowy gloom into one glorious shine; the Father beheld this marvellous transformation with supreme calmness, he was outwardly and inwardly quite undisturbed, for these, to most persons unusual experiences in spiritual phenomena, were to him simple everyday occurrences, so accustomed was he to their constant appearance; with hands upraised in prayer, and with an unearthly and ecstatic expression of countenance, he entered the vestry and closed the door.

Some days had elapsed since this episode, and on a fine morning on which Sol even deigned to show his face and beam on the city of London, Father Zaron made himself ready for a short journey by train previous to a long

walk out into the country; this was one of his customs, and gave his mind a thorough rest from its many cares, for whenever he thus took a day's holiday, he determined beforehand to think of nothing harassing or wearing, so that he might return to his arduous and self-inflicted duties renewed both in soul and body, for the air and the exercise renovated his system and imparted that physical vigour, which of necessity is somewhat lacking in one who perforce leads rather a sedentary life. Moreover, although doubtless cankers often lurk and are hidden under a fair exterior, and by simile in an Arcadian existence, still they are not so palpably on the surface as is the case in large and crowded towns, so that the good Father was rarely pained by any gross exhibitions of wanton cruelty, and he would often compare the rustics with the Londoners to the great advantage of the former. To-day he strode along through green fields and lanes, with the lark singing blithely overhead, and all Nature decked out in verdant beauty, for it was still spring, and beautifully warm for the time of the year; he thought that it was indeed a happy world, for so are surroundings

apt to colour our ideas and feelings and even temporarily alter them ; the fat, contented-looking cattle were browsing in the meadows and gazed at him with their gentle yet unmeaning eyes ; the labourers busily engaged in their monotonous but useful work of tilling the ground, appeared to be quite satisfied with their lot, their little children brought them their midday meal, and smiled up at them, and they too looked happy ; the horses seemed everywhere to be sleek and well-kept, there was a pleasant hum of insects, and the air was heavy with the scent of the may-blossom and lilac.

The peacefulness of the scene was communicated to Father Zaron ; he sauntered into a wood and there seated himself upon a mossy bank, he ate the frugal repast with which he had provided himself, and drank a draught of fresh water from a neighbouring spring ; soon a drowsy feeling overcame him, and presently he slept, and sleeping he dreamt a wonderful dream. He found himself in a vast sandy desert which extended far away behind him, and on either side, in tracts and ever-receding tracts of treeless waste, not a blade of grass, not a green leaf was anywhere to be seen,

and before him was what appeared to be a dark and thick veil of a gauzy texture, which reached far up into the sky, and away towards the horizon at both ends, till they were lost from view. With him was a great multitude of people, who cried out continually, "Oh, mystery! oh, mystery! lift your veil—we are groping blindly onwards, have pity on us, and show us the right way!" Some of these people thrust their hands and arms deep into the sombre filmy material, but there seemed to be strata and strata of its dense folds, for the rents that they succeeded in making revealed nothing but masses upon masses of the curious gauze-like substance, the tears also closed up immediately, and presented once more an even surface. Many of the people grew fiercely angry at their vain endeavours to pierce the veil, and they began to quarrel, accusing one another of hindering their attempts, for the crowd was immense, and the jostling and screaming were terrible, whilst the weaker persons got trodden under foot; then a few of kindly disposition interfered, they expostulated with the aggressors who trampled on the poor wretches without mercy, they lifted them up and did all they could for them, heedless of

the scornful and contemptuous looks of the tyrannical ones, and of their taunting expressions of ridicule. "Why trouble yourselves about such fools as they?" they cried. "Everyone for himself say we; for if you are so silly as to remain behind, and lose your chances of piercing the veil, we will not. Look at the seething crowd in front of you, you will never get through it; you are idiots, and nothing else. What does it matter if such miserable creatures as those are used as carpets or druggets? Pray, of what use are they to anyone? Let them die. Ha, ha, ha, we don't care, as long as we are all right!" Now Father Zaron, who had been a silent witness of all that was being enacted in his vicinity, noticed that the kind-hearted persons, after having helped their fellows, found no difficulty whatever in making their way to the front, which greatly surprised the wicked ones. He saw, too, that shining beings, invisible to all, made a pathway for them through the crowded throng, and so they were able to go forward until they reached the veil, which although they did not touch it, appeared to grow transparent in the places where they fixed their gaze; he was unable to tell what

they beheld, but it was surely something that gave them great pleasure, inasmuch as their eyes often filled with tears of joy, and their faces were uplifted to Heaven, whilst words of praise and gratitude fell from their lips. Father Zaron now moved nearer the veil himself, but he first stopped to raise up a poor girl, who had been cruelly down-trodden, and who thanked him with modesty and meekness for his help ; he then passed on, and was, in a moment, before the mystic veil which hid the invisible from mortal eyes ; in solemn majesty it loomed there, and the awful stillness and mystery oppressed his soul. "If only I could see beyond," thought he, and he longed ardently with an intense longing that the hidden things might be revealed to him ; then he considered how small and lowly he was, and hardly dared to hope that his wish would be granted, but, falling on his knees, he prayed with much humility, and as he gazed at the dense, impenetrable sheet of darkness, which kept its secret in such fathomless concealment, he felt that he could bear the terrible strain no longer, and he uttered a piercing cry of anguish, wrung from the very depths of his being, and as the bitter wail rang through the air, there

was a change, for lo! the mighty curtain began to rise amidst the strains of angelic music, soft and distant at first, but ever growing stronger and fuller. So the veil rose steadily and surely upwards, whilst the melody swelled into a grand song of praise, as if myriads of Spirits of the Blessed sang with one voice in harmony, and at length there was disclosed a glorious atmosphere of dazzling light, into which Father Zaron felt himself being drawn by a Power that he neither could nor wished to resist; he then seemed to be floating as on a stream, and everywhere, above, below, and around him, there was the pure whiteness of electric fire, without a tinge or a shade of amber, and his spirit knew a rest that it had never before known, and, as if inbreathed, the words came to him, "And in Thy light shall we see Light," and in that moment all the hard problems of life were solved for him, and he was infilled through and through with the wondrous crystalline atmosphere, in which was mingled the fragrance of the lilies that he loved. All was made plain to him, and he recognized how the sorrows of the world created the joys of the great hereafter, for the soul that has drunk of the cup

of the bitterness of woe to the dregs, can also more fully taste the most intense bliss. He had loved Light, and now the Light had come, and he felt that he was drifting in a sweet peace and calm to an unspeakable happiness which stood awaiting him with outstretched arms.

Onwards he floated, wishing it might be for ever so; for he knew that all was well, and that in time he must reach the haven. And then, with the music of the spheres entrancing him, and the glorious foretaste of realized hope shining on his spirit, he awoke, to find himself once more in the cold, grey, material world. Hours had flown, and it was twilight. The air was chill, and there was an overpowering stillness which almost made itself heard, so forcible was it in its want of sound or movement, for at that time of day—neither morning, noon, nor night—one is irresistibly reminded of death in its mystery of silence—Nature's hush. Father Zaron rose from his mossy couch, and drawing his cloak closely around him, walked swiftly away. He felt still in a dazed condition, and he was much impressed by his vision, which surpassed any of his previous ones, and was still fresh in his mind. When he at last reached his

humble dwelling, the room he entered looked cold and drear, and the silvery crescent moon peeped at him through the latticed casement whilst he was occupied in lighting his little lamp. He looked into his store cupboard, and found a small piece of dry bread and some cheese, just sufficient to appease his hunger ; and for one brief moment he who thought only of others was filled with compassion for himself and his own poverty. He felt just then as if he had been transformed into another person, and was looking on. But thrusting the temporary wave of feeling aside, he pulled himself together, and began at once to map out his plans for the next day with work, work, work till the sunset ; and so would it be on each succeeding day until, for him, the clear azure sky was resplendent with red and gold for the last time on earth, and heaven's morning dawned.

The Crown of Edelweiss

AN ALLEGORY

IN a far-off land, where the sun shines brightly all through the year, round and golden, in a background of pure azure sky, and where the air is ever balmy, and laden with the scent of roses, which abound everywhere, making the earth appear like a fair garden, dwelt the Princess Irenda. She was wondrous fair, and her spirit was equally fair and unsullied, lending an angelic beauty to her outward form and countenance, and shining through her deep blue eyes with the radiance of the heaven within. There were other princesses living in the neighbourhood, but they were not so divinely good and unselfish as was the Princess Irenda, and therefore they did not possess her mysterious and lasting charm; for those who loved her loved her with adoration, and for her real, true self, and were irresistibly drawn towards her in spite of themselves; for

what is so powerful as extreme beauty and goodness combined? So were some of these princesses tenderly attached to Irenda, and she fully reciprocated the feeling, for she was of an affectionate disposition; but others, as may be supposed, cordially detested her, because they, poor things, were madly jealous of her immense popularity, and of the superiority in mind which they perceived, yet failed to understand. They called her eccentric, on account of her not caring for all the feasts and pageants, which to them meant life; for she preferred, instead, to remain in her palace and fine grounds, in the company of a few tried and choice friends, with her favourite books and pet animals, of which she had a great variety; and whereas these ladies found unlimited pleasure—in fact, even happiness—in gorgeous dresses and jewels, with an added zest, when wearing them, in the thought that they were cutting one another out, her idea of happiness was to be able to relieve the destitute and needy; and, to accomplish this beneficent object, she devoted much time, and spent the greater part of her fortune, which, however, did not nearly equal the riches of some amongst her detractors. But the sorest point of

all to these disagreeable princesses was her immense attraction for the opposite sex, and the numerous suitors for her hand. None of them, however, would she hitherto accept, and for the following reason. An ideal was before her eyes and engraven on her heart, compared with which every aspirant seemed a miserable specimen of manhood. Where was the love of light, the unselfish striving, the untiring work for humanity, and the grand endeavour to ameliorate the sufferings of the brute creation? She saw them not; and till now each suitor appeared to be more despicable than the preceding one. Also she had firmly (and the princess had a will) made up her mind that she would wed only that man, be he prince, noble, or simply gentle, who could climb up the rocky, narrow, winding stair in the Tower of Transparency, which led to the white land of the Edelweiss flower, of which fair blossom of Paradise he must bring back a crown, gathered and wreathed with his own hands. This feat sounds remarkably easy, but in reality it was just the reverse. Moreover, although the various admirers of Princess Irenda tried their utmost to win her, they stopped short at this arduous

task, which they one and all found utterly beyond their strength, and perfectly impossible to accomplish; for none could reach to that mystic land at the summit of the stair unless the life of unselfishness were led. Nevertheless, some of the princes and nobles were extremely artful, and thought to deceive the princess; so they would arrive at the palace with fine and courtly bows, bearing garlands of flowers, some of them even artificial, to imitate the Edelweiss; and they would try every means to induce the princess to believe that they had mounted the rocky stair and culled the flowers, besides speaking of the many kind actions which they had performed to persons and animals; but, alas! for these enamoured impostors, their comedy was played in vain; for Irenda cared not for them, and knew instinctively what was their true nature; besides which, she had but to glance through the clearing-glass, which she always wore attached to her robe, to render her intuitive surmises certainties, and so dismissed them, overwhelmed with shame and shattered hopes.

A few years elapsed, and Princess Irenda continued to be quite happy and contented in living

her quiet, peaceful life, and the love that would one day turn everything to music and radiancy was still sleeping. Her soul had not yet awakened to the touch of the magic wand, which would later change all; and, if at times a thought of true love and wedlock crossed her mind, she put it quickly from her, for said she, "I will never wed till I find my ideal—my other self!" But now and again, when the sky was all burnished with the glow of the southern sunset, and she, in her evening stroll, was gazing alone in wondering admiration at the varied shades of colouring, which no artist yet has been able to reproduce, except to give a faint idea of the reality of the grand picture which Nature paints in Heaven's blue dome; and more especially on one glorious summer's night, which she could never afterwards forget—were such thoughts forced upon her.

She was standing on her balcony, over which creeping roses trailed, whilst from below, in strong and vigorous growth, reached up the myrtle, fair bridal emblem, in full flowery bloom; the moon and stars looked down in jewelled splendour, and the thrilling notes of the nightingale vibrated through the perfumed air. Irenda's soul, over-

come with the entrancing mysterious beauty of the scene, and in unison with the great world-soul, hidden deep down in the earth—a poetic fancy maybe, but perhaps embodying a germ of truth—in unison then with this heart of loving, progressive life, ever in a mighty conflict, and ever aspiring upwards towards the great central circle from which it was drawn,—so was her soul in a turmoil, trembling with feelings she could hardly analyse. The song of the nightingale seemed as if it must find a response in her heart, and she felt as if something were wanting to make her life complete, for she experienced a sensation of intense loneliness, she knew not why or wherefore; as if she, cast as a small atom in a boundless universe, a vast unknown, or adrift on a mighty ocean, must trust only to herself to find her way unguided, and unprotected, through countless difficulties in a dark untravelled track, by land or sea. She felt suddenly overwhelmed with the knowledge of her great helplessness, a knowledge, not a mere idea, which forced itself upon her, in spite of her efforts to throw it off, and bore down upon her spirit with a painful and crushing weight, which was almost physical in its terrible and sickening pressure. A

prayer for help from above rose to her lips, and stretching out her gleaming white arms towards the stars, with a yearning look of faith in her eyes, she appeared like a little tender child endeavouring to grasp at something to steady it in its feeble walk. Then as she gazed out into the night, a mistiness obscured her vision, shutting out the sky in all its planetary glory, but presently the mist cleared, and she beheld, or fancied that she beheld, the wide silvery sea, on which sailed a vessel, the like of which she had never yet seen, and near the mast stood a man in a foreign style of dress, of distinguished mien; the expression of his countenance was serenely noble, as if imbued with a high and lofty purpose, and his honest steel-grey eyes were fixed straight on Princess Irenda with a penetrating, but at the same time, an adoring and reverential gaze, which filled her with astonishment, delight, and confusion; in fact, her feelings were naturally of such a mixed kind, that it would be impossible to describe them, for she herself could not understand them, or comprehend the reason, for plenty of admiring glances and looks had been directed to her before now, and she had remained as completely unmoved as if she

were a statue of marble. Why, then, should this man, or phantom, whatever he might be, possess this extraordinary influence over her? So mused she, or rather the thought flashed across her mind instantaneously; the same question that has puzzled many a sister woman, under other circumstances, since the first one lived on this planet, and so will it probably be till the end of time, if there is any sense in that phrase, for how can there possibly be an ending to something to which there never was a beginning? And in that moment of abstraction, sea, ship, and figure vanished from Irenda's view, and instead she saw as before, the resplendent starry heavens. Had she been dreaming, she wondered? She put up her slim hands to her brow and pushed back the masses of sheeny golden hair, which had been blown forward by the soft breeze that had risen during the evening, and in a deep rêverie with a weird strange feeling of having entered some new world, she stepped off the balcony into her boudoir, and ringing a silver handbell, she summoned a black page, and desired him to bring her a glass of fresh water. Then leaving the apartment, she mounted the stair to her own

room, where she found her waiting-maid in readiness to assist her to disrobe, but Irenda dismissed this faithful attendant as soon as possible, for she longed for solitude and to be left to her own thoughts. Sleep was out of the question for several hours to come: she was in far too excited a condition, and as she remained tossing on her pillow in a couch of alabaster, with all the furniture to correspond—for she disliked glaring colours, and had a great partiality for pure white—she allowed her imagination to run riot, and did not attempt to rein it in, for in sober fact, she was in a highly-wrought state of mind, and the image that had been imprinted on her brain was by no means easy to efface. Irenda wondered what was the meaning of the vision—who was that man? In that momentary glance she seemed as if she had met her ideal; some interior perception had made her cognizant of the fact. What if at length she should find the love of which she had dreamt? so she asked herself—the true soul love of a good and noble man, and if she should herself experience an all absorbing passionate devotion, which should transform and beautify all the remainder of her life; she began to wish that

the hero for whom she had waited, would come, and indeed, she believed he would—he who thinking the same thoughts, feeling the same interests, and longing the same exquisite longings for light as herself, should for ever keep her far aloft on a pinnacle of fond reverence, and in whose constant, never-changing, and endearing affection, she should feel herself raised in her own estimation, and also truly and indeed helped towards a higher sphere of existence—a more elevated plane—and he, this king among men, should be her guide and counsellor through all the intricacies of this earthly maze of enigmas, which she often found too hard to solve and unravel. So Irenda's mind worked all through the night, and only when the first grey streaks of dawn appeared did sleep overtake her, and she slumbered soundly and dreamlessly, being worn out with fatigue.

In the meantime, from the far North, from the land of the proud Sea-Kings—the Vikings—the noble Prince Valsen was journeying to the fair country where lived the Princess Irenda; he had heard a great deal about her, and he was well aware that she was peerless as to personal beauty, and in what to his mind was far more important,

loveliness of disposition and character. Princes and nobles from her country had raved to him about her, for many of these had travelled to his land in order to endeavour to heal their wounded hearts, which the Princess had without intention innocently pierced, by a thorough change of scene; a large number of them also came on account of their health, for, having indulged themselves too freely in rich and sumptuous living, at the great feasts they had attended, they were ordered by their physicians to brace up their shattered and damaged constitutions in the fine, rarefied atmosphere of that clime, and on the plain fare furnished by the more simple inhabitants of the North. These noble invalids would return year after year to renew their jaded physical machinery; for if people will persist in eating three times more than is necessary of highly-seasoned foods, and in imbibing glasses unlimited of strong, adulterated, alcoholic beverages, they cannot expect to retain sound health; outraged Nature will have her due, and her debts must be paid at a high rate of interest. But to return to Prince Valsen.

His was an uncommon character, indeed; no

word of evil report could be breathed against him ; his benevolence and munificence were unbounded. Certainly, he was wealthy ; but then those who are blessed with a superabundance of this world's goods are not always so ready to untie their purse-strings. The cottages in the hamlets on his estate were models of cleanliness and comfort ; the peasantry, well paid and cared for, were as contented with their humble lot as he with his grand position and residence. All the retainers and domestics entertained the most affectionate and respectful regard for their noble master, and no wonder ; his bravery and courage were extreme. On more than one occasion had he been known to be instrumental in saving life ; for his vast estate bordered on the sea-shore, and fishing was a great branch of industry with the peasant population. Boats had occasionally overturned when the Prince was on the spot ; and without one thought of the danger and discomfort to himself entailed in the proceeding, he, with his two faithful Newfoundland dogs, had plunged into the water, and dragged the drowning men—and women, for they went out, too—to land. A marked trait in his disposition was his immense

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fondness for animals; and although he was a splendid and fearless rider, he set his face entirely against hunting and racing, from a humanitarian point of view; in fact, he did his utmost to discountenance and abolish both these so-called forms of sport, although his self-imposed task was difficult, as the greater part of the nobility took pleasure in these relics of barbarism, and the country being flat, lent itself to the accomplishment of their desires. Prince Valsen was a sure and excellent shot; but he would allow no preserving of tame pheasants, or battues, on his domain, and he only shot wild birds when they were literally required for the table, and, of course, would not permit traps of any description to be set for the ensnaring of ground game. As for bearing-reins, on either carriage or cart-horses, he would have none of them. The Prince greatly enjoyed an out-door life, but his tastes were at the same time literary; and he was himself no mean author, besides being much given to astronomical calculations and to music, in which last art he excelled, playing brilliantly and with a marvellous touch on the pianoforte. As to his person, he was tall of stature, and strongly

yet slightly built, his figure being well fitted for athletic feats of every kind ; his hair was brown, but not of that shade which verges on black ; his features were straight and well cut, and he did not raze off all his beard, in accordance with the prevailing and effeminate fashion of the day ; the expression of his whole countenance was pleasing, for the impress of benevolence and noble thoughts were indelibly impressed upon it.

Hitherto Prince Valsen's heart had been quite untouched, although many a fair lady had laid siege to it, but the princesses and noble damsels of his country had found no favour in his eyes ; he, like the Princess Irenda, had set up an ideal, and the pretty and amiable, but brainless and rather selfish little dolls he had met with did not at all approximate to his poetic conception ; still less, did those unsexed, abnormal specimens, who, armed with guns, accompanied their male relations and boon companions over moor and fen, and afterwards, joining them in the smoking-room, sipped brandies and sodas, and smoked big cigars —because, forsooth, they thought it was “the right thing, don't yer know!” thus aping all the faults and vices of man, without possessing either the

desire, ability, or insight to enable them to aim at, or to attain to, the higher level of his redeeming qualities and virtues. A pitiable travesty indeed! A few of the more industrious amongst the Prince's admiring female circle of acquaintances, and these were mostly the plain and dull, thought to work themselves into his good graces, so his wardrobes were stocked with hideous, useless, and unmeaning garments, of every description which the fertile brain and nimble fingers of the feminine half of creation can concoct. Disgusted and sick of all the tiresome and wearisome attentions which, in common courtesy, he was hardly able to repel, and which really often placed him in an awkward position, Valsen shunned society as much as he dared, but he frequently felt terribly lonely, and longed for some congenial companionship—in truth, he knew well enough that he should never be happy till his heart was satisfied—till he had found the one woman who, to his affectionate nature, would be more than the whole world. Of late, he had been dying to behold the Princess Irenda, for, from what he had heard, he felt *so sure, so sure*, that she must be utterly different from all the rest of the maiden tribe. Moreover, he

was under the impression that he had seen her in dreams, for one day an artist showed him her portrait, in which he found a striking resemblance to the beauteous image in the vision which kind sleep vouchsafed to him so constantly. At length his impatience knew no bounds, and he determined to sail to the South, and travel onwards till he reached the distant land where she, whom he seemed already to love, resided. It had come to his ears, and he understood perfectly, that it would be utterly useless for him to attempt to enter the presence of the Princess, unless he had first visited the spot where grew the Edelweiss, and gathered her that wondrous wreath. So he naturally made up his mind to perform that appointed task manfully, before he dared to beg for an interview in the position of a suitor, in which situation he had every intention of appearing as soon as possible. So he started on his voyage, and whilst on board his fine ship in mid-ocean, the very night, and at the same moment in which Irenda seemed to behold in him her ideal, so was she made visible to Prince Valsen. Did their souls meet on a spiritual plane of being? does true love thus find its own affinity? Who can tell? It may even happen

sometimes in this dark planet, so immersed and sunk in gross materialism! Who can understand the divine and mystic power of white-winged love? To most students of psychology it is no more a subject for enquiry, but a matter of clear conviction—aye, one may even be bold enough to say, a great and positive truth—that, in the whole universe, nothing is created alone, nothing is single, every form is dual, from the tiniest molecule deep down in the heart of the earth, up through the ever-varying gradations in the manifestation of life; how then with the soul, the immortal spirit, that wonderful essence of life, which comes all forgetful of the veiled and hidden past, and, enshrined in a casket of mortality, breathes out a few years of enforced, and oft of painful captivity, till, at length, freed from its restraining bonds, it breaks gladly away, to soar upward through countless ages, and for evermore, towards the light, which glory it must surely, in some distant future, attain; and, in its progress, shall it not meet with its twin-soul? There is no doubt of it. Then let the lonely and forsaken grieve no more; the end to the bitter, gnawing heartache, or the dull, depressing, empty void, must come at last, for with

certain flight, though seeming slow and tardy, joy is on its way, even appearing on the horizon amid rose-tinted clouds, and borne on glistening, silvery pinions; and the delay in its coming will but enhance the sweetness of its advent, and the many long, sorrowful, lingering days will be forgotten in the mighty rejoicing on that transplendant morning when love perceives and claims her own in the everlasting land of the immortals.

* * * * *

“Oh! sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day is done,

The voice that now is speaking may be beyond the sun,
For ever and for ever, with those just souls and true.
And what is life that we should moan? why make we such
ado?”*

* * * * *

“The Sabbaths of Eternity,
One Sabbath deep and wide,
A light upon the shining sea,
The Bridegroom with his Bride.”*

Meanwhile, Prince Valsen having sailed during several days and nights on the vasty deep, and on reaching shore having been compelled to travel forward for some time overland, found himself

* Tennyson.

now at his destination. The country he had entered differed greatly from his native land ; it was very mountainous and thickly wooded, with every conceivable kind of tree and shrub ; the choicest flowers grew around in wild profusion, gaily-coloured song birds soared upwards in the cloudless blue ether, and flitted hither and thither, filling the air with the most rapturous and delicious melody. Valsen felt himself to be in an earthly Paradise of enchanting beauty, but he had not the faintest inclination to linger there in contemplation, or to allow his imagination to run away with him in poetic artistic fancies, conjured up by the witching scenery ; on the contrary, he was all eagerness to be moving, so as to perform his mission. He was in far too excited and exalted a state of mind to feel the least fatigue ; he experienced a sensation of extraordinary exhilaration, as if his spirit held entire possession of his body.

Before him was the entrance to the Tower of Transparency, which tower was reared against the base of a mountain, whose snowy peak far overtopped those of the same range ; the edifice was entirely composed of shining crystal, and sparkled

brilliantly, illumined by the powerful rays of the noontide sun. It was narrow in circumference, but of imposing height, for its summit was lost to view, and it parted from the protecting mountain after having followed it upwards in the closest proximity, as if for support, for some distance. An extensive forest stretched away in sombre grandeur beyond the tower at the other side, and in that direction lay the property and palace of the Princess Irenda. Prince Valsen's heart beat violently when he thought how near to him was she for whom he would gladly die, and he felt that if he was unable to gain her affections, life would indeed be worthless. He stood facing the massive wrought-iron gate of the majestic Tower, seeking for a knocker or a bell, but there was neither, so it occurred to him that there was nothing for it but to endeavour to force an entrance, and his one idea just at that second was that right is right, and he dared not think of what he should do if he failed in his attempt; for the mere notion of such a terrible contingency flashing across his brain sent a freezing shiver down his spine, and almost stopped his pulses, whilst an icy cold hand gripped cruelly at his heart. To conquer he *must*,

and act at once, for the suspense was sickening, and he therefore gave the door a vigorous push, but it yielded not; so concentrating the whole power of the strength of his manhood, and setting his teeth as he exerted the whole volume of his force of will in the supreme effort, he grasped the huge unyielding bars with a mighty conquering grip, and, immediately, as if worked by some secret spring, the heavy ponderous door sprang back on its groaning, creaking, time-worn hinges with a loud clang, and after he had entered, back it swung behind him with a resounding thud, which reminded him forcibly of the banging-to of the door of a dungeon, and which seemed to shake the foundations of the building. Straight, and in a perpendicular line from the gate, led a steep, stony flight of stairs, which promptly took a winding direction; damp, slimy, and moss-grown, the steps looked far from inviting, and were evidently frightfully difficult of ascent, but Valsen did not hesitate, but placing his foot on the lowest began to mount. He was not deceived as to the tediousness of the proceeding; indeed, he stumbled dreadfully, and more than once on turning a corner in the circuitous flight, his feet

slipped from under him, and he was nearly precipitated downwards, and might, had he not been agile, and so managed to save himself, have experienced a very nasty fall, for there was no hand-rail of any sort, and it was only by the most careful manœuvres that he kept his ground as well as he did.

Although the tower was composed of crystal, it was not very well lighted at the height to which Valsen had attained, for the glass was stained with marks of bad weather, and was in places perfectly opaque; besides on one side it was completely darkened by the mountain, and so, as the day drew in, for it had taken him hours even to arrive at so slight an elevation, he found it still harder to proceed, excepting at a slow pace; and in the crevices of the walls and stairs, there were enormous spiders, which hurried away at his approach, and he could not help an involuntary shudder when he discovered that snakes were also residents of that unfrequented path. By-and-bye the moon arose, and flooded the stairs in her brilliant light, so that he could see perfectly. Up he clambered, and to his extreme surprise, on turning a corner, he was met by three most

beautiful and handsomely-attired damsels, who, pointing to a passage which evidently led straight into the mountain, said—

“Come with us, you will never reach the land of the Edelweiss; and even if you do, it will not repay you for your trouble. You are wearing yourself out in climbing after a fleeting mirage, which will elude you; remain with us instead—at least, for a time—to rest and refresh yourself; to-night we intend to dance. Hark! the musicians are already there, and we are all anxiety to join the gay company that is assembled.” And, indeed, Valsen could hear the sound of music—an uncanny, witching melody, most fascinating, yet demoniacal, to the weird strains of which he thought sirens might be madly dancing in wild revelry.

“And oh, charming Prince,” continued the most attractive of the three ladies, as she laid her arm caressingly on his, “perchance you may find one amongst us who will love you much more than the Princess Irenda ever will. She is not the only woman in the universe, and you are blind that you are not able to understand that you are making yourself an object of ridicule in rushing

so madly after that foolish white child. You are bewitched!"

Valsen crimsoned to the roots of his hair with mingled shame and indignation, in which lurked a tinge of contemptuous pity for such miserable effrontery; but the mention of Irenda's name was too much for his composure—it filled him with real anger, and disengaging himself gently and quietly from the charmer's restraining hold, he remarked, with a great effort towards self-control, for his temper was rising with strides, and his words came out with an incisive precision, and in a chilling tone of dignified coldness—

"Madam, I thank you; but I am quite unable to come to your dance. You will oblige me greatly by no more breathing the name of that immaculate lady, and by allowing me to pass upwards."

Raising his hat, he made a profound bow to the three, clearly manifesting his intention of proceeding on his way; and they let him do so, amidst mirthful and derisive peals of laughter.

Now, as one of them called out after him, "Farewell, noble and haughty sir!" he looked round, and perceived, to his intense horror, that

the three fair nymphs were being gradually transformed into the most repulsive-looking old hags, with countenances too fiendishly terrible for words.

With this unpleasant adventure fresh in his mind, Valsen continued to mount, and presently, at a bend, he reached a landing of diminutive size, into which opened a dark and evidently a very deep cavern, at the mouth of which stood an enormous lion, that, as he approached, glared at him ferociously. Nothing daunted, Valsen fixed it with a determined and persistent stare; and as he gazed, the animal's face and body changed into the face and body of an ass, with long pricked-up ears; and then, under his very eyes, for they were still directed in startled wonder at this extraordinary phenomenon, there was a new phase of strange and curious transformation, for lo! in place of the meek donkey, there now stood a reverend Pastor, dressed according to the Lutheran faith of Valsen's ancestors, and of his own, who, with a stern and rigid expression of countenance, his right hand being uplifted with a gesture of admonition and warning, thus addressed him—

“Prince, you desire to peer and pry into

mysteries which Providence has wisely and purposely hidden from finite man; be advised in time, and heed the motherly exhortations of the Church. We, your loving and learned Pastors, well versed in doctrinal matters, are able fully to instruct you in all that it is fitting and requisite for you, one of the laity, to know, and no mere woman's whim ought to have the power of causing you to attempt to scale the heavens in such a reckless and impious manner. Man was never intended to learn or acquire a jot or a tittle more of Truth than has already been vouchsafed to him in the Holy Word, and expounded by us to him in all its true meaning, so that any new interpretation, or any adding thereto, must be reprehensible in the extreme, and you are imperilling your immortal soul by allowing yourself thus to be deluded by the wiles and snares of the wicked one. No good will ever come of the proceeding, believe me."

He ceased. Valsen yielded his best and most respectful attention, meanwhile, to a discourse which he found somewhat irritating. He then was ready with his answer.

"Good sir," said he, "do not think me un-

grateful for the kindly interest that you take in me, for I assure you that it is not unappreciated ; neither do your words of warning fall upon deaf or unthinking ears. I have well considered all your arguments and reasons, but you must not be offended with me when I candidly own that they have not succeeded in turning me from my course, for I am by no means convinced by them ; on the contrary, your sentiments, judgments, and opinions seem to me to have become somewhat warped and narrowed by a too literal pursuing of the letter, for I cannot believe that with the last words of the Revelation inspiration ceased, and I fail to understand or see why a certain scope should not be allowed for the wondrous operation of the far-seeing Divine Spirit of man ; surely, when wafted to aerial regions on the wings of poesy, or when a pure white ray, evidently descending from circles not far from the Central Heaven, seems all at once to illumine and enlighten, waking the noble aspiration of the soul, which has perchance been heavily sleeping, like the hidden seed in the earth, which, by a magic touch, now wakes to bud, blossom, and fruit, after long slumbering inertia ; or if, as in my own case,

an angel hand seems beckoning towards a higher sphere, and in following timidly, yet trustfully, the spirit untrammelled from things of sense, feels to be drawn ever upwards, and suffused more and more with a clear and limpid radiance like the reflection of moon-beams on a calm evening sea—is this the broad road leading to error, sin, and destruction? I trow not. And though the Cross of Christ shines with unchanging brilliancy, penetrating the nebulous atmosphere of this grey, sombre world, and with peace diffusing glory upon all mankind, methinks that some, in their gloomy and distorted imaginations, fancy that it casts down—and is indeed intended to cast—a huge shadow, which weighs on their spirits—for they are utterly unable to behold the joy infusing resplendency of light which continually streams from the upper point which is concealed in the grand and mysterious beyond. So, reverend friend, although I thank you, I shall, all the same, persist in my search; and I must crave your pardon for this never-ending reply.”

As he uttered these last words, to his intense amazement, the Pastor again resumed the form of the King of Beasts, which, turning tail, fled, with

a loud, savage, and prolonged roar, into the dark, cavernous recess. On looking up, Valsen perceived, for the first time, a large, sparkling, white star, with seven pointed rays, which shone straight through an aperture at the Tower's summit, and, to his delight, he saw that there were no more turns in the narrow steps, and that he could now ascend in a direct line to the top, which was evidently not far distant; he heaved a great sigh of relief to think that his troubles were well nigh over, besides, something told him the lion was the last obstacle he would encounter, and that no further obstructions or hindrances, real or unreal, could, from henceforth, bar the road and essay to prevent him from making a speedy end to his pilgrimage. The steps were easier than before, and denuded of loathsome reptiles, so he simply raced up them at full speed, till he neared the opening, from which he observed there flowed a strange and mystic brightness; with one bound he reached his goal; the stair terminated abruptly on level ground, and from beneath his feet, and as far as his eyes could see, there stretched, oh wonder, all around him a vast land of complete and glistening whiteness, for the earth was everywhere covered with Edelweiss

flowers, growing so thickly and closely in a shimmering, dewy sweetness that Valsen, at the first glance, imagined himself to be in a frozen world of ice, but, on a closer inspection, he found that the resemblance was not so great, for the petals of those inanimate denizens of realms of purity stood out clearly defined in the bright moonlight, and presented a soft and velvety texture, and the liquid gleam lent, by the luminous rays, to enhance their ethereal and fairylike beauty, lacked the hard, cold shine of icicles and snow on a wintry night; the air too, though rarefied, was not chilly. At length, Valsen having revelled in the beauty of the scene for some time, a scene which not only feasted his eyes, but which appealed strongly to his sensitive and spiritual mind, moved forward amongst the fair flowerets with light and careful tread, for he was fearful of crushing their tender blossoms; stooping, he busied himself in culling as many of the choicest and finest specimens as he could find; soon he had plucked quite a large nosegay; he then walked on in an abstracted manner, half dreaming, and without noticing that light was merging into dawn, and that the sky was already faintly streaked with

rosy pink and mauve, tinged with golden threads; this change entirely escaped his observation, because the brilliance of the starry night in the wondrous land of the Edelweiss was such that it by far surpassed the brightness of the breaking morn, neither did the Prince see how, at a few paces' distance, in the direction to which his steps were leading him, the ground broke off suddenly, and ended in an awful precipice; to the edge of which, altogether unmindful of the ghastly danger which threatened him, he was momentarily approaching. Nearer and nearer he drew, and then all at once, he knew not what had happened to him, for he found himself to be careering wildly, at a fearful velocity, through space, then, after perhaps a few seconds, but they might have been hours so far as he was concerned, for the horror of his position was so great, he was brought to a sudden halt; strong, yet gentle arms appeared to be upholding him, and a melodious voice whispered in his ear, "Grasp the Edelweiss flowers tightly; we, your spirit friends, will never permit the mortal who has attained to such pure heights, and who has gathered these heavenly emblems, to come to any harm."

Valsen had his treasures safely in his hand still, and, at these words, he held them yet more closely, whilst unseen, encircling arms, seemed to be now floating him slowly earthwards. Above and beneath were the billowy clouds, which, as he gazed, assumed beautiful shapes, and anon they would take on the likeness of curious and dread dragons and monsters; undefined phantom forms passed and repassed him, or sped upwards, creating a stir in the air, like the current caused by the whirr of feathered pinions; was all this but the outcome of his fevered imagination, or were the faculties and senses of his inner man—his soul—awakened? Was some unknown gate of his physical personality suddenly thrown ajar? He knew not. Meanwhile, eastwards, the firmament was ablaze, for the majestic sun was rising in all its grandeur, in a refulgence of glory; fiery rays forming a spiked, golden frieze surrounded the glowing, burning disc, and pointed in all directions, as if to discover and illumine every spot in the canopy overhead, or in the earth below; the snowy mountain peaks were as if burnished, or dyed, with a marvellous mixture of gorgeous aureate and carmine, and deep purple

and violet shadows threw up the terrors of the wide, gaping mouths, and black depths of the abysses and ravines. And soon Prince Valsen was let down softly upon the ground, and, at the same time, he was relieved of his flowery burden, which unseen hands firmly, yet gently, took from him ; and although so much had lately occurred in his existence to prevent any further astonishment at anything, still he was somewhat amazed when he beheld that the Edelweiss stems were being quickly and gracefully weaved into a crown, or wreath, as if of themselves, for he neither saw form or fingers, but they alone, suspended in the air, and twining, or bending, round according to the turns and twists required in the manufacture. When completed, the lovely garland flew into his keeping, and a sympathetic voice whispered, "You were too clumsy to arrange the flowerets thus yourself ; now it is a fitting gift for your sweet lady-love ; see, you are at the gates of her domain."

He looked around, and sure enough there were the imposing brass-worked portals of the entrance, through which he quickly passed, and making his way at full speed, although his strength was almost spent with fatigue, he raced through the park from

sheer impatience and excitement, and arrived shortly at the gate of the pleasure-grounds, on entering which, to his intense surprise, joy, and rapture, he perceived, resting on a seat, in a bower of roses and leafy foliage on the mossy lawn, the Princess Irenda, for he recognized her immediately from her likeness to the portrait which had been shown to him, although it by no means truly portrayed the beauty of the original, and also he could not fail to notice the striking resemblance to the fair phantasm which lent such a ravishing charm to his dreaming slumbers; then like a vivid flash of lightning came the remembrance of that never-to-be-forgotten night on board ship. The Princess did not at first see Prince Valsen, but she experienced a very strange sensation as soon as he entered the garden, and at the moment when his penetrating gaze was first directed towards her, it seemed as if she was no longer alone, and she felt a curious premonition of impending change in future events. It was a feeling more than an idea, and it did not oppress her; on the contrary, it was quite the reverse, for her heart beat quicker, why, she could not tell. Then she looked up, and across the lawn, within a few yards in fact, there

stood, in life, her Ideal! Their eyes met. Irenda rose, and with changing colour advanced a few steps forward to meet Prince Valsen, who deferentially approached her, hat in hand, and bearing the Crown of Edelweiss, at the sight of which she grew even more agitated than before, for well she knew what it portended.

“Princess!” exclaimed Valsen, and then a deadly pallor o’erspread his countenance, and overcome with the tumult of his emotions, and wearied and worn out by all the difficulties and hardships of his arduous undertaking, he fell unconscious, prone on the turf at her feet. Irenda uttered a piercing shriek, which brought out a whole troop of faithful retainers, foremost amongst them being her own waiting-woman and the small black page. They at once grasped the situation, and, running back to the palace, quickly returned with restoratives, which, when first administered, seemed to produce no effect whatever, but after much patience the Prince began to show signs of returning life, and to revive, and when he opened his eyes the domestics discreetly withdrew, although the negro page alone, with pardonable and youthful curiosity, could not resist an impulse which

prompted him to glue his nose against the window-pane, in the corridor, which commanded a view of that part of the grounds, in which were his mistress and the Prince. Princess Irenda had been weeping bitterly, for she was completely unnerved, distressed, and alarmed at the sudden illness of Valsen; however, when she found that he was recovering, she grew calmer. And now the hero of her maiden fancies and reveries sprang up from his recumbent posture and stood before her in all the vigorous glory of his manhood. At first he was naturally somewhat dazed, supposing himself to be in dreamland, and Irenda as usual the central figure round whom kind imagination wove such a bright silver thread of romance, but speedily his mind resumed its normal condition, and his brain performed its functions as usual. Gravely and with bowed head, Valsen confronted Irenda, and offered her the wreath.

“Sweet lady,” he commenced in tremulous, pleading tones, which betrayed all the depth and fervour of his great and true passion, “for your dear sake alone have I toiled and mounted to gain this crown, a fitting diadem to grace those queenly brows. Will you deign to accept it, and with it

the hand of the giver? That it is real affection you well know; it is needless for me to endeavour to convince you of a glaring truth which your pure spirit has long since guessed with certitude!" Then raising himself to his full height, he looked her full in the face, with such an intensity of love and admiration in his wonderful grey eyes, that Irenda flushed and paled visibly under that ardent, earnest gaze, and finding no voice in which to reply, she simply reached out her hands, and with dignity accepted the proffered gift.

And standing there, Irenda, in her pearl-trimmed, white clinging robe, clasped round the waist with a diamond girdle, appeared for all the world like a sweet white lily, so slender, so fair was she.

"Princess Irenda, dearest one," continued Valsen, "will you not speak?" And he ventured to touch her wrist. But Irenda was still speechless. The words she would say she could not, and the rush of her pent-up feelings was past endurance, and almost suffocating. So, with a loud sob and the light of a great love in her sweet blue eyes, she stretched out her arms to him, and rested her head against his shoulder

like a tired and lost nestling that has at last found its way home.

"My beloved," he whispered, as she clung to him whilst he clasped her in a fond embrace. "From the beginning was it surely ordained that you and I should meet, and belong to one another; and I believe that you also are aware of this."

And now Irenda was dumb no longer, and thankful was she that the spell, or, rather, the nervous tremor that had forced her to remain silent as death, had fled.

"Soul of my soul," she murmured almost inaudibly, "it would be unworthy of me to attempt to feign an indifference which I do not feel, for everything you say touches me deeply, and finds an echo in my own heart. Whilst I was on the balcony I beheld you, as in a vision, sailing upon the ocean, and intuition apprised me of the wondrous fact that in you should I find my ideal." She paused, and Valsen closed her lips with a long, lingering, passionate kiss. Then he spoke thus:

"As to making any protestations of undying devotion, my true affinity, you and I understand

the uselessness—the absurdity even—of such a proceeding, for we can as little help loving as we can living. The attraction of each to each is as the attraction of the sun to the moon, like the affection of the dew for the rose, or the love of the turtle-dove for its mate; and so shall it continue for evermore, and through countless ages.”

And a lovely bird of the same species as the bulbul sang a thrilling song of never-ending love on the branch of an orange tree hard by that was bursting with bloom; and he glanced shyly, with his bright round eyes, at the happy lovers, who conversed about many things of which they were never weary of talking, and which could only possibly interest themselves. And so they remained together until eve, when Prince Valsen repaired to the comfortable, but humble, dwelling of the good priest Father Zaron, who had migrated to that part of the world, for Irenda thought it best that her future bridegroom should not lodge under her roof in the palace, on account of the evil tongues of the spiteful and jealous princesses in the neighbourhood. And in a week they were wedded, and so lived happily ever

afterwards, as is the correct and approved ending for a tale of this description. But it may be that those readers who care to dive deeply will find some interior and underlying meaning which, at first, might not strike them. The hero and heroine are living on earth still, residing mostly in the south; and by-and-bye, when the time arrives for one of them to depart, the other will wait patiently alone till the hour comes to follow, knowing that the farewell is not for long, and then, in realms empyrean, will they both roam eternally in bliss and harmony, never more to be parted. Now, the noble residents of that land were much exercised in their minds as to why and wherefore Irenda had chosen this prince for her husband, and for what reason he had come purposely over the sea from the far North to woo and win her, but Prince and Princess Valsen keep their own secret.

Shadow and Shine

A TALE OF MOTHER EARTH

SIX strokes were boomed out by Big Ben, and the sound still lingered in the air, on a sultry evening which followed an oppressively hot day at the latter end of July. In the crowded thoroughfares of the metropolis the heat had been well-nigh intolerable, and it caused the humanitarian many a sharp pang to witness the patient sufferings of the poor cab-horses as they were lashed unmercifully along. The sun had been beating down on Spider Court with a cruelly persistent power. The dirty and squalid children found themselves compelled to give up their miserable and futile attempts at playing games, and instead were to be seen lounging listlessly and drowsily on the baked, glaring doorsteps. Now there was a change it was slightly cooler, and the wretched little things becoming a shade less inert, and with feelings

of renewed vitality coursing through the stagnant intertextures of their poverty-stricken physiques, woke up to play once more amidst their sad surroundings. Most of these unhappy small beings had never even so much as seen a green field or a rippling brook. Never had they gazed upwards in order to follow with their eyes, and in spirit, the ascent of the blissful, carolling lark, as it soared heavenwards. The only one of that species which they had, perchance, beheld, was the much-to-be-pitied captive in the window of a retired chimney-sweep. The homely brown sparrows were, of course, constantly to be seen hopping around, and some of the kinder-hearted children fed them with the crumbs which remained over from their scanty meals.

At No. 4, Spider Court, up three flights of a filthy, ricketty staircase, was the room of Anne Pole, the artificial flower-maker. There she sat from early morn till evening, and often even far into the night, manufacturing lovely roses, violets, lilies, and myriads of other kinds of flowers and leaves, for Jonas Moses, the rich Jew, who, by grinding down his workpeople, and by forcing them to accept starvation wages, was gradually

accumulating a not inconsiderable fortune. He had a daily-increasing custom, for the West-end shops found his wares so much better and cheaper than those supplied by other manufacturers; and his patrons were not aware—nor would a few of them have cared had they known—that the health, beauty, and, alas! sometimes the virtue too, of the poor girl-workers were woven into the stems, blossoms, and buds of those fair imitations of Nature's divine art.

Anne was twenty, and exceedingly comely, with a cast of feature, and a gracefulness of form and carriage, which are usually seen in women of a far higher station in life, for refinement was impressed upon her whole person. As she now sat at her well-scrubbed deal table, with her nut-brown head resting on her shapely hand, she would have furnished a lovely model for a great academician; her eyes, of the deepest azure, were fringed with long, black silken lashes; her forehead was ideal, rather low and broad, and the naturally waving hair grew round it in a manner that many a fair lady might have envied, and indeed have essayed in vain to copy, with the aid of curling tongs and pins; her nose was small

and slightly *retroussé* ; and although her mouth was not diminutive, but rather the reverse, it was well cut, revealing, when the rosy lips parted, teeth resembling two rows of tiny pearls. Anne's complexion was certainly too pale, the result of late hours, overwork, and of the want of fresh air and proper nourishment ; poor girl, she had to endure grievous privations, and she was utterly alone in the unkind, wide world ; an only child of parents who had known better days ; her mother had died in giving her birth, and her father, having become bankrupt, soon followed his wife, and joined the great majority, dying really from a broken heart. A kindly, widowed neighbour had brought her up, but she too had gone ; and, having nothing to bequeath to her foster daughter, she was left a penniless orphan, and supported herself in the manner already related.

Anne's room was almost bare ; a bed, wash-stand, one table, one chair, with a wooden box for her clothes, and three shelves for crockery, saucepan, and tea-kettle, completed the list of furniture, besides a cracked, hanging looking-glass ; a dealer, unless very charitably inclined,

would hardly have offered much more than five shillings for the lot, for every article, although scrupulously clean, bore on its surface the marks of the wear and tear of daily use, and naturally nothing possessed the least value.

The ghost of a breeze was stirring, and Anne rose from her seat and went to the window, which was widely opened to admit any air that there might be in that stuffy court; as to view, there was absolutely none whatever; grimy, ill-built, neglected houses, smoking chimneys, tattered and torn discoloured washing hung out to dry; these were the sights which met the eye, and, if a sensitive one, it would involuntarily wince, and its owner would experience a corresponding sensation of repugnance at the sordid surroundings. On the window sill was a pot of musk, which appeared to be more thriving than any other living thing about the place. Anne sniffed at it; and then, fetching a jug of water, she watered it copiously, and had another sniff; the fresh green colour of the foliage delighted her, the perfume appealed to her senses, and altogether the humble plant, with that curious slumbering vitality, that half-life which it is so difficult to comprehend,

called up tender and poetic feelings in her soul; it was, at least, something which required her fond care, and, in its sweet budding leaves, it seemed to respond to her in gratitude; and, then, it was such an innocent, healthy thing, and differed so greatly from the other unpleasing objects on which she was compelled to gaze, and which she so disliked, or, in fact, hated.

On the table was a pile of artificial flowers, the result of Anne's labour; she could find nought to admire in them, and would never wear a single one; the idea was loathsome, and sickened her; she was obliged to toil hour after hour in their construction for her bread, till her brain reeled, and until the variegated shades and tints presented a big blur, and she had to blink her eyelids to clear her vision; how, then, could she look on them with aught but detestation? She now placed the delicate and showy aids of fashionable attire first in a wrapping of fine tissue paper, and afterwards in strong brown, and then she tied up the parcel with much care, for, supposing she arrived at her employer's house of business with crushed goods, there would either be a great reduction in the price or no pay at

all ; but such a misfortune seldom or never happened to Anne ; her slim, nimble fingers could not be clumsy in their manner of proceeding ; they were so skilful and deft, that whatever she undertook was neatly done and finished. She reached for her plain black straw hat and her poor little Cashmere cape out of the box, and quickly put them on without so much as a glance at the cracked mirror, which, after all, would only have presented a distorted reflection of her charming self at best, although she hardly knew she was pretty ; then she left the room, locking the door behind her, and, putting the key in her pocket, she descended the creaking, unsavoury staircase, and then out into the court and streets beyond on her way to the premises of Jonas Moses. Soon she was there, for the distance was not great ; it was a good-sized building, with a door of funeral blackness ; she rang the bell, which was answered by an undersized, carrotty-headed little urchin, with an impudent face.

“Oh, it’s you !” remarked he, grinning up at Anne. “You are early—not many have been yet,” he continued.

"Yes, I managed to finish them off quicker than usual," replied Anne; "but I suppose they are hard at it in the workroom," added she.

"Rather; it is like a furnace up there to-day," said the boy; "or like what that must be," pointing downwards with a knowing expression.

At that moment a large hooked nose appeared through a door in the passage, followed by a pair of coal-black eyes, and presently the whole dirty, greasy, countenance and sooty hair came into view; and a voice, in which the well-known Jewish nasal twang predominated over every other tone, uttered these words:

"All right; I will send you out the money by Alec Tarn; that is to say, if you have brought the things in the usual perfect condition; send them in by the boy, please."

"Pleash" was the way the word was pronounced, and all the other "s's" to correspond.

"The master is in fine form to-day," whispered Tim, the boy, to Anne. "He has been swearing like a trooper, and having a jolly row all round"; and he took off the parcel, winking his left eye slyly.

An unwashed hand, on which sparkled several

diamond rings, was now poked through the doorway, and the packet was seized and drawn in with a rapid, clawing motion, like that of a bird of prey, when it fixes its talons and closes them firmly on its quarry.

Tim nodded to Anne, and, taking to his heels, ran away somewhere towards the back of the house, whilst Jonas Moses—for it was he—altogether disappeared—like a hideous snail drawing itself into its shell—inside his office.

For about ten minutes Anne waited, when at length steps were heard approaching, and from out of the same mysterious apartment walked a man, aged about thirty, of tall and wiry build; he was anything but handsome, for homely features, a freckled skin, and small, light grey eyes do not exactly produce, when combined, a particularly attractive and taking appearance; but there was, nevertheless, an air of manliness and honesty which was impressed upon his whole person, and which compelled attention. He came forward to greet Anne with a pleasant smile.

“Here is the money,” said he, as he handed her a few coins in an envelope; “and I am so

sorry," added he in regretful tones, "that Mr. Moses has deducted a shilling from the proper amount, as he considers the lilies are too stiff."

"Oh, never mind," replied Anne, endeavouring to appear more cheerful than she felt, "it was only what might be expected; Tim told me he wasn't in his best mood."

"Miss Pole," commenced Alec, diffidently; "would you come for a turn with me? It is such a fine evening. I feel I require some exercise, perhaps it would be good for you, too, unless you are tired already?" He coloured slightly.

"With pleasure, Mr. Tarn." There was no emotion in her voice; she was perfectly cool and collected.

"Allow me," and Alec stepped in to take his hat off a peg, and was soon striding gaily beside the pretty girl. He was of the same class as herself, but had raised himself to a superior position entirely through his own industry and exertions; he had always been quick at figures, and was now a clerk in whom Mr. Jonas Moses placed implicit confidence. Alec disliked and despised his master, but he served him well,

and as he received good pay—for Moses recognized his worth—he considered it best to remain where he was for the present, at any rate; besides, he was occasionally able to influence the grasping Jew, when this one was in his better frames of mind. If he happened to be in a bad one, the Sultan of Turkey would have been easier to manage than was he. Anne tripped along demurely at Alec's side; she was perfectly aware that he admired, nay, loved her, for he had been at no pains to disguise his feelings, and had before now informed her of their state by very pointed hints, but she had turned off these extremely unveiled inuendos with silvery peals of laughter, and with the information that "he was really too amusing and funny, and why did he talk such nonsense?" So that he dared not proceed to any more open declaration. In truth he was desperately in love with Anne, poor fellow, but she did not reciprocate the sentiment in the very least, and had not the faintest wish to change her condition of independent poverty for the comfortable position she would occupy as Alec's wife. She liked him well enough, and she did

not find him bad company in an evening's stroll, but that was quite sufficient, and after a time, she felt she was becoming bored, and could hardly repress a stifled yawn. It was touching to witness the young man's devotion: he hung upon Anne's every word and look, and tried his best to adapt his step to her's; his manner was certainly ungainly and awkward, but, then, who can expect the polish of a courtier in a little clerk—a son of the people? Besides, no man in creation ever appears at his best when he is genuinely in love; the bold and smooth-tongued suitor, whose heart is so well under control, that it scarcely beats a thought the faster—the gentleman who pays his court, not from the ardent passionate impulse of his soul's intense affection, but for the sake of some worldly gain, fortune or title, or from evil design to attain some despicable wicked end—he it is who shows to best advantage as a lover, whilst the honest and the true one, with his bashful and shy ways, caused by his tremulous emotions and his fears of finding no favour, in most cases seems but a sorry object, fit for compassion but not love, and so a lady

often prefers the less worthy and the more audacious wooer. In the meantime, the young people were walking together towards Hyde Park, which they soon reached, entering opposite the Duke of Wellington's statue. There were still a few fashionable loungers to be seen, for the weather was warm, and it was pleasant to stroll and sit about under the trees for those who did not happen to be dining out, or repairing to either the theatre or opera. Carriages, but not many, rolled along, and they were for the most part broughams, carrying modish ladies and gentlemen, decked out in all their finery, to the dinners and entertainments of the waning season. Anne watched the grand equipages, and the well-dressed people, with just a slight tinge of envy; how delightful must it surely be, mused she, to have everything one wanted—horses, jewels, frocks and bonnets of every description, and to do nothing but enjoy oneself during the whole live-long day.

Had she been able to peer beneath the surface, she would have judged differently; in the first place, many of those ladies had a very great deal to do; of course, there were those, and

perhaps the greater number amongst them, who literally only occupied themselves in catching at fleeting pleasures, and in accepting and answering invitations, but there were others who employed themselves busily with their household duties, and in the care of their children, besides assisting in charitable schemes, for all were not the gay and unthinking butterflies that Anne imagined, also she was totally unaware that some of them had terrible grinning skeletons locked away in dark cupboards, such as cruel, unfaithful husbands, deformed and idiot children, or long dressmakers' and milliners' bills, which must be settled one day near or distant—and how? They could not tell. One lovely being, with sheeny golden hair, covered with diamond stars, drove by, and Anne heaved a sigh as she gazed upon her beauty.

“Why do you sigh, Miss Pole?” asked Alec, bending towards her with a soft expression in his colourless eyes, whilst in his voice was a tender inflexion.

“Oh, I don't know, Mr. Tarn,” replied Anne, rather more gravely than was her wont.

“I was wondering,” continued she, “if it wouldn't be nice to be a lady, and ride in a carriage, and

wear jewels, and——but what a silly thing I am!” and she sighed again.

“Miss Pole,” observed Alec, “I don’t believe you would be any the happier. Some of them look precious miserable, to my mind, with all their fine clothes and fallals.”

“No doubt you are right,” answered Anne, with a wistful look; “but,” added she, “it must be delicious to have every single thing one wants, just exactly as if a fairy brought it. Not that I am complaining, you understand.”

She paused. This was too good an opportunity to be missed by Alec, and he began in earnest tones—

“Miss Pole, Anne dear, why do you choose to remain slaving day after day when you know that you need not, when you have but to say——”

“Good gracious, Mr. Tarn!” interrupted Anne merrily, “you quite alarm me by speaking in that way! You look so queer! You make me laugh, you do, you absurd creature! Slavery, indeed! I am no slave; I please myself. I don’t care to work in the factory, but prefer to make the flowers at home; and I am my own mistress, and can eat and carry on my occupation at my own hours. I

have no desire to change anything at all in any way. I have not, indeed. I was only joking. I don't want to be a fine lady, not a bit, believe me."

She ended, becomingly flushed, and out of breath. Her lover appeared to be rather down-cast. Decidedly he was not very bold, and did not understand how to carry all before him, and win with flying colours.

It was nearly eight o'clock; and when Alec and Anne reached Grosvenor Gate, they noticed that there was a small crowd collected at the door of one of the houses in Park Lane; so they crossed over, and stood with the rest, to see the guests arrive for a dinner party. And then they still waited on, to obtain a view of the smart people as they sat at table; for, as the evening was so sultry, the windows were wide open in the dining-room, and the blinds were not drawn down. The apartment was brilliantly illuminated with the electric light, which blazed from wall lights, whilst on the table were tiny pink fairy lamps, nestling amongst ferns and mosses, from which rose masses of white gardenias; handsome ornamental plate gleamed and shone in the centre.

and the wine-glasses glimmered brightly in the rays which were thrown down from the candelabra; as for the diamonds of the ladies, they scintillated with a deep, fiery radiance, and the white necks and arms of their wearers, clasped in their jewelled embrace, possessed a fair, shining beauty of their own also. And these women's souls, did they too join in this glorious irradiation? Not always.

Besides the twenty-four decorous, perfect-mannered diners, and the major domo, with his subordinates and hired waiters, the room was filled and peopled by unseen beings—beings who greatly resembled the mortals in form and feature, only that they seemed to be somewhat more transparent. Some of them had pleasing countenances, but others amongst them were of unprepossessing appearance, and bore such faults and vices as selfishness, greediness, sensuality, and insincerity stamped upon their features. These spirits, for so indeed they were, took immense interest in the conversation, and glided and floated behind and above the different chairs; sometimes one would whisper into the ear of a lady or gentleman, and he or she would then often repeat, almost word for word, the gist of what had been suggested, or,

if not, an impression would be made on the mind ; and an idea, good or bad, implanted in this way, they fancied emanated from their own brains. For are we not all encompassed by a cloud of witnesses, which, invisible and unknown to the spirit enshrined in human casket—for what else is the perishable body?—counsel, aid, and, alas! sometimes drag downwards the immortal soul? For if he or she aspire to nothing higher than a pure animal existence, if such, instead of ever reaching upwards, and, with unselfish thoughts and acts and heaven-raised faces, constantly make forward progress, what occurs? Just this. Like attracts like, and so are those unhappy ones, who have left this world with their spirits blackened over with vice and crime, and still unrepentant, drawn towards those on earth of the same perverted tastes. The spirits who lived solely for passing, fleeting fashion, without any feelings of sorrow for the poor and needy, or for the miserable, tortured beast, these find earthly friends who are leading the same lives as did they. Oft-times may a good guardian angel whisper into the ear of the wholly material man, but he gives no heed, and his own divine self is sleeping ; and only at length, when remorse tardily

comes, will that spirit be able to asserts its rights of birth. And so will the hideous, fearful, dark covering wear gradually away during the course of long years, amidst pangs and throes of agonizing pain, till the darkness is washed off, and only the translucent light remains, pure as in its true pristine glory. But how sweet will be the moment of arrival in the spiritual world to those others who have endeavoured, with humility, and from a far distance, to follow in the footsteps of the Perfect One—Christ; and also for the many unselfish ones, who never even having heard of His name, and following other creeds or no creeds, and yet, in the purity of their lives, arrive at some slight approximation of that wondrous example, which shines out, like a brilliant, dazzling lamp, o'er all the earth. When all these wise and happy ones soar upwards to the land where love alone reigns, surely the truth of the following lines will be realized—

“When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past?”*

It is a strange and perplexing, yet interesting problem for the thoughtful mind, how that one

* Keble.

white soul never seems to lose its purity from the first, but from infancy continues pure and good; how a second loses its whiteness for a time, by wavering towards evil, and then pulls up and makes a speedy recovery, perhaps sparkling even more gloriously, by reason of the decadence, and the increasing knowledge gained thereby; whilst a third rushes wildly at once towards the realms of vice with terrific impetus, and there remains during mortal life. What is the reason of these different courses? Doubtless, force of circumstances and the influence of surroundings are powerful central motors, and then the law of heredity steps in; but still there remain unanswered questions, unsolved enigmas, and exceptions, which cannot be accounted for by any possible human theory, or, indeed, unravelled by any known spiritual one, as far as the spheres to which embodied man has access, extend, for the disembodied progressing spirit cannot be omniscient, and it is absurd to imagine that this could be so. How comes it, one wonders, that occasionally a man or woman is born and bred in an utterly vicious environment, and yet manages to rise completely above it,

unsullied and lovely, in ethereal, unearthly beauty? Who knows?

Meanwhile, Alec and Anne were intently watching the occupants of the dining-room, and experienced not the least fatigue; they saw the hostess give the signal for the departure of the ladies, and the male portion of the guests were left with the master of the house. A hansom-cab was waiting in front of the window, probably for a fare at the next door.

"Look at them toffs enjoying of themselves," remarked the driver to a pedestrian friend; "it makes a fellar's mouth water, it do. I should be glad of a drop and a bit of grub."

These sentiments were uttered in such a loud tone of voice, that they reached the ears of the inmates, who sat comfortably at the table over their wine and dessert.

"Do you hear that, Raffler?" exclaimed the corpulent host, turning towards a young man of mild countenance. "How funny," continued he; "*I* am not going to offer the chap anything to eat or drink, anyhow!"

The youth thus addressed said, "Really!" and then was silent. He appeared to be perfectly

indifferent; but in reality, he felt disgusted with his host, for he was composed of better metal, and it would have pleased him greatly at that moment, had he been able to give the selfish creature a good kick, whilst ordering champagne and dainty dishes to be sent out to the cabman; however, he dared not break through the bounds of ordinary civility, and possessed neither the moral courage nor the ready wit to frame up a scathingly sarcastic retort; the rest of the men remained, for the most part, quite unmoved, and one or two laughed loudly and coarsely, as if the little episode were the subject for a good and not too refined joke.*

The street was now in darkness, save for the dim light of the lamps, and of the twinkling stars above; no moon was visible, but a fine summer's night, even in a densely-populated city, possesses a certain semi-brightness. The young people, having gazed on the smart folks in the grand mansion to their fill, now began to move slowly away, when a flashily-dressed man of middle age, with a rubicund face, suggestive of copious libations, brushed rudely by Anne, and staring

* A true story, passed at a London dinner-party.

at her insolently, observed in an insinuating tone, "A pretty little girl, by Jove! Pray, my dear——" and he raised his hat slightly.

"Scoundrel!" interrupted Alec, with the laboured articulation of rising anger. "You are a cad!" added he, in a voice of unsuppressed rage.

The man was evidently overcome with drink; he glared ferociously at Alec, and then, with a menacing gesture, rushed on him without a moment's hesitation, and began to pound him vigorously with his clenched fists. Seeing that there was no help for it, Alec defended himself as best he could. His adversary was by no means a powerful man; and observing his half-intoxicated condition, he would take no mean advantage of him; but get rid of such a cur, by shaking him off, he must, at all costs. So letting out from the shoulder, he gave the flashy warrior one in the chest, which sent him reeling backwards. Still it was not a sufficiently stunning blow to cause him to fall; he retained his foothold, although he had swayed, and now stood dazed and panting, with the breath slightly knocked out of him. Alec having thus freed himself from

the hateful person's embrace, grasped Anne by the arm, and swiftly drew her away, whilst his antagonist, having partly recovered himself, called huskily after him, "Wait till we meet again, hot-blooded youngster; I shan't forget you! Wait!"

Fortunately, the passage of arms had taken place with but little noise; and as only two or three cabs had driven past at a rapid rate, and not a pedestrian had walked by just then, no crowd was collected; also, as good luck would have it, "Policeman A." did not happen to be on the spot, or the affair might not have ended so quietly and pleasantly. Alec escorted Anne as far as the entrance of Spider Court, and then departed homewards; he had emerged from the fray in a sound condition, with the exception of a slight contusion of the left shoulder. As for Anne, she had been naturally rather alarmed at the scrimmage; but being a somewhat strong-minded young woman, and having had the misfortune of witnessing many a brawl near her residence, she neither screamed or fainted, but simply remarked to Alec, "Try and release yourself, the man is tipsy"; and after the fight, she displayed more kindness and softness in her

manner towards her admirer than was her wont, nor was she contented until he had assured her at least half-a-dozen times that he had not sustained either hurt or injury. Indeed, he only wished that it might be his proud fate to enter the lists for his ladylove every day, if so be that she would reward him thus graciously with her gentleness and sweet smiles. And certainly Alec, by his chivalrous prowess in her defence, had risen tremendously in Anne's estimation; she felt touched by the way in which he had so promptly resented the insult offered her; and when she beheld the passionate fury flaming in his eyes, and heard the intonation of swelling wrath—of righteous indignation—in the vibrating words which he hurled at the vulgar aggressor from the depths of his strong soul—for her sake, for love of her, in order to protect her—she experienced a more tender regard for Alec than she had ever before known. Pity, they say, is akin to love; and if the timorous lover had pressed his suit with ardour then, he would have ensured a better chance of success than had ever yet fallen to his lot. But he let the auspicious moment slip; and being altogether

contented with the favour accorded him, he rested on his laurels; clearly manifesting, by this dulness of perception, how deficient man generally is in that marvellous intuition which woman possesses in so large a measure, and which enables her to fathom and read moods and motives so quickly; she understands, sees, and knows, whereas he gropes and blunders blindly in the darkness. Poor, idiotic, loving Alec! Bliss was very near to him, but he was too dense to be able to grasp it; and so he arrived at his humble lodging, and was soon slumbering peacefully, whilst his last waking thoughts were directed to Anne. It was not so with the object of his affections. The momentary warmer emotions passed off, and her champion was soon dethroned from his temporary position in her mind by the press of more important and absorbing subjects for reflection. As she was about to mount the stairs, she was waylaid by an elderly woman of slovenly appearance.

“Janet Robinson called to see you, Anne Pole,” began she, “near about seven o’clock, it might be; you was out,” she continued, “so she asked me to deliver this message; it is as this—that she will

be at Marble Arch at half-past five to-morrow, and if you will meet her, she will take you to see that milliner—you know, says she, what she means. She have spoke to her respecting you, and she may engage you for the showroom."

This lengthy speech was uttered with great volubility and without a pause for breath. The speaker now literally gasped, whilst Anne replied with much politeness—

"I am extremely obliged to you, Mrs. Hill, for your goodness. I quite understand, and will be there at the hour Janet wishes. Thank you kindly. And it was nice of Janet to think of me. Good-night." "Good-night, Anne," responded the unkempt lady, as she retreated to her apartment on the ground-floor, whilst Anne mounted upwards. Now Janet Robinson, whom she had known from childhood, possessed a remarkable turn for the trimming of hats and bonnets, and had for some years been working at the establishment of Madame Rose, otherwise the Honourable Mrs. Pict, the fashionable lady milliner in Bond Street. It had always been Anne's acme of ambition to be employed in that shop; she fancied she might make a good saleswoman, and

Janet had often praised the perfect taste she manifested by the remarks she passed on the clothes of the people she met in the Sunday walk, which the two girls occasionally took together. Janet also constantly expressed her astonishment at the ingenious way in which Anne made the most of her insignificant wardrobe, and at the manner of arranging the ribbons of her simple headgear, for they were invariably tied with nattiness and deftness, creating a style that the touch of a Frenchwoman alone can as a rule produce. The next day dragged slowly on; the heat was intense, and the girl worked more industriously than ever, so as to finish early. This she managed to do, for "Where there is a will, there is a way," and at half-past five sharp she was at the trysting place, where she found her friend already awaiting her. Janet was a very different looking young woman from Anne; she was shorter, and of stouter build; her hair was scanty, and of a mousey-brown shade; she had small eyes of a greenish hue, and an ordinary nose and mouth; her face was round and highly coloured, so she was decidedly no beauty, but she was a well-disposed, amiable creature, and a clever needle-

woman, who knotted and concocted bows, and fixed flowers and ornaments on the "toques" for the modish customers in a masterly fashion, which won for her the golden opinion of Madame Rose, and also the golden sovereign that was a still more substantial proof of her employer's appreciation of her merit. The lady milliner, having a considerable idea of Janet's acuteness and respectability of character, and feeling certain that she would never form undesirable acquaintanceships, had enquired whether she knew of any friend who might be suitable for the show-room; Anne was the first who suggested herself to Janet's mind, and she therefore immediately mentioned her name to Madame, and with so much praise, that an interview was at once arranged. Anne felt deeply grateful for this kindness, and greeted Janet with a real cordiality, telling her that it was indeed good and sweet of her to have thus borne her in mind; the girl replying in her blunt hearty way, that "Pray, why shouldn't she do her a good turn if she could?" Anne had always been nice to her, and besides, it was nothing at all, not worth mentioning! So then the two started together, and chatted away

pleasantly the while, relating all their little plans, troubles, and joys to each other, and were soon at their destination. They entered the shop, and proceeded into a small room at the back, where at a large table which occupied most of the space, two girls sat busily working. These stared questioningly at the new-comer.

"Will you wait here a second?" whispered Janet to her friend. "Miss James, Miss Rice," she added, turning towards the apprentices, "this is Miss Pole—you have heard me speak of her."

The young women all bowed at this simple introduction. Anne ventured to remark "that it was a fine day"; not a particularly original sentiment, perhaps, but how useful is the weather as a topic of conversation; how would one get on minus it?

"Yes," replied the prettier of the two, a soft little flaxen-haired thing. "I shall be glad when it is time to leave and get some air; but see what a duck of a hat this is!" And she exhibited a fairy-like structure composed of white lace, chiffon, and fluffy pale pink roses, which she held aloft, with pardonable pride, for Anne's inspection. "There is something wanting, though," observed

she, deprecatingly, after Anne had sufficiently expressed and acknowledged her admiration. "It is a mauve bow—here is the ribbon, but I daren't make it up; it would result in a miserable failure. I must let Miss Robinson do that to-morrow morning; it has got to be sent home by the evening for a young lady who is very particular. Two and a half guineas is the price, ain't it a lot—although it *is* lovely, now isn't it?"

"Yes, it really is," replied Anne; "but it does seem strange that some people have so much to spend, to be able to give all that, just for one article of dress."

Just then, Janet appeared and beckoned to her.

"Madame wishes to see you," she said; "come upstairs with me, dear."

And Anne followed her, both ascending some narrow steps which led from the back room to the floor above, and Janet ushered her friend, without ceremony, into an apartment furnished as a drawing-room, but the little artificial-flower maker had not much time to look about her, or to admire the pretty terra-cotta walls, cretonne curtains, and blue and white china, for the next moment a portière, which apparently divided the chamber into two,

was raised, and out stepped a lady of aristocratic bearing, and of a tall and commanding figure. Her hair was of the shade known as golden auburn, which bright tint might, very possibly, have been the result of art; her attire and complexion were, alike, fashionable in the extreme, for the latter was considerably embellished, or the reverse, according to the fancy of the beholder, by rouge lavishly applied on the cheeks, and black kohl or some such compound rubbed on the eyebrows and lashes, besides a general whitening of the remainder of the countenance; but the features were good, and everyone would have been forced to admit that Madame Rose—for it was she—was a handsome woman, who carried her forty-five summers in an airy and marvellous manner, and who, at her best, might have passed for ten years younger, such was her state of preservation.

“So this is the young person,” she remarked to Janet, as she inclined her head, with a queenly and gracious movement, towards Anne, whom she surveyed with a critical, but by no means an ill-natured eye.

The subject of her scrutiny stood modestly and shyly before her, and was so impressed by the

whole aspect of this wonderful-looking feminine being, that when this one deigned to question her as to her capabilities and knowledge, which, indeed, she did with the searching astuteness of a sharp barrister cross-examining a trembling witness, Anne found it extremely difficult to collect her thoughts, and to reply with the coherence, or in the businesslike and decisive way she would have herself desired. She hesitated, stammered, and blushed, and experienced the terrible sensation that, instead of getting through the trying ordeal decently and well, she was, alas, making an abject fool of her poor little self. This was by no means the case, for the grand milliner was most favourably impressed by the apparent genuineness of character and honesty of the little thing; innocence and goodness seemed to surround and breathe from her, nor were the answers she gave stupid. Her nervousness was understood by the shrewd-witted business gentlewoman, who considered Anne pretty and fascinating, and opined that she might go farther and fare worse in her quest for an assistant, so that, to the girl's amazement, she was not dismissed with ignominy from the presence of the *modiste*, who

appeared to her to be an arbiter of destiny, for Anne felt that her fate lay in a balance held and poised in the strong white fingers of that lady. Her surprise was great when she was addressed thus—

“Miss Pole, you may, if you please, enter my establishment on Monday week. I think I have sufficiently explained your duties, and, under my personal supervision, you will not be able to make many mistakes. I have already acquainted you with my terms—ten shillings a week to commence with, and a commission on everything you sell; your dinner and tea you will be given here; and, if you suit and make yourself useful, your salary will very soon be raised to fifteen shillings, then to a guinea, and, perhaps, more, but that is to be seen. You are only a beginner, and, doubtless, you are aware that a young person who, for the first time, enters a house of this, or, indeed, of an inferior class, usually receives no pay for a considerable period, and often has to give a premium. I wish you thoroughly to understand this, in order that you may fully appreciate the advantageous offer I am holding out to you. Do you wish to accept it?”

Anne's spirits had been gradually rising during this speech, and at the close of it she felt so delighted that her self-possession completely returned to her, and she answered with a complacent little smile, and in as composed a tone of voice as the excitement of her joy would allow—

“I am only too glad to accept, madam, and assure you that I will do my best to please you and give satisfaction. I will give Mr. Jonas Moses notice of leaving his employ to-morrow, and, as it was arranged that either of us could at any time give a week's notice, it will be all right.”

“There is one thing I desire to mention,” continued Madame Rose; “that you must, at all times, address the lady customers as ‘Madam,’ otherwise it is extremely uncourteous, and it is only in common shops that underbred assistants dispense with this proper form in their intercourse with ladies. But I am happy to see,” she added, “that you do not fail, in this respect, to place my mind at rest. You are a civil-spoken girl.”

After this there was some conversation regarding details of dress, and the *modiste* was good enough to promise to present a slightly-worn black gown

of her own for Anne to alter and wear in the show-room. A few hints on general deportment, and some explanation about the business and of the pricing of the millinery, and then the two young women respectfully took leave of Madame Rose.

"Do you mind just coming to the chemist's?" asked Janet of her friend, who was tripping beside her with a light-hearted step, as she talked gaily of the interview and of her future plans in this new line of work.

"No, of course, I shall be delighted. Can you imagine what old Jonas Moses will say, and what sort of a face he will put on, when I inform him that I intend to leave," added she, laughing outright.

"Oh, Anne," exclaimed the other, shaking her arm gently, for they held on to each other as they walked, as schoolgirls and young damsels of the lower and middle classes will do. "I declare," she continued, laughing merrily in her turn, "that you are becoming quite mischievous and naughty, now that you have such a turn of good luck."

"Well, it is all owing to you," retorted Anne, with a grateful look in her sweet blue orbs.

“No, it isn't, you silly—get along, do!” answered Janet with a nudge. And at this juncture they found themselves at the door of the emporium of Mr. Barb, the store chemist. They went in, and Janet proffered a request of the smart, good-looking young man behind the counter, for some soap and some borax. These articles were immediately forthcoming, but not so quickly done up in a parcel, for the gentleman who served Janet was evidently much struck by the appearance of her friend, and his handsome violet eyes were constantly wandering in her direction, and he ventured one or two commonplace remarks, whilst he rolled and unrolled the paper with a lingering and protractedly slow touch. Curiously enough, there lay in the cast or mould of his features, and even in the expression, a striking resemblance to His Royal Highness the Duke of York, and the humble-positioned son of the people having been apprised by his relations and comrades of the fact, and in all probability by his mirror as well, attempted, as far as his resources—mental, physical, and pecuniary—would admit, to render the likeness still more apparent. Anthony Prior, for that was his name, trimmed his beard in the fashion which

the Prince affected, and copied his ideal in dress, as nearly as it was possible for a chemist to follow royalty, which was naturally at an immeasurable distance. Anthony was acquainted with Janet, and knew where she was employed; for the last two years she had been in and out of the shop to procure little bits of goods of various kinds, and this is how the sort of mercantile friendship had been scraped up. There was nought to admire in Janet personally, but she was lively and amusing, and "a good sort," as this budding tradesman told himself.

"And I suppose you are still with Madame Rose, Miss?" he now enquired of this young person, in an insinuating tone of voice.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Prior," she answered. "I am in good quarters, I assure you, and have no intention of leaving, unless I am sent off—which I trust won't be at present."

"And the other young lady there?" whispered the chemist, with a slight jerk of the head in Anne's direction, for she was standing a little farther off, and the opportunity was too favourable to be allowed to slip.

"No, but she is going there next week," replied

the impulsive and talkative Janet; "she has been in the artificial flower business. Such a nice girl, Anne Pole is," she added; "she's a great friend of mine, I can tell you. Anne," cried she, "come here, I must introduce Mr. Anthony Prior to you. I expect you'll be in here occasionally; Madame may very likely ask you to come round and fetch her things—sometimes she sends me—those homœopathic medicines she takes. I can't see myself what benefit such absurdly small atoms can do."

"Well, between you and me, young ladies," observed the chemist confidentially, "I think the less physic one puts into the human system, the better. Nature is a famous doctor if left alone, which she seldom is, and so I infinitely prefer the homœopathic remedies to the others; only breathe it not in Gath, for whatever would become of our trade if misguided persons did not largely invest their money in those beastly patent medicines?"

"Just so," observed Janet; "and what would the doctors do, if they weren't called in. Their mixtures must bring you in an income, I should imagine, always making them up as you are!"

Here a spotty-faced youth of about eighteen,

with a shock of black hair, which he had evidently vainly attempted to comb down, and who, from the tap-tap which met the ear, was beyond doubt engaged in stirring up some compound with pestle and mortar, burst into a smothered laugh; his head only could be seen, for he was otherwise hidden behind a kind of screen composed of glass, in which were shelves filled with bottles, boxes, perfumes, and cosmetics, bearing attractive labels to catch the unwary customer. Anthony glanced at his subordinate with dignified disapprobation, and just then there entered a shabbily-dressed woman with a pretty little girl, who was evidently of Jewish extraction. The mother timidly begged the chemist to give her some arrowroot, and the child exclaimed in a tone which could be heard by all those present: "He's the gentleman who is like the Dook of York, mammy," then she added shrilly, "I see the Princess of Wales driving to-day; why, if she's a Princess, don't she wear a crown?"

Even the chemist could not repress a smile now; he was not in the least offended, on the contrary, the child's remarks were, to him, flattering in the extreme, exhaling the sweet fragrance of incense.

"Have you been into the country, after all, Ruth?" he asked her suavely.

"Yes, Mr. Chemist," she replied quickly, "and do you know, sir, that little Bill tried to blow out the sun, he thought it was a great big candle."

Little Bill was Ruth's baby brother. And now, Janet, who had at length received her parcel from the dilatory one, and who, with Anne, had waited on for a few moments when the funny child began to speak, bade the chemist "Good evening."

"I trust I may soon have the pleasure of seeing you again, Miss," he said to Janet, but the look which accompanied the words was unmistakably intended for Anne, who would have been more than dense had she failed to notice the interest she had aroused, for it was so palpable. Anne herself also, was not wholly unmoved under the fire of that admiring gaze; her colour heightened, and when she found herself once more outside in the street, she could not refrain from thinking of the young chemist, with his unusually handsome face, and charm of manner, and she compared him with Alec Tarn, to the utter disadvantage of the latter. Appearances are often deceitful, and, in truth, Alec, with his honest awkwardness and want of polished

gallantry, was by far the better man of the two, but this she did not know ; poor Alec, placed side by side with Anthony, would come out badly, and make but a sorry show, as was the case now in the girl's mind, but place them both in a trying position, where the moral virtues and qualities were in request, and the tables would speedily be turned, and Alec would be brought in at the head of the poll, a most glorious and victorious hero, whilst Anthony would show himself in his true light, as a mean, cowardly poltroon. Anthony was a regular male flirt, and a gay butterfly who flitted from flower to flower ; he imagined himself to be a tremendous lady-killer, and if his exploits and successes were not so great as he fancied, and the supposed wonderfully powerful mesmeric influence of his too captivating personality was not so terribly dangerous and enthralling, as he was conceited enough to believe, still, it must be owned that he was not devoid of a certain fascination for the fair sex, and that more than one had fallen hopelessly and madly in love with him ; but the swain had an ingenious manner of extricating himself from his difficulties of the heart, which, on his side, was absent, for when he

had sufficiently amused himself at any maiden's expense, and when there was no doubt that he had gained her affections, he talked sentiment by the yard ; he assured her that he had acted solely from ignorance, that he had no idea that she would view the matter so seriously, that, of course, how could he have dreamt for a moment that she would have so honoured him as to regard him so tenderly? Alas, his circumstances were not at present brilliant enough to permit of his contemplating matrimony—and, indeed, he much doubted if they ever might, but if the young lady would continue to be his friend, he would esteem himself only too proud, and was now the humblest of her servitors, &c., &c. ; in this grand, eloquent strain, he would write pages, or declaim, like an actor, by the hour ; and such an adept was he in the histrionic art, that he had managed, on more than one occasion, to gain his point, and the foolish girl, whose feelings he had thus trifled with, would forgive him, thus avoiding an unpleasant quarrel. But there was a dark secret which now loomed and hung over the perfidious chemist's head, and which he feared might be divulged at some ill-fated and in-

opportune moment; about a year ago he had been greatly taken with a pretty barmaid, he had made fierce love to her, and the end of it was, that, a short time back, he had been informed that he was the father of a strapping boy. Anthony's frame of mind was decidedly not to be envied when the news reached him; before the impending event he had steadily refused to marry the victim of his wicked and detestable selfishness, and the sort of fondness, coupled with the infatuation of a false and fleeting passion, he had experienced for her, vanished as soon as she fell an easy dupe to his malevolence—a second Marguerite; but he did not rise to the standard of a Faust; for that lover cherished in his soul her he had so foully wronged, whereas the heartless Anthony loathed and hated Linda Bell with the terrible hatred that deceivers so often contract for those they have ruined. Anthony was sensible neither of pity or remorse; he only lived in grim terror lest his deviation from the paths of virtue and rectitude should be blazed abroad, and reach the hearing of his particular and upright master, who would surely instantly dismiss him. So did the wretched man already begin to reap the

certain reward of his error, although his conscience was yet drowned in sleep; as for his spirit guide, his ever watchful and ministering guardian-angel, she was often compelled to veil her face and weep from sheer agony at the obduracy of his inverted disposition, and at the impossibility of penetrating the thick, dark, murky veil of obstinacy and persistent callousness with which he shrouded himself.

And now Anthony, having met Anne Pole, whom he considered charming beyond measure, had every intention of following up the impression which he was sharp enough to perceive he had made upon her, and he was already concocting future plans for delicious meetings in the twilight and evenings, for there would be little difficulty in waylaying the innocent charmer as she left the protecting roof of the smart milliner. Whilst these thoughts were occupying the mind of this selfish being, Janet and Anne were nearing the unfashionable locality of their respective residences; the former certainly was more fortunate in her dwelling-place than was the latter; it did not lie quite so far away from the main thoroughfares, and was a superior habitation to those in Spider

Court. Bean Street was its name, and here the two young women parted from one another with kisses and amicable little expressions of delight, at the idea of thenceforth being able to earn their daily bread in the same establishment, and the delight was real and unfeigned. Let the cynic sneer as he will at feminine friendships, and laugh them to scorn as ever insincere and non-existent; his assertion is false, for although perhaps such a thing is in the minority, and that the majority of women detest each other, and, may-be, are incapable of entertaining the fellow-feeling which is so commonly felt by man for his brother man, still, there are numberless and brilliant exceptions, and when a woman does truly love a sister-woman, her affection is of the tenderest, most devoted, and truest kind; it is usually composed of the sweetest unselfishness, and no tinge of jealousy can enter in and blast the beautiful strong growth, as is the case in heart alliances between the opposite sexes.

The next afternoon found Anne in front of Mr. Jonas Moses's door by five o'clock, carrying a huge piled-up mountain of artificial flowers. When Tim appeared, in answer to her ring, with the usual

cheeky grin illumining his countenance, she informed him that she wished to speak to her employer.

"All right, I'll give the boss your message, miss," he replied, nodding his head in a manner which forcibly reminded the beholder of a monkey. "It ain't only the pay you want then? Now I *should* like to know what it is—curious I am!" continued he, putting his forefinger into his mouth.

"Well, Master Inquisitive, I will gratify you," said Anne. "I am going to give up working for Mr. Moses, but just you be quick and do as I ask, there's a good boy!"

Tim gave a prolonged whistle, and with a look in which astonishment and knowing acuteness were mingled, took to his heels. Presently he returned, and desired Anne to follow him to the mysterious office. She did so, and being thus ushered into the august presence of Jonas, found that worthy reclining in an easy chair, pipe in mouth. He did not trouble to rise on her approach, but sat tight in his comfortable lounge, puffing away like a steam-engine. For one second he removed the meerschaum in order to remark in drawling tones, with the usual hideous Jewish twang—

"Good-afternoon, and what do you want? Higher wages? You won't get 'em, Miss."

"No, sir, I don't require an increase of salary," replied Anne, with dignity; "it is that I wish to leave your employment, and will give a week's notice from to-day if you please."

Jonas started, and half rose from his sitting posture; amazement was written over his whole person, and there was an angry gleam in his blood-shot black eyes.

"What do you mean? You ungrateful girl!" he exclaimed furiously.

"Well, sir, I have found something that will suit me better; I am going into a milliner's show-room," she replied.

"Show-room!" interrupted the Jew with increased rage. "And pray what will you do there? Stand like a stupid dummy at the wax-works, or like a barber's block I presume—and they won't keep you long, believe me; you ain't got the figure let me tell you, not at all; don't think it, make no mistake."

He paused to take breath, whilst Anne crimsoned with suppressed indignation. She scarcely knew how to frame a reply, so vexed was she at the

insolent coarseness of the man's words and manner. At length she controlled herself, and said quietly enough—

“Well, sir, that's my affair ; you quite understand ? This day week. I have brought the flowers now, and will have another lot in readiness by then, and you can settle everything together if you prefer to do so.”

“No,” roared Jonas. “Don't you dictate to me, Miss Impudence ; after to-day you come here no more—you hear what I say ? I don't want to see your sly, artful face no more !” he thundered forth, totally forgetful of grammar, which was not his best point at any time. He got up and advanced towards her, trembling with wrath.

“A good master such as me, one who has paid through the nose for bad work ; to treat me like that, you thankless baggage. Well rid of you I am, says I !” and he brought down his clenched fist with a thud on his desk, on which lay his open ledger.

Anne was hardly prepared for such a disagreeable interview as this, and she began to feel rather alarmed, but she fancied that the worst must be over. Of course, he was well aware that he was

losing one of his best and quickest hands, and therefore his exasperation and resentment knew no bounds. She untied the string and undid the paper containing the flowers, which she exhibited to the irate curmudgeon with a studied smile. He stamped his feet, and seemed unable to speak by reason of the violence of his cholera.

“Six dozen roses, two dozen bunches of violets, six dozen of various leaves, four dozen lilacs, four dozen acacia, four dozen poppies and grass, four dozen cornflowers,” she repeated mechanically. “You see, sir,” she added, “that I couldn’t finish all last time; and, of course, there was no hurry about the lilac or acacia, and I began them quite ten days ago; it will be fifteen shillings in all.”

Jonas had seemingly recovered himself slightly. He cleared his throat, and remarked, in a less savage tone, “All right;” then he fumbled with a key at the secret drawer of his bureau, and took out some coins; as he surveyed them, his temper returned with renewed vigour and violence, for the thought arose that he should never be able to discover such a cheap, skilful, and energetic worker as Anne. He counted out the money to himself, so as to be certain that he was not

offering her too much ; and then, as if suddenly possessed by some demon, he raised his right hand, in which he held the shillings, high aloft, and literally flung them in the young woman's face. Two lodged in her bonnet, and the remainder fell at her feet and rolled over the worn carpet. She stooped to pick them up, and the movement caused those near her brow to alight on the ground. Jonas did not attempt to assist Anne in her search ; he stood there glaring at her wildly, and burst into a fierce peal of brutal, devilish laughter.

Having gathered all the scattered coins together, Anne took her purse from her pocket and placed them in it ; then she retreated towards the door, saying, in as cool and collected a tone of voice as she could muster in such a trying situation—

“ The money is quite correct, thank you. Good evening, Mr. Moses.”

There was an underlying inflexion of sarcasm in the always musical intonation which the rough, unpolished Israelite was too dull to observe ; but, at the same time, the civility and unruffled calmness of her conduct and speech surprised him to

such an extraordinary degree, that a sort of shame even filtered through his vulgarised and sullied mind, and gave a tiny stab at his heart.

“Good evening to you, Miss Pole,” he stammered; “and if you care to go on working till the date you mentioned, I don’t say as——”

“Thank you, no, Mr. Jonas,” interrupted Anne. “It is far better it should rest as it is. I won’t come again. Good evening, sir.” And she left the apartment, and in so doing came into collision with Tim, whom she discovered in a very suspicious attitude, for he was on his knees, and now jumped up as if he had been shot, growing purple in the face when he met her gaze. Jonas perceived him also, but, fortunately, only when he had resumed his normal position.

“What are you doing there, you rascal?” he shouted angrily. “Get downstairs as fast as you can, or I will assist you.” And he banged the door to behind Anne, who had swiftly passed out into the hall, not caring to participate in another stormy scene. Tim followed her on tip-toe to the pavement.

“Well, I never, Miss,” he remarked, in an impressive undertone.

"Oh, you are a sly boy!" she exclaimed, turning round at the sound of his voice. "*I* caught you at the keyhole; thank your stars that old Jonas didn't find you there; and now here you are, and I really had no idea that you had come after me—you crept like a cat!"

"Hush!" whispered the boy. "'Taint so bad as you imagine; it was to shield you I listened. I heard that old wretch bellowing so, that I wondered what was up, and I came to make sure he wasn't a-going to murder you or something. A reg'lar fiendish monster he is; and I hate him, I do, for treating you, that have always been so good, in that awful way—cruel it is!"

Tim was so indignant that the words were literally hissed forth. Anne was touched at such a manifestation of true juvenile chivalry.

"That was certainly good of you, Tim," she said, gently. "Mr. Moses was decidedly very hasty; and I did feel rather frightened," she added.

"If he had got any worsen, I should have fetched Mr. Tarn," observed he.

"He's a real good chap, he is," he continued; "and ain't he sweet on you—oh, my! Coopid

ain't in it, you bet." On this sally, Anne blushed violently.

"You do talk the greatest rubbish I ever heard, and about things of which you are perfectly ignorant," she observed, with hasty utterance. "Coopid, indeed; you want schooling terribly. Don't you know it is Cupid?"

"No; I can't say as I does," answered Tim. "All as I knows is that Coopid, or Cupid, was the god of love—and mark what I say, Miss, Mr. Tarn ——"

But he progressed no further, and whatever important advice or elevating sentiments were to pass from his precocious lips were destined and doomed to be eternally lost to posterity, for Anne frowned at him, and stopped the flow of his words with decision.

"Shut up, you stupid little boy!" she exclaimed with vehemence. "I shan't like you any more; you don't understand how you are annoying and vexing me."

Tim was sufficiently intelligent to comprehend that he had gone a trifle too far. He had never yet known Miss Pole to exhibit the least ill-humour; but now he saw that he had displeased

her, and he hastened to do his utmost to make amends for his thoughtlessness. From some receptacle in his dress, he produced a sticky scrap of blue paper, in which was half-hidden a very unappetising looking piece of barley-sugar. This toothsome sweetmeat Tim held out to his friend, with as enticing a grin as he could manage to muster.

"It's awfully nice; do have it, do?" he begged, as he endeavoured to press the messy confection into her gloved hands.

"No, Tim, thank you; no!" said she, drawing back, with an almost imperceptible grimace of disgust. She did not wish to wound his feelings, but she was unable totally to disguise how unpalatable to her was the idea of the gift he so generously tendered her.

"Don't think me ungrateful, Tim," she smilingly continued, "but I never eat goodies; and see what a time we have been talking. I must be getting home and you haven't finished in the pantry, I am pretty sure. Good-bye!" And she gave him the tips of her fingers.

The urchin's face fell. "I am so sorry you aren't coming no more," he responded, mournfully.

"You have always been kind to me, and never cross and snappy, like the other young ladies!" The tears were actually welling up into his eyes.

"Now, you mustn't be silly, Tim," said Anne, encouragingly. "Mr. Moses told you he should raise your wages, and it isn't a bad berth for a lad of your age, and I shall see you sometimes. Be a good, sensible boy. Good-bye again, Tim!" and she walked on and left him. She gave one glance over her shoulder, and finding that he was still gazing after her in a dejected way, waved her hand to him. Then he roused himself, and went back to the house, with a feeling as if his staunchest partisan had departed from his life. She had not gone many yards when she heard quick, manly steps in the rear, and presently she was overtaken by Alec Tarn, who appeared to be unusually excited and perturbed.

"I am indeed distressed, Miss Pole," he commenced, "to think that Mr. Moses should have behaved in such a bearish manner. It is downright scandalous!" he exclaimed, with heat.

"But how in the world have you come to know about it or find it out?" enquired Anne.

"First of all, old Jonas related to me a few

minutes since that he had had an interview with you, and from what he let drop, I could well guess the remainder," said Alec; "and just now," he added, "I met the boy, Tim. By the way, I thought he looked rather odd and downcast, and I really hardly know—for I was at boiling point already—how it was; anyhow, he told me how horribly and disgracefully that brute had been behaving. He is nothing but a low bully, and I feel I could kick him with the intensest delight."

"Oh, he isn't worth that trouble," retorted Anne, laughing; "but I am glad I shall never more behold him, and in truth I ought to consider myself vastly flattered by his ebullition of temper. The cause of it was my having given him warning. Nothing else, I assure you. I am really gratified; and besides," she continued archly, "you must congratulate me, Mr. Tarn——"

"On what?" interrupted he, in a tone of fierceness and apprehension combined.

"On what?" repeated Anne. "Why, on my promotion, of course. I am going up in the world, and shall be very haughty. To sell bonnets at Madame Rose's is not a position to be sniffed at, I can tell you!" She laughed again.

Alec resumed his normal composure.

"But this change is extremely sudden," he exclaimed. "Fancy my never having known of it," and there was an inflexion in his voice, as if he considered himself hurt.

"You see, it has only just been settled," retorted Anne; "so I could hardly tell my friends before I knew myself, could I?"

"Of course not," replied Alec, "and you know me well enough, I am sure," he continued, "for it not to be necessary to persuade you that I am glad for your sake, if you fancy you will be happier in another business—only," and there was a tremulous, emotional sound, which vibrated and rang through this speech, which seemed to come straight from his soul. "I can't bear to think of your going right away—such a distance off. How shall I see you?"

There was such an expression of desperate earnestness written on his face, and what with that and his words, Anne trembled already in dread of an impending declaration. She caught sight of a poor little lost white dog at that moment, and she at once directed her admirer's attention to it, to divert the current of his thoughts into a fresh

channel. It must, however, at the same time be owned that her feelings on the subject were not entirely selfish, as at any time she would have paid attention to the poor beast, for she dearly loved all animals.

“Oh, look at the wretched, starving thing! Do you think you can catch it, Mr. Tarn? Oh, here’s a policeman. I will ask him to help,” and turning to the stout constable she did so.

“I haven’t got any string, miss, but I’ll go and see,” he answered, without much alertness or enthusiasm, and he went after the dog, but so slowly that he might just as well have remained stationary.

“He walks as if his boots were stuffed with lead,” remarked Anne to her friend, who was already almost running, whilst she was racing along by his side.

“He’s a lazy, sleepy fellow,” replied Alec.

The subject of their remarks watched their retreating figures with sublime indifference, and continued his stately march. No doubt he thought them a pair of fanatic lunatics, to trouble themselves so much about a half-starved mongrel, for he was perfectly happy himself, so long as he had

plenty of roast beef, mutton chops, and beer. A phlegmatic materialist was he! And now the poor dog had evidently discovered some dainty with which to appease his hunger, for he had come to a halt, and his nose was buried in the gutter.

This was Anne's opportunity. Softly and gently she approached the animal, and immediately attempted to coax it to her. It wagged its tail in token of its full appreciation of this dulcet persuasion, to which, alas! it was sadly unused, and having swallowed the last piece of the diminutive portion of wretched, rejected food, it came right up to her, and placed its fore-paws on her dress, fixing such wistful, famished eyes on her face, that her soul felt all melting with pity.

Alec watched her with intense sympathy, and it occurred to him that he had a biscuit or two stowed away about his person. These were soon discovered, and he broke them up and fed the dog with them.

"I tell you what, Miss Pole, I shall keep that creature, I have taken a fancy to it," he observed.

"Oh, I am glad; that's capital," exclaimed Anne. "I would give worlds to have it, but

have nowhere to keep it," she added, disconsolately.

"Come along, old fellow," he said to the dog, as he lifted it up into his arms, and they trudged forward again. "Oh, I can give him an excellent home," continued Alec; "my landlady is simply mad about animals, and my only fear is that she may kill him with kindness, she will make such a pet of him," and he patted the mongrel's head as he spoke. "Then," he added, "you have noticed what a lovely garden we have? He can disport himself there with a ball, if he so pleases, in my absence, and in the evening I will exercise him myself. By the way, what name shall we give him?"

"We found him in Lupin Street," answered Anne; "do you dislike the idea of Lupin?"

"It couldn't be better," retorted Alec, "what an important appellation; don't you feel awfully stuck up, old boy?"

The little beast pricked up its ears, and crept closer to his coat, as if in approval. And then they arrived at the gloomy Spider Court, where Anne bade her escort farewell, whilst he with pardonable guile formed of Lupin a centre to a

little mesh of pretence, discovering in this innocent specimen of the canine race, a too delightful pretext for another speedy meeting with the object of his adoring affection; so she, who was concerned and interested beyond measure in the dog's fate, promised the young gentleman that she would favour him with her company in another saunter, and that she would wend her steps, within the space of forty-eight hours, towards a given point, where she would find him ready and waiting for her. Anne congratulated herself that old Jonas had not prevailed upon her to continue a week longer in his employ, for she found that her work was completely cut out for her, and that, indeed, she would have as much as she could do in getting her wardrobe into order, and in altering and fitting the gown which Madame Rose had given her. She was in the highest of spirits, and when the evening, on which she was to accompany Alec in the stroll, came round, she started towards the place of meeting, with quite a little air of importance in her bearing, which was hitherto foreign to her, and she hummed the tune of a popular valse as she went. To Anne music was a passion, and she could

rarely resist the temptation of waiting in the street to listen to the strains of either a brass band, or a modest piano organ; her favourite melody was one from the "Cavalleria Rusticana," and when this was being ground out of that instrument dear to the itinerant Italian, she had been even known to spare a penny from her hardly-earned savings, and to bestow it on this not always very worthy object for charity. She had proceeded for some little way, and had left the slummy locality behind her, when, on turning into a respectable but not ultra-fashionable square, she came face to face with Anthony Prior. Lifting his hat with a most courtly bow, he addressed her with a marked deference of manner. "I wonder if you recollect me." He paused for a second. Anne held out her hand, but was silent; a hot blush had overspread her countenance at this unexpected encounter.

"My name is Anthony Prior—you remember. You were at the chemist's with Miss Robinson; and you are Miss Pole," he continued, in the sweetest of tones.

"Certainly I recollect you," replied Anne, recovering herself.

“Have you seen anything of Janet since then?” enquired she, as she moved on, he walking by her side without asking permission.

“No, I have not,” he answered. “Neither have *you* honoured me by another call. Angels’ visits are few and far between,” he remarked, eyeing Anne furtively, to discover, if possible, whether he was going on the right tack. She remained quite grave, but her colour contradicted the serenity which her unmoved facial muscles indicated, and the wily chemist was of opinion that he had scored one.

“I am afraid I am taking you out of your way, Mr. Prior,” she ventured at length.

“By no means, Miss Pole,” he replied. “Such a pleasure as this—so unforeseen, too—is so inviting that I must take advantage of my luck. You will not be so cruel as to banish me from your society?” he added, with an ingratiating smile.

“Oh, no,” stammered Anne, half-wondering at the extraordinary satisfaction she found in this man’s company, and at the disquietude and uneasiness of mind which he, at the same time, caused her. “I suppose you are generally very busy?” she continued.

"Fairly so," he answered; "but if you will be gracious enough to allow me to fetch you occasionally, I shall be more than proud to attend you to the theatre or any other place of amusement. Will you come with me?"

"You are very kind. I hardly know what to say," replied Anne, as her heart gave a bound, and astonished her greatly thereby. "It is rather a short acquaintanceship, yours and mine, for that yet, isn't it, Mr. Prior?" she added, but not coldly.

"I don't see that at all," he replied. "I know Janet Robinson so well, that it seems to me that I must have known you all my life."

"Well, yes, that does make a difference," said Anne irresolutely, for caution and inclination were already doing battle within her.

Anthony, ever observant of her varying moods, and watching her as a cat would a mouse, or a spider the silly fly, seized his advantage with a giant's grip.

"Now, there is a splendid play, in which Mrs. Bareface is acting, called *The New Woman*. Suppose we give the Falsity Theatre the benefit of our patronage. What evening will you choose, Miss Pole? Mine are all at your disposal."

This was a very fine move, and the audacity of its apparently unstudied candour put Anne entirely off her guard. She saw before her a young man who was apparently the embodiment of unselfish generosity, of frank and artless honesty. Why, therefore, should she wound his sensitive feelings, and deprive him of this chance of performing a disinterested kindness? Why should she be so "stand-offish?"—so ridiculously particular? What a treat was in store for her too, if she agreed to his proposal! The thought of that was beyond her powers of resistance—a play, of all things the most delightful.

"You are exceedingly good. Do you really mean it?" she asked, glancing at him shyly.

"Mean it!" he exclaimed in a voice of unfeigned joy. "I should rather think I did. Only fix the day, and I'm your man."

"Will Friday suit you?" enquired Anne.

"Down to the ground," responded Anthony, as he smiled radiantly; and then they arranged to meet near a shop which lay at a few yards' distance from Anne's residence. They had been conversing in such an animated way that they had neither of them noticed that a man was

quickly advancing towards them—a man who was an utter stranger to Anthony, but not to Anne. His eyes were fixed on the pair. He looked from one to the other, and his gaze was one of vexatious jealousy and discontent. By-and-bye Anne lifted her blue orbs, and they fell on him — on Alec — and their eyes met. There was an expression of reproach in his, and she thought how very tiresome it was that he should have come upon her just then. She could have given no reason for this feeling, but there it was. She was nothing to Alec, she mused, or, rather, Alec was nothing to her; but he was so stupidly jealous, and might let her know it, and it would be a bore. And then it struck her that she was a trifle unkind to her old and tried friend, when she was engaged to take a walk with him, and instead of hastening to bear him company, she had been coolly dragging her steps along like a slow tortoise, by the side of a person to whom she had only spoken once before during the whole of her short existence. Tired of waiting for her coming, Alec had, of course, started in search of her faithless little self, as he knew the route she

must take by heart. And now all three met, and Anne introduced the two men to one another; and she did not fail to observe how stiffly formal was their mutual salute, and she felt extremely uncomfortable. Alec would barely comport himself with civility, so the only thing to be done was to bid Mr. Prior farewell, which she did with alacrity.

“Good-bye, Miss Pole, till Friday,” said he; and with a meaning look the daring, impudent fellow gently squeezed her fingers. Nothing would ever elude or escape him from a want of assurance. With lowered eyelids, and a tremulous, exquisite thrill at her heart, Anne parted from him.

“Who on earth is that man?” asked Alec, scowling blackly, for, like most of his sex, he was utterly unable to wear a mask where his vital feelings were concerned.

“Oh, he is the head assistant at Mr. Barb’s, the store chemist in Raleigh Street, out of Oxford Street.”

“Well, in my opinion, he is a conceited jackanapes! Moreover, he has a nasty, deceitful expression. Have you known him long?”

“No, but Janet Robinson has,” answered Anne lightly.

Just then the dog Lupin, who had been following close at his master's heels, and to whom she had paid no attention, having been too greatly engrossed in managing his ruffled owner, bounded to her like a frisking lambkin, and dumbly craved for recognition.

"Oh, Lupin!" she exclaimed, stroking his head, "your appearance has already marvellously improved; you look quite trim, and are ever so much fatter!"

"Yes," responded Alec, his countenance somewhat brightening, "he really begins to do me credit; and as for his appetite, it is so enormous, that I shouldn't be surprised if he ate me out of house and home. And as for his name," he continued, "my landlady, who prides herself on her erudition, informed me that she supposed I mean 'Lubin,' and when I said 'No,' that I had called him after Lupin Street, she sniffed in a contemptuous, superior manner, and remarked, 'Dear me! oh, how vulgar!'"

Anne giggled with merriment. She had once beheld the highly respectable Mrs. Tiggs, and could never obliterate from her memory the remembrance of that terrible vision of plastered-

down, dyed-black hair, with the corkscrew curls on either side of the thin cheeks, the long, pointed, inquisitive nose, on which was poised an aristocratic *pince nez*, the lipless mouth of untold dimensions, and the huge white, false teeth, which resembled those belonging to a tiger, and which seemed to be longing to bite any frail or imperfect mortal who ventured to address her immaculate majesty! This lady was never visible to visitors unless she was arrayed in an ancient black silk gown, which had been turned and re-modelled more than once. With this modish dress, she wore a white Honiton lace collar and cuffs, a large, inartistic gold brooch, containing the hair of the dear departed at the back, and a massive gold watch-chain. Her hands were also, when on view, discreetly covered by black lace mittens; and in this last habitual custom she was passing wise, for the members thus veiled did not permit of close inspection. They were clumsy and abnormal in size and shape, as red as beetroot, the finger-tips being square, and the ugly, short, wide nails embedded in the encroaching flesh. But, in spite of this unprepossessing appearance, Mrs. Tiggs was kind-hearted, and, as she was fond of dogs, Anne

forgave her her forbidding exterior. After all, it was but the shell, and the spirit, when freed, would be rid of the earthly blemishes which hid its beauty from the casual observer.

To return to the young people.

Alec soon forgot the obnoxious personality of the gay Lothario of a chemist, in Anne's charming smiles. She seemed, if possible, more captivating than ever, and appeared to lay herself out to amuse the clerk. Unfortunately, whilst talking and joking with him, her thoughts would wander off towards Anthony; and, sad to relate, her unwonted hilarity was chiefly caused by her delight in contemplation of the treat in store for her in his company.

Presently Alec observed, "If you have found a new friend, Miss Pole, so have I!"

His tone was a trifle tart.

"Oh, indeed! Do tell me about it," replied Anne, with real interest, in which was mingled a tinge of feminine curiosity.

"You haven't forgotten the insolent tipsy man of the other night, have you?" enquired he.

"Not likely," responded Anne; "it was too disagreeable an occurrence to forget easily."

“Well, as I was returning home yesterday, having made rather a circuit, as I was obliged to do some shopping—getting some biscuits for Lupin, and one or two other necessaries—who should I meet but my friend,” said Alec.

“And,” interrupted Anne.

“Yes,” continued he, “it is ‘And.’ Just you wait, missy; for, will you believe, he came up to me in a most friendly manner, and he was perfectly sober on this occasion, mind you. ‘Youngster,’ said he, ‘p’raps you may not call me to remembrance; but although I was screwed, and behaved disgracefully to your lady friend and to you, I wasn’t too far gone to notice your face and figure, and this minute I recognized you at once. Now I want to tell you that I am awfully sorry I behaved in such an ungentlemanly way, and so I crave your forgiveness.’”

“Just fancy!” interposed Anne.

“To continue my strange story,” resumed Alec. “Of course, I assured the man that there was nothing to forgive, that you certainly bore him no malice, and that we were both aware that he did not altogether know what he was about. Then he told me that he should not speedily forget the

blow I had given him, and I answered that I ought to ask his pardon for that. He said, 'Not at all,' and that he considered me a fine chap. Indeed, he was far too flattering. We became fast friends, and, I assure you, he isn't half a bad old gentleman. He enquired what was my walk in life, and told me that he was a tea merchant, that he was seeking for a clerk, and that if I would call on him on any morning, he would show me over his premises; and he offered me the appointment then and there, but begged me not to decide about accepting it till I had visited him, and spoken to his head man; and he added that his manager was growing rather too old for his business, that he was thinking of pensioning him off soon, and that if I understood book-keeping thoroughly well, I might, before long, occupy that post—regularly walk into his shoes. I didn't tell you that my new friend's name is Mr. Arthur Wargrove."

Anne had been listening with ever-increasing attention as this tale wore on, and, finally, she was so absorbed in it, that Anthony and the theatre were simply crowded out of her mind.

"I believe fortune is coming to you, Mr. Tarn,"

she remarked, when he had finished. "It is my turn to congratulate you, which I do cordially," she added, with a sweet smile.

"Thank you, a thousand times, dear Miss Pole," said Alec; "your good wishes are real gifts to me, and worth ten thousand of those of anyone else on this earth."

He spoke with genuine feeling.

"Now, that is silly," answered Anne, laughing; "but," she continued, "I agree with you, that that rude old gentleman has been transformed into an angel, and it is a marvel; the more I think over it, the more unreal the incident appears; it is just like what one reads of in a novel; it doesn't seem as if it could be true. What a curious man he must be, to be sure, with two entirely different sides to his character!"

"Yes," replied Alec, thoughtfully; "but, in the first place, you see he was intoxicated. And," he added, with earnestness, "I believe even the best of us have two distinct selves. A scientific person with whom I am intimately acquainted, and who has investigated spiritualistic phenomena, and who, beginning as a sceptic, has now become a most ardent believer and propagandist of what

he terms the new revelation to mankind—the further development of Christianity. Do you comprehend me?”

“Yes, but go on, tell me more! I am deeply interested,” answered Anne, with widely opened blue eyes.

“This person, then, was giving a lecture, and invited any amongst the audience, who were wishful of learning more about spiritualism, to step into a private room later, and converse with him on the subject. I was one of those who accepted his invitation, and, having ascertained how desirous I was for further enlightenment, he, regardless of the difference in class, which would have naturally divided us, gave me his full permission to go to his residence, for instruction, on a fixed day, once a week. You may be sure I did not require to be pressed, and I attended regularly for instruction until he moved to the country, and, even now, he sometimes honours me with a letter. What I wanted to tell you was this—the gentleman was a medium, that is to say that the spirits were able to influence his mind extremely, and write through his hand.”

“How wonderful!” interrupted Anne.

"Yes, but it is quite true, I assure you," continued Alec; "and in one of the messages, received in this fashion, my friend was taught that every mortal has a double soul; two souls, you understand, one animal or earthly, the other entirely spiritual. The former perishes utterly with the body—or shell, as the spirits term it—at the moment of death; the immortal soul living, of course, for evermore. It is this earthly soul, in which reside the evil passions of mortal man; and if a human being persistently listens to, and follows the promptings of his lower nature, he will sully his divine part, and then, in the next world, he will be compelled—by his own fault—to suffer in restlessness and in remorse, till his soul is cleansed. The spirits say that earth-life is a school, and they call death 'a change.' For my own part I consider it a very sensible doctrine; what is your opinion, Miss Pole?"

"So do I," was her answer. "I feel inclined to become a spiritualist."

"You are one already," replied Alec. "Every person who lives up to his or her ideal—which I am sure *you* do—and does their best, is a spiritual person, and surely a spiritualist means that. It is

so ridiculous of people to consider the term as referring to a new sect or religious denomination. I must own that some who have embraced the glorious truth, and who have satisfied themselves that they are able, beyond doubt, to hold holy intercourse with the dear departed, err in this respect themselves, and it is an egregious mistake."

"Then you really are a spiritualist yourself?" enquired Anne.

"I am, indeed," answered the young man; "but, alas, I am not a physical medium of any kind, so I can demonstrate nothing to you. The gentleman said that I was influenced through my mind by the spirits, or that I should not have been so quickly convinced. He assured me that everyone was, more or less, a medium, as far as thoughts are concerned—they are not always entirely our own. Don't think me capable of talking nonsense to you, Miss Pole," he remarked, noting her expression of amazement; "and," added he, "you will allow I have a character for accuracy, both as regards figures and speech; but you have had more than enough of this subject—I fear I have wearied you," and he glanced at her tenderly.

"Wearied!" she exclaimed. "You have no

conception of the interest with which I have followed you, you explain everything so clearly; and I so entirely agree with you that spiritualism is the silvery, shining line that runs through every creed, and encircles them all also, exactly like a wide sea of liquid white light, and that those foolish or cavilling ones, who wish to narrow it into their own moulds, or who say it is of the devil, or a false mirage, will find that it swells, and ripples out from between their fingers at its own sweet will, for nothing can hold or enchain it. It is in and with every pure soul that lives up to its highest ideal of justice and righteousness, not only of thought but of act, and it flows straight to earth in brilliant, glorious rays from the cross of Christ and the Christ star!" Anne paused as if inspired; and, doubtless, the words she uttered had been wafted and breathed down to her from higher spheres.

Alec was simply astounded; he gazed at her as if enraptured.

"How divinely you speak—what a lovely mind—what intuition and intelligence you possess," he said.

"Let men decry women as much as they please,

I am their champion!" he continued. "What dull boor of a man could grasp the subject in a second as you have done, I should like to know, and, perceiving its beauty, finding at once the kernel—the inner meaning—descant upon it in this way; I know your foster-mother gave you a better education than other girls of your position usually have; but, let that alone, it has nothing to do with it, you are a genius!"

"Oh, no!" responded Anne; "that I declare I am not; if I were I wouldn't waste my talents at a milliner's. No, Mr. Tarn," added she, "thoughts come into one's mind occasionally, one hardly knows how; some stray word may set one's brain working, and all you said seemed to wake me up; it was *you* who gave me the ideas, *I* only enlarged upon them slightly—not even as much as that—but, somehow, whilst I spoke, I seemed to feel what I was saying was true."

"Ah, that's where it is," began Alec. "There you are; when a person gives out some very fine and uncommon sentiments, and feels them, that's where the spark of genius comes in—'the gift of the gods,' as the expression is, but I don't care for that phrase; it is heathen, and trivial, too,

it strikes me; I believe you were inspired by the denizens of circles of light!"

Meanwhile, Lupin, not considering himself in the least neglected, had been vastly enjoying himself in chasing the black sparrows.

"Poor Lupin," exclaimed Anne, "how shabbily we are treating you. Really he is a good, patient dog," she said, turning to Alec, "and he is growing so chirpy—almost cheeky—look how he is barking at me with delight. I was very rude to change the conversation to the dog, wasn't I?" she asked prettily.

"No, I told you before that you must be sick of it."

"And I told you that I was nothing of the sort," retorted Anne, with a determined little stamp of her foot to accentuate the decisive declaration. "It is only that I could find no ready answer; in some things you are certainly very clever, Mr. Tarn, but in others you are mightily stupid—for instance, as regards me—I am neither the genius nor the angel, nor anything else that is charming, that you kindly imagine; I am just very commonplace and frivolous—not by any means the incarnation of all the virtues, whatever they may

be." Her voice rose higher and higher in her excitement, and the silvery, flute-like tones, thrilled Alec's heart.

"You are just the sweetest thing that was ever born!" he replied, trembling with emotion.

"This won't do," thought Anne. She made as if she had not heard.

"What's the time, Mr. Tarn?" she asked. "I must be getting home—see, it's getting dark, and I have needlework to do; I have been out much too long!"

Alec heaved a sigh. "It is no good," he mused dejectedly, "she doesn't care for me a bit, that's plain, for whenever I try to let her know how dear she is to me, she shuts me up sharp." The infatuated beau little knew that it wasn't necessary for him to inform his idol of the state of his affections, for his every word and look transparently showed them to her during every passing moment that he tarried beside her. He took out his watch. "It is half-past seven," he said. "I wouldn't have believed it could be so late; when I am with you——"

"Look here, Mr. Tarn," interrupted Anne, "I daresay it is amusing—although how it can be

I am sure I don't know—to converse about me, but I find it particularly irritating—really, it almost makes my head ache!” and she placed her hand on her brow.

“Oh, dear me!” exclaimed Alec with great concern, “what an idiot I am—I am so dreadfully sorry. What shall we talk about!”

“Oh, whatever you like,” replied Anne mirthfully, “so long as you keep off personalities; it is tedious and worrying to be always thinking about oneself now, isn't it, Mr. Tarn? Not that I have any intention of being impolite—pray don't fancy it—speak about your own affairs—I shall be delighted!”

“Unfortunately my affairs and yours muddle themselves up so in my mind, I can't help it, and I must own that I consider you are rather hard on a fellow,” remarked Alec, with a pronounced shade of crossness. He was not at all a bad-tempered man, but he could “rise to the occasion,” and, really the girl was too teasing in her coquetry, and he adored her so—he loved her with such deep devotion, such despairing longing, that although he would have gone through fire and water for her sake, she was now, by her thought-

less cruelty, goading him to exasperation; he felt almost as if he could tear out his hair in handfuls. And there she stood, looking up at him mildly with those azure orbs.

“Good-bye, Mr. Tarn,” said she, offering him her little hand.

“Good-bye, Lupin dear,” and she lifted up the dog and kissed its soft, furry forehead, thus driving Alec to the verge of frenzy by reason of the jealousy which consumed him, as he was compelled to remain a silent and placid witness of caresses which, to his mind, were thus lavishly wasted, whilst his heart was hungering for them in vain.

“When shall we meet again, and have another walk?” he asked, as she was preparing to leave him, for they had reached the lane out of which her squalid court opened.

She stopped short. “I would prefer your not coming any further; folks will talk—they are such dreadful gossips, if we are constantly seen together!”

“What if they do?” answered he in a hoarse voice.

“And about seeing you again,” she continued

briskly ; " in a day or two I shall be at Madame Rose's ; to-morrow week, will that do for you ? "

" No, that is too far off," replied Alec.

" Very well, then, just send me a post-card, and suggest an evening, and if I can manage to come out with you, I will."

" A post-card ! " exclaimed he indignantly ; " I shouldn't think of doing such an impertinent thing, Miss Pole. I will write a note."

" Oh, just as you like ; but, anyhow, I shan't be able to know for certain ; it depends ; you must take your chance. Adieu ! " and she flew off like a bird, whilst the depressed lover was left to console himself as best he could with this scant comfort.

" Never mind, Lupin," he said to the dog, who seemed to comprehend his master's misery, for he wagged his tail, and from this canine appendage to the tip of his nose he expressed affectionate sympathy.

" Never mind, Lupin," he repeated ; " everything comes to him who knows how to wait " ; and having solaced himself by imprinting a kiss on the selfsame spot that had been touched by Anne's rosy lips, he strode out quickly homewards.

The other gentleman—the rival—was in the most exuberant of spirits, which increased perceptibly as the hours of Friday passed. On the approach of evening he dressed himself in his very best, and to some purpose, for when he came forward to meet the young girl, who was somewhat late, he was flattered by beholding the admiration, which she was too inexperienced to be able to conceal, shining in her eyes.

They were soon at the Falsity, and managed to get front seats in the dress-circle, Anne divesting herself of her hat in the cloak-room, for Anthony wished to impress her and to do the "grand"; and although she assured him that the pit would do very well, and that she considered it unnecessary and reprehensible extravagance to go elsewhere in the house, he would hear none of it; so she was compelled to accede to his wishes. Indeed, she found it very difficult to say "No" to him in anything, for, unknown to her, he possessed a dangerous mesmeric influence over her, of which fact he, a thorough man of the world, was fully aware; the sort of fascination that the snake has for one of the feathered species, was the attraction with which he allured her.

The play was well acted, but the plot was most disagreeable and repulsive, and, in parts, Anne felt herself blushing with shame, to the diversion of her companion, who was of an exceeding brazen temperament, as has been demonstrated. Between the acts he whispered to Anne in soft, lover-like tones, and hazarded words and phrases of significant import; sheer moonshine and nonsense, which she swallowed all too willingly and greedily; but, as sometimes happens, the biter gets bit; and Anthony presently discovered that he was falling in love with the girl more truly than ever in his life, and with a feeling as deep as such a shallow and selfish nature as his will allow.

By the time the play was over, he was obliged to own to himself that this was for once no laughing matter; he had never yet come across a young woman who was so genuine and so refreshingly healthy in all her ideas; she was as good as gold, her soul as pure as a diamond of the first water, and her thoughts as translucent as transparent amber, for as she spoke they were shadowed on her face in a never-ending fair and changing sequence; so do glinting, alternating

light and shade pursue each other through the foliage of a vast forest, on a summer's morn in Nature ; and Anne was Nature's true child.

And so it happened that this faithful descendant of Mother Eve emerged from the theatre with him, nestled close to his protecting arm, which arm pressed her rather more tightly than the occasion strictly demanded, although it must be conceded that the thronging crowd was excessive, and that sundry individuals in this mixed assembly pushed and shoved with all their might and main and without mercy ; and the pair came out thus, whilst the foolish little maiden leant more heavily on her cavalier than she need have done, and with a palpitating heart, for this fluttering thing, containing such tender, sacred affections, aspiring towards an ideal, of which Anthony was but the wretched simulacrum, had, alas ! left her keeping, and had flown to that of the unworthy sham in the form of a man, for he had none of the illustrious qualities and attributes which constitute glorious manhood. And then it was arranged that they should meet again on the following evening, and they at length bade one another a fond and lingering farewell.

When Anne pondered on this eventful outing, and on all Anthony's sayings, in the privacy of her own room, her head whirled, and she could scarcely realize that she was indeed the same person that she was before he brought this bliss into her existence, for now, she mused, her life was worth living; she sighed softly, and thought what a beautiful thing was love; and oh! how blessed was she that all appeared to be so smooth; already she could hear the marriage bells ringing; and she was so blindly infatuated with this paltry hero that she was now oblivious of the extraordinary velocity at which her inclinations had been travelling, and how she had allowed them to rush wildly and excitedly away at an instant's notice, without the feeblest attempt at reining them in. She excused herself, if a faint idea of her mad rashness was presented suddenly to her mind, by telling herself that "it was a case of love at first sight"; and so she rested awhile in a state of beatitude—in a castle in Spain—for the whole phase was unreal, having no sure foundation.

She met Anthony on the succeeding night, and this was the precursor of several others, for he

never parted from her without making a new appointment, and Anne was only too ready to meet his wishes.

Their conversation is not worth recording, for Anthony's spirit never soared above the plane of sense. He was hopelessly immured in materialism; and if Anne broached any sort of subject of the kind she was wont to discuss with Alec, he would immediately manifest his want of interest in such topics, and turn the conversation adroitly to her charms; and as she was so fearfully under the power of his magnetic fascination, she cared not of what he spoke, so long as he adored her; and naturally, too, she was nothing loth to find herself the pivot around which he wreathed a ceaseless flow of endearing words; and it was far sweeter indeed to listen to these, than if he had contented himself with giving her the benefit of a lecture on the sun, moon, and stars, or had held forth to her on themes of that description; for when a woman's heart is deeply touched, one theme alone is sufficient, and fully satisfying, and that is love; and of that she never tires; nor does its music ever pall on her longing ear, even though the object of her wasted affections be a demon of

darkness in the form of an angel. And so it came to pass that, on a night which would for ever be engraved on her memory, Anthony made Anne an offer of marriage, which, needless to relate, she accepted; and her exultation knew no bounds, for she believed herself to be the most fortunate of her sex, and was not sufficiently far-seeing or observant of character to truly read Anthony's. For what could possibly be the future of the deluded girl who should link her life with his in wedlock? Utterly unstable, utterly inconstant of disposition was he, and incapable of a lasting attachment, so that, after having delighted himself with his new toy for a few months, or perhaps for a year's time, he would assuredly grow weary of it, and rove amid new pastures; and then there would be tears, reproaches, and recriminations, and afterwards he might possibly return to remain quietly by his hearth for some weeks, whilst his hardly-suppressed yawns would proclaim the extent of his boredom; and so later the same story would be repeated and re-acted, and probably it might be more painful for the poor wife to endure than the former rehearsal, and by-and-bye her looks would fade,

and noticing the drawn, haggard face, the wasted figure, the grey streaks in the hair, signs of premature old age, what would the inconstant husband think? He would compare her with his latest flame—a radiant creature of outward beauty; and shrugging his shoulders, his steps could not—with his nature—do otherwise than wend themselves in the direction of this charming being. But enough of such moralizings! To return to poor Alec. He allowed some days to elapse since his stroll with Anne, and then he penned her a most civil little note, begging her to write at her leisure, and let him know when he might have the pleasure and happiness of seeing her; but Anne was so engrossed with her love affair that she thrust Alec's missive aside with undisguised impatience, and, sad to relate, she completely omitted to answer it, and it was only when she reached home, after having promised herself for life to Anthony Prior, that the envelope containing the young clerk's effusion met her careless eye, and furnished her with a subject for reflection and meditation of a far from agreeable kind; for she was well aware of the state of Alec's feelings, and it would be an unpleasant task for her to be obliged to make him

cognizant of the fact, that she had pledged herself to marry another man; besides, she felt that she had not altogether behaved well to him—she blamed herself for having even encouraged his attentions to the small extent of which she was guilty, and then a wave of pity crossed her heart, and she communed with herself thus—

“There is something noble about Alec, his mind is always given to grand progressive ideas, and I can never forget how he defended me; he is not nearly so attractive, but perhaps he is better than ——”

But she would not allow herself to go further. She brushed the half-formed thought rapidly away, and she said aloud, “Anthony is a dear,” with a marked emphasis on the last word; and she sat down without troubling more; and determinedly steeling herself against any continued pensive commiseration of Alec Tarn’s woes, she wrote him a letter, in which she informed him “that he might be surprised to hear that she was engaged to be married to Mr. Anthony Prior, and how she felt sure of his good wishes and continued friendship.” She then put this epistle under cover, directed it, and took it instantly to

the post; for there was a pillar-box almost within a stone-throw's distance from the Court. This having been accomplished, Anne found herself next thinking of her friend Janet Robinson, and she wondered what that young lady would say to the news she would acquaint her with in the morning; for the two girls met daily, because Anne was now employed at Madame Rose's establishment. And considering the mass of all these subjects for speculation and contemplation, besides the excitement and novelty of the situation, coupled with the rush of tumultuous feelings tinged with a roseate hue, it was not wonderful that Anne hardly slept a wink during the whole night through. Nevertheless, so great and strong are the recuperative natural powers of vigorous youth, that the little person on rising, having washed—for to Anne cleanliness was next to godliness—in plenty of pure cold water, and frictioned herself thoroughly with a well-soaped flannel, felt entirely refreshed and renewed; besides, the mind exerts such a mighty controlling influence over the body that, in truth, “as a man thinks and feels, so he is.” Of course, it would be mad to apply this maxim to a violent fit of pain

like the toothache ; although it has been said that even in such a case, a stoical indifference, or the firmly maintained thought that the pain is imaginary and unreal, may work wonders. But putting this extreme contingency aside, there is no doubt that a mind at ease gives health, and that the reverse condition produces disease ; for the spiritual must and does rule over the material, because everything earthly is transient and fleeting ; and as regards the human being, it is the soul which gives expression to the body and sustains its life ; and when the shell perishes, that beauteous immortal thing cannot grieve ; though, on leaving it for ever, there may be, peradventure, one loving backward glance of true regret, for the poor dead image through which it has manifested itself, and with which it has lived in so close and intimate a union for so many years.

But to return to Anne. Having performed her ablutions, she dressed quickly, and set out for Bond Street, which she soon reached. The shop presented a smart appearance, for a clearance sale was proceeding, and the amount of the millinery on view was monstrous ; indescribable structures, dear to the feminine mind, were ranged in un-

interrupted sequence, and each bore a ticket on which was marked a fabulously low price, considering the preposterous quantity of every imaginable material and ornament, which was piled upon the head-gear, to the utter destruction often of good taste or beauty. Janet was already assisting in the arrangement of the various French models, some of which had been designed by Madame Rose, and the ideas carried out by her own nimble fingers, for the most delicate work was always entrusted by the artiste to this young woman, whom she relied on implicitly, and reckoned as her right hand. When Anne was able to speak to her friend for one moment in a corner of the apartment, she confided her secret to her usually sympathetic ears, in a hushed whisper—the blunt, outspoken Janet, replying that “really Anne had made her jump—that it was so sudden. Are you certain you are not joking?” she enquired, looking her companion full in the face.

“Joking,” repeated Anne, who felt a tiny bit offended. “Decidedly not; how could you imagine that I should be—and I feel a little hurt, Janet. You don’t wish me joy, but instead you treat me as if I were playing you a trick or something.

Now you are not cross, dear old girl, are you, but why are you so strange and different from your own self?" And she placed her right arm round Janet's waist.

"Indeed, I am not cross," answered the latter; "and from the bottom of my heart I desire your happiness, and trust all may be very bright for you, dearie—you believe me, don't you?" and she kissed her cheek.

"Of course I do," murmured Anne.

"You know I have a habit of speaking out my mind," continued the impulsive one, "and I allow that your communication has astounded me, because—well"—she said hesitatingly, "I really know nothing about Mr. Prior, mine being only a business acquaintanceship, and you have known him such a short time—and—are you wise, Anne?—have you seen or heard anything of his relations?"

"No, I have not," answered she; "but Anthony is, I am positive, everything that could be desired. What do I care about his family? He told me he came from Newcastle; but what does it signify who his people are? It is himself that I care for; and if his ancestors were robber chieftains, it

would neither make any difference to me, or alter my feelings; it is him that I love—and he is as good as he can be, which is the chief thing.”

“Well I never. You are far gone!” observed Janet, laughing softly. “And I quite agree with you that goodness is all-sufficient, and if you are so sure about your Anthony’s virtues—but, mind you”—and she held up her hand, and shook her first finger with an ominous gesture of mock warning—“Men were deceivers ever.”

“Oh, you croaking raven!” said Anne, and both girls laughed together in unison.

“Young ladies!” These words were uttered in a tone of mild remonstrance. The speaker was Madame Rose, who, in full war-paint, was stationed like a sentry on watch near the discreetly-curtained window, on the look-out for customers. Just at that moment a brougham had driven up to the door, and a lady was alighting from it.

“Forward, Miss Pole, please,” remarked Madame, Janet, in the meantime, having vanished into the workroom.

The arrival was a woman of matronly appearance, stout in face and figure. She was attired in a style, also, which was utterly unsuited to

her mature years, and which even in a younger person would have met with strong disapproval from male relatives, for such do not altogether relish accompanying or encountering their female belongings in startling costumes, in which crude conflicting colours, glittering embroideries, and buttons lavishly disposed and fixed, conduce towards the fabrication of a toilette, too fearful and wonderful for any eye to understand or wholly appreciate, excepting that of the untutored savage, who rejoices in blazing hues and gaudy glaring tints and tones.

“I require some country hats suitable for garden parties, and I also want a thing that will stick on and look well for cycling, don't you know?” observed the lady on entering the shop.

“Certainly, Madam,” said Madame Rose, advancing towards her. “Miss Pole, bring the shady hat with the yellow wings and blue roses, if you please.”

Anne hastened to do her employer's bidding with alacrity, and she was glad to be able to hide her countenance, as on hearing the customer's request, and being a novice, it was an effort for her to retain a demure and composed demeanour,

as the pictured idea of the over-blown lady mounted on a bicycle was most comical.

"This one *was* two-and-a-half guineas, Madam, but the price is now only thirty shillings," observed the damsel, as the mature one tried on the marvelous and hideous construction.

"It suits you perfectly, Madam, doesn't it, Miss Pole?" and Madame Rose turned with perfect gravity towards Anne as she made this unblushing assertion.

But it was too much for the new and truthful saleswoman.

"I think this might be more becoming to Madam," she said quietly, producing a plainly-trimmed black hat, on which there was only a bow of white lace and some field flowers.

"Why, it is positively frightful," answered the Juno shortly, glaring at Anne, who, feeling herself completely snubbed, held her tongue.

Madame Rose gave her a meaning look, which told her as clearly as in words, that "she was a little fool."

"Fetch the pink straw, trimmed with variegated roses, also the bird of paradise toque, and the Gainsborough, Miss Pole, if you please"; and the

grand milliner pointed in the direction where these were to be found.

"Oh, this is too sweet," exclaimed the customer, donning the toque.

"Yes, Madam, and it is cheap—only twenty-five," remarked Madame, as she added suavely, "the very thing for cycling, Madam, is it not?"

And so this misguided lady chose this little ridiculous cap, with its horrible feathers, hateful in all their beauty, because they were altogether misplaced as objects of adornment, and more especially on account of the revolting cruelty which was entailed in procuring them; but this selfish animal woman never gave the poor bird from which the feathers had been torn a passing thought; not the faintest suggestion of inhumanity presented itself to her gross mind. She purchased two other modish and staring hats; and ordering them to be sent "home" to her, and begging Madame Rose to "put them down to her account," she left the establishment with an air of polite and disdainful condescension. No sooner had the door closed upon her, than Madame Rose proceeded to sermonize Anne in a good-natured manner, upon her want of "sense," as she termed it.

“Really,” she began, “you are like a great baby, so little knowledge of the world, or of people, do you possess. The idea of your having called Lady Lambkin’s attention to such a common-place hat! Couldn’t you see that she would only care for something that could be noticed a mile off? And then you didn’t say that the toque suited her, or the other one either, you silly child. She looked a terrible object in them, of course; but it wouldn’t do for us to let her know our real thoughts, nor would we earn her gratitude; and she is so conceited, why, she believes herself to be lovely. Whenever you see an idiotic woman smirking at her own reflection in the looking-glass, no matter what monstrosity in the shape of a bonnet stuck on top of her ugly head, you must tell her, ‘Madam, you couldn’t do better than take that one—it suits you perfectly.’ No, I am quite grave, I assure you,” as Anne was unable to suppress a smile; “and unless you act on my words, we shan’t get on, you know. You won’t do for a sales-woman. Business is business; you comprehend,” added she; and upon this she departed into her own sanctuary, desiring Anne to call her as soon

as the next customer put in an appearance. And another soon came, and presently the shop was crammed, and so it continued till the end of the day, and then Madame Rose complimented Anne on the progress she had made "in manner"; for the girl had done as she was told, and in spite of the detestable feeling of hypocrisy, she had flattered the likely purchasers to the top of their bent, laying on the honey with such graceful astuteness, that by six o'clock there was a sensible decrease in the number of hats on the pegs; hence the lady milliner's complacent satisfaction.

"I blame when it is necessary to find fault, but I also am ready to praise where praise is due," she remarked, when Anne bade her "Good evening." But the unerring approval of a good conscience is sweeter and more satisfying than unmerited laudation; and this young woman of upright character felt as if she had been indulging in fraudulent practices. Then, of course, her inward monitor was more tender than is the case with most people!

On her way home, Anne met Alec; if the truth must be divulged, he had purposely gone out of his way, on the chance of thus meeting her. The

poor fellow's face was ashen, and his whole appearance was suggestive of despairing misery.

"It is needless to tell you what a blow this is to me," he began in a broken voice; he was unable to utter the word "engagement."

"I am so sorry," chimed in Anne; "but really——" and she paused.

"I had not the slightest idea of it," continued he; "and although, of course, I knew you didn't care much about me, yet I always hoped; and Miss Pole—Anne—No," as she was interrupting, "let me speak; I shall go mad if I can't tell you, just this once. I love you dearly; I would have worked for you, slaved for you from morning till night. You should have done what you would with me, and I would have shielded you from the rough world, and loved you. Anne, you don't know what you are to me; and now, my bird, he has stolen you from me. But is it too late? Tell me, is what you have said to him final? Are you certain you love him? Is there no hope for me? Tell me, Anne, for mercy's sake!"

His eyes had filled with tears; and the words came so truly and strongly, straight from the depths of his soul, that the girl paled—moved

by the intense suffering which shone in his steadfast eyes, and was breathed forth in the infinite might of his true, passionate, manly love; his tones rose and fell in varying cadence, like the chords of a grand organ, so deep, so tuneful in their powerful swell, as they were poured from his honest heart, and convinced his hearer of the mental torture he was enduring, and of the strength and reality of the affection he bore her.

She lowered her eyelids; although she did not love him, she felt for him, and as had happened once or twice before, but now with far more piercing sharpness, did the worth, the super-excellence of his character force itself upon her; she perceived this, she knew it, but, alas! her love refused to go out to him, it belonged to Anthony.

“I am very, very sorry,” she said, “you have always been a kind, good friend to me; I can’t bear to wound you, but we must speak no more of this. I didn’t think you would care so much; oh, why did you?” she asked piteously; and without waiting for a reply, continued, “You don’t take me to task, but I was very wrong; I ought not to have been so often in your

company, although, indeed, I enjoyed it. I was selfish, I should have thought what it might lead to, and so have deprived myself of the pleasure of your society in time; I always liked you, and do now, and oh, Mr. Tarn, be my friend still, always, will you?" And she held out her little hand, looking up at him, pleadingly.

Alec took it and pressed it in his own; a heavy sigh involuntarily escaped him; then he pulled himself together. "Beloved, let me call you this just once," he said quietly. "Hard as this is for me to endure, sad and lonely as my life must ever be now without you, I love you far too dearly to be able to refuse your offer of friendship. I will be true to my word; never fear that I shall forget that a gulf separates us. I am, I trust, an honourable man, and although it will be best that we should not cross one another's path more often than is necessary, at present, for I feel I cannot bear it,—later," and his voice was near breaking again, "I shall hope to meet you with calmness; and mind you, if ever you are in trouble, in danger, or in difficulty of any description whatever, send for me, and I will come to you at once, or help at a distance, if that

should be your desire, and ever believe that my best powers will be devoted to you. In an emergency I will not fail you, and you may rest assured that you can rely on me with perfect safety, and that I shall still be mindful of friendship's compact, and never overstep the boundary line, or vex your ears by words which you would be absolutely unwilling to hear, and that I should be a knave to utter; for you are sacred to me as an angel, in the purity of your ideal womanhood." And as Alec spoke, his earnestness and moral courage, the actual soul bravery, which is a quality so rarely found in man, transfigured his countenance, so that he resembled the sublime Sir Galahad.

"You have a noble nature," answered Anne, gently, "and I will always remember your generous promise of aid. If I should happen to be placed in some trying position, and be in need of a helper, you would be the first person I should think of, for I consider you my best and most faithful friend. Good-bye, Mr. Tarn, and pray forgive me for any pain or distress I may have caused you," she added in remorseful tones.

“There is nothing to forgive,” he replied, sadly and kindly. “God bless you, dear girl.” And taking her hand he kissed it, and then with one wistful look, like that often beheld in the eyes of a dumb animal, which is enduring agony in patient quietude, he raised his hat and was gone.

The scene had been a very afflicting one for Anne, and for many hours she was unable to banish it from her mind; she had never till then realised with what an overmastering, and, at the same time, unselfish passion Alec loved her; she was compelled to own to herself, that this was the love that would for aye retain the ring of pure gold—there was no sham metal in its composition; *she* was far dearer to him than *himself*; and she could not resist asking herself, if Anthony, placed in a similar position, would emerge from it with such glorious brilliancy, but she refrained from pursuing the enquiry, further than to answer it in an evasive way. “They are so different, and Anthony is devoted to me, but he is a far more fascinating man than Alec, and of course, could not live unless his love was returned—he is so affectionate.” These were Anne’s thoughts, but had she said, “he is so

detestably selfish," she would have been nearer the mark, and still musing, she went off to meet her *fiancé*. For her the evening passed blithely away, and Anthony pressed her to "name the day," as he was desirous of having a speedy marriage; so with some maidenly hesitation, she at length fixed the date, and he rewarded her by stringing together a great number of endearing terms, and by countless caresses, thus demonstrating the heights of joy to which Anne had raised him. And so the time wore on apace amid walks in the twilight and at sunset, and romantic strolls by the light of the moon and stars, whilst Anne felt very, very happy, little dreaming that this earthly bliss would soon be turned into gall and bitterness. A volcano was towering above her, and before long, it would pour out streams of fiery lava; and this figure of speech, grotesque as it may appear, is none too exaggerated, for it entirely conveys to the mind the stupendous magnitude of the impending crisis, which would be brought about by the agency of the unfortunate forsaken one, Linda Bell.

This poor girl had at length heard that her

betrayed was about to be married, and she had made it her business to find out all she could about the object of his choice, and she had even endeavoured more than once to ascertain her place of residence, but this she had as yet been unable to discover, as Anthony did his utmost to circumvent and frustrate her plans and designs. He had her watched by an elderly woman, whom he paid as handsomely as his funds would allow, to lie to the girl, and put her off the scent in every possible way, so that her steps should not be rightly directed, and that she might suppose that the engagement would be of indefinite length, and the marriage far off on the horizon. The chemist was wily and cunning enough, but he did not allow a sufficient margin for the range of the feminine mind, which is brimming over with incredible and fertile imaginings and suggestions for the carrying out of artful little schemes to accomplish ends, which inimical, hostile persons are desirous of preventing at all costs from being consummated. For months past Anthony had declared to Linda that he would receive no more communications from her, and that if she continued to pester him he would stop the allowance he gave her, which

was a larger one than the law strictly demanded, and which it may be inferred he only accorded her in order to shut her mouth. However, when the news of his betrothal reached her, she naturally wrote him a letter of furious indignation and reproaches—a letter that was most justifiable, and not half as bad as he deserved, considering his blackguardly treatment of her. To this missive he vouchsafed no reply whatever. When he perused it he grew livid with rage, and tore it bit by bit into fragments, of which he made a small bonfire in the empty grate—for, of course, it was summer—gnashing his teeth meanwhile, with the expression of a ferocious tiger.

And now for a spell of tiresome, tedious, moralization and introspection. It is the fashion nowadays to decry matrimony, and to clamour and sneer at the ceremony as unnecessary and ridiculous. When a case, similar to the one under consideration, presents itself, does the complete falsity of the specious arguments against legal wedlock force itself upon the deep and right-thinking mind. How blind are the members of the weaker sex to allow themselves to be deceived by the advocates of free love! Cannot they per-

ceive that, in the existing state of society, that even should a man make a rash promise to live with a woman for life, and that she consents to reside under his protection, that she is degraded by so doing to the rank of a paid mistress, never more to be held in respect by her own or by the opposite sex, never more to be listened and hearkened to should she raise her voice in protest against any cruel abuses, (her own excepted) which she desires to help to suppress ; for, pray, who will give ear to a "dishonoured woman," as she will for ever be termed by this thoughtless generation. She may be but silly and foolish, and her soul as pure as the driven snow, far purer than those who thus spurn her, but she must bear the stigma of her self-elected path, and rank with the vast multitude of the victims of man's selfishness. Whatever may happen in the distant future, when the stronger sex have outgrown some of their faults, and approximate to a closer resemblance to the angels, the time for the abolition of the marriage ceremony, be it performed in church, or before a registrar, has not yet arrived. To dispense with it now is to give a cruel power to the man, and to make any children of the union poor,

illegitimate outcasts, and the sham wife an outcast, too, whenever he chooses to get rid of her ; in fact, the whole of the conception of such a condition of affairs, is a hideous fallacy. Men's passions are more imperative than are women's, and herein lies their only excuse ; but it is a downright disgrace that the identical fault should be esteemed venial in one sex, and that in the other it should be considered nothing less than a crime. The man suffers not at all, and gets off scot free, whilst his victim is crushed beneath the feet, even of so-called Christian people, who, when she sinks lower still, avert their faces as she passes, yet sometimes receive her male friends at their houses, being perfectly aware that the lives of these are immoral and vicious. Then let a girl pause and think before she allows herself to be entrapped into the awful, cruel situation of a Linda Bell.

To return to Anne. The hours had flown by as if on light silvery pinions, and now in two days she would be married, and then she would be no more seen at the smart milliner's in Bond Street.

Madame Rose regretted losing her nice little saleswoman, who had been with her for such a short period, and she gave her her choice of three

hats or bonnets as a wedding gift, to Anne's extreme satisfaction. The girl had been very busy preparing her modest trousseau, and at the present moment she was putting the last stitches into her bridal gown of mauve crêpon, prettily trimmed with lace and ribbons. On her head she was to wear one of Madame Rose's artistic successes, composed of soft net, in which reposed orange blossoms mingled with deftly-knotted bows of the best white satin ribbon. Janet had had a hand in this piece of millinery, and she was to act the part of bridesmaid. Just now Anne paused in her work to admire the pretty dress, when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," she cried, wondering who the visitor could be, for she expected no one.

The door opened, and in walked a tall, handsome young woman, with hair as black as night, and in a tangled disorder. Her face was high-coloured, and her bold, black eyes flashed defiantly as she met Anne's astonished gaze; in her arms she bore a fair, blue-eyed child.

"Ah, I have found you at last!" she exclaimed as the girl rose and confronted her with an air of inquiry.

"I don't think I have ever had the pleasure of seeing you before—is it a mistake?" she asked, for the intruder's manner was so aggressively insolent that she could not understand its meaning.

"I know you have not had the pleasure—and I doubt you will find it agreeable now," almost shouted the woman. "Shall I tell you who I am?"

"Please do," replied Anne, "for I still think you must take me for some other person."

"Not a bit," screeched the visitor. "You are Anne Pole, and are to be married the day after to-morrow to that wretch, Anthony Prior, whose wife I ought to be—look here," and she held out the child, "this is his—true as the Gospel—Anthony is his father!"

Anne shrank back with a cry of horror; she turned ghastly white, and leant for support against the table. "I don't believe you," she said, gasping for breath. "What have I done to you, woman, that you should come and tell me such wicked falsehoods—you are tormenting me sorely!"

"No, on my soul it is true, and you should be

grateful to me for letting you know it in time—could you like to wrong *me* so cruelly—and the child; and you, *you* could never have any peace or happiness with such a monster—didn't he promise to marry *me*, the wicked man; my love—and oh, how I loved him—has turned to hate and loathing, I tell you."

Anne had sunk down on a chair, with her face buried in her hands; the blow she had received had almost stunned her, and for some seconds she was completely deprived of the power to think. The woman approached nearer, and touched her on the shoulder.

"Now, don't take on like that," said she, and her voice was less harsh and strident. "It's all for your good, and I had to come and tell you, but I can't permit you to imagine that I don't speak true. What object should I have in coming with a pack of lies; 't is for the child's sake firstly, then for my own, and it's best for you to have your eyes opened; besides, pray why should you defraud me of my rights?" and her tone grew harder and fiercer.

Anne raised her head, and gazed at her piteously. "It is too terrible—if what you say

is fact, I will never see Anthony again—but I still hope that there may be some error—that we are at cross purposes—of course, I am sure you would not wilfully misrepresent things.” She spoke with pride and intense emotion, feeling, meanwhile, dazed and sick with misery, for she began to fear that there might be some truth in her visitor’s fearful statement.

“See, I have brought proofs,” exclaimed the latter, producing a packet of letters from the bosom of her dress, and she spread them out on the table. “You *must* read them,” continued she, “and then you will be convinced that I am neither liar nor impostor, but only a cruelly wronged and deceived girl.”

Anne was not weak-minded, and she had common-sense, so, instead of pushing the incriminating documents from her, as a less strong-minded and more foolish member of her sex might have done, refusing to read them, she roused herself and pulled them towards her, and forced herself, in spite of the mental agony, which was almost physical as well, to peruse the nearest one. It had evidently been written in the halcyon days, in the first flush of what

Anthony would be pleased to term his love for Linda—for Anne discovered the name, as the missive began, “Darling little pet of a Linda,” and terminated, “Your adoring lover, Anthony Prior.” When the poor girl arrived at these words she shivered, and the tears welled up into her eyes and coursed down her cheeks; but, at the same time, she reached out her hand for the next letter—she wished to make assurance doubly sure, and felt compelled also, as is the case with some natures, to torture herself to the utmost; she had descended into this abyss of woe and unspeakable suffering, and she could not spare herself—she must know all, and probe everything, regardless of the maddening, sickening throes of gnawing grief, to the end. Alas, she knew the handwriting too well, even the turns of the phrases. There was no room left for doubt as to the identity of the writer; and Anthony had constituted himself his own accuser; he was caught in the mesh of his own words, for, in a later epistle, which Anne took up at random, he spoke of “his child,” telling the wretched mother “that he detested the thought of it, and that if she ever ventured to bring it near his

door, he would have them both kicked out." This charming effusion the girl literally threw from her in horror, and the clinging affection which she had, till then, borne for the man who was to be her husband, was transformed, in that instant, into a dread feeling of repulsion; and, turning towards the woman, who stood surveying her with an unflinching gaze, as if endeavouring to find out her inmost thoughts, she said, in a broken voice, "Have no fear, I will never wed that man, and I am grateful to you for thus saving me from committing what, to my mind, would be a crime—for, before God, you are Anthony Prior's lawful wife—will you leave me now—I must be alone—the shock has been great—and you perceive that my nerves are upset," and she offered Linda her hand, which was taken, and held for a moment in a firm grasp, as the woman remarked, her eyes also filling with tears:

"You are made of good stuff, and I am sorry for you. I know what a broken heart is like; but cheer up, my girl, he isn't worth it. As for *my* marrying him, well, I should like to be made an honest woman of; but I couldn't live with him now; I have no love for him; he has killed it."

Just then the child crowed, and stretched out its fat, dimpled arms to Anne.

"Poor little thing," said she, patting it softly. "Your address, please Miss, Mrs. ——, may I have it?"

"Yes, here's one of his envelopes," replied Linda, handing it to the girl; and nodding a farewell, as she repeated, "Cheer up," she left the room.

For at least ten minutes after the departure of this disturbing guest, Anne was buried in deep thought. She had ceased weeping; traces of tears remained, but she wiped them away. Her pride and indignation had been rising with strides, and kept back the sobs which would otherwise have been irrepressible in their turbulence. As it was, after the first paroxysm had exhausted itself, she grew outwardly perfectly calm. Inwardly she experienced the awful sensation of a chill void, a blankness where her heart should have been. There seemed as if there was nothing worth living for. Where had the sweet love fled, which had made the long summer days and nights so beautiful? All had been changed into dark, cold despair; and the only feeling left to her was

anger, rage, that she, who had held her head so high, should be brought so low, as to become the dupe of a man who was so base and unprincipled as Anthony; he whom she had fancied was the incarnation of all the virtues. It may appear strange that her love for him should so quickly take wings; but then she had set him on a pedestal, believing him to be the embodiment of her ideal; and she was such a pure-minded, virtuous girl, that all her best feelings, which had been wound round this wretched being, had been wrenched and torn whilst Linda Bell's miserable tale was being unfolded. And to think that he could have treated that unfortunate young woman in such a cowardly, infamous manner! No, her idol had been cast rudely down, and lay at her feet all broken beyond repair. She took up her pen, and wrote to Alec Tarn, begging him to come to her at once, as she was in great trouble; and she did the same to Janet, and despatched both notes by a good-natured boy, who undertook to convey them to their destinations for next to nothing.

Alec was the first name which presented itself to Anne's mind; and, oddly enough, it did not occur to her, until it was too late to recall the

messenger, that it was a passing strange proceeding on her part to send for the man who had offered himself as her husband, to assist her in this delicate and awkward matter. But she only remembered at the time that he had insisted upon her promising to come to him for help if she was in any difficulty, so she had taken him at his word.

Within an hour, the two friends arrived. Janet was mounting the stairs when Alec entered the court. Both were extremely pained and affected when they beheld Anne. She related her sad and thrilling story with a good deal of hesitation of manner, which was not surprising; and once or twice she paused, as if she could proceed no further, and sat gazing into vacancy.

Then Janet, with her sympathetic, affectionate heart, encouraged her with coaxing words, and by placing her arm tenderly around her, and then Anne was able to continue.

During her narrative, Alec grew momentarily more infuriated against his wicked and successful rival; but he was so noble and single-minded, that the thought never crossed his mind, at this juncture, that now the coast was again clear, and

that he would have a fresh chance. Later, naturally, he simply would have been superhuman had the idea not flashed upon him, accompanied by a sense of bounding delight. His present attention was solely directed to the arrangement of the affair under discussion, and he immediately grasped the situation, and understood what was the proper course to pursue ; so, after having been made acquainted with everything by Anne, he told her that he should start, then and there, on an expedition of investigation, and that he should not rest till he had discovered if Linda Bell's statements were entirely true, and that, if possible, he would call, by ten o'clock in the morning, and inform Miss Pole of the result of his mission.

After his departure, Janet remained, to console her friend to the best of her powers ; and she decided to sleep with her, for she considered that Anne was far too unstrung to be left to pass the night alone.

Finding that her candid remarks were not resented, Janet, with her usual impetuosity, informed the poor girl "how she had always had her suspicions of Anthony, she knew not why, but that there was something about him which caused

her to mistrust him ;” and she repeated a former saying of hers, namely, “that she had considered it rash of Anne to engage herself so quickly to a man of whom she knew less than nothing.” The latter could not help allowing how right the astute young woman was in her surmises, although it was painful to feel how blindly infatuated she had been.

Early on the following day Janet was obliged to go off to her work, because there had been no time to beg Madame Rose’s permission for absence, and at ten o’clock Alec appeared. He gravely told Anne that Linda Bell had spoken the truth without the least exaggeration. He had cross-examined two women who were intimately acquainted with her, one of whom had nursed her at the time of the child’s birth. She said that Anthony’s cruelty and callousness were fiendish ; and the other person, who had known Linda for several years, corroborated the allegations of this elderly matron’s. Besides these witnesses, Alec had routed out yet another—a man friend of the chemist’s—who, when taxed with his comrade’s misdemeanours, could not deny them. The case against him was there-

fore overwhelming, and he was found guilty, without a shadow of a doubt as to the justice of the verdict. Anne mournfully expressed her gratitude to Alec for his exertions on her behalf, but he would not hear of any thanks, and, with gentlemanly feeling, he bade her adieu, for he knew that she would prefer solitude in her great sorrow. And so he left her, simply entreating her to send him a line whenever he could be of any service to her. And now Anne had to perform the very disagreeable task of writing to Anthony. This she commenced doing on the spot, but she tore up no less than four letters, as they did not at all satisfy her. It was a terrible epistle to be compelled to write, but it had to be done. Still, she found she must put off thinking any more about it for a little time, as her brain was reeling, and therefore she rested for a space. And so it happened that Anne only penned and dispatched the important missive in the evening; and thus it was received by Anthony on the morn on which his wedding was to have been celebrated. And instead he was informed by her whom he had felt so positive he should lead to the altar at eleven o'clock, that she would have

none of him, giving him the appalling reason—which he had fancied was a dead secret to her—and adding that she desired never more to behold his face in this world. Thus was the truth of the old maxim brought home to him which declares that “One’s sins will find one out”; and Anthony, if too hardened by sin to experience remorse for the evil he had wantonly committed, and although years might elapse before conscience asserted her full rights, yet was he sufficiently alive to his own interests, and humiliated and prostrated by this severe disappointment, to perceive that had he kept from the path of transgressors, he would not have lost a bride whom he believed he truly loved, and who was dearer to him at this hour than ever before, for it is when losing something for aye that one recognizes its worth, and it is then that one prizes what before may have possessed but little value. The miserable Anthony valued Anne at his own estimation, and he cared for her with the wretched affection of which he was capable; but it was impossible for him to appreciate to the full, those splendid qualities in her nature which he could hardly behold at all, for his character was so

paltry and mean that he could not judge of or comprehend spiritual attributes. He read and re-read the fatal letter which sealed his doom, pacing up and down his room meanwhile like a caged wild animal. At first he thought he would go to Anne and plead his cause, but then something told him that this step would be of no use, that all his endeavours to regain her esteem and her affection would be unavailing, for the missive assured him that "nothing was hidden from her, that she knew all, and that her respect and her love went hand in hand ; that there could be no real or lasting affection without reverence, and, finally, that before heaven he was the husband of Linda Bell." He therefore arrived at length at the just conclusion that he must accept his fate, but at the same time he made up his mind to send Anne a letter, which he did at once, and its contents set her more against him than before, if that were possible, for he excused himself in a disgusting way, throwing all the blame upon poor Linda, whom he falsely represented as a dangerous and artful siren, and after this he accused Anne of being very hard-hearted, and ridiculously strait-laced and particular ; and he

went on to say that she knew nothing of the world or its ways, and that if she did, she would not be so nonsensical, and wish to spoil a man's life and her own on account of her absurd and childish whims. He trusted, therefore, that she would reconsider her hasty decision, and let him hear immediately that she had done so, and put him out of this "cruel suspense," and he remained "her ever-devoted Anthony."

To this delightful and cunning document the sender never received a reply, and as the days wore on he was obliged to confess to himself that the affair was hopeless, and that as the girl would not relent he must bow to destiny; but he found it impossible to do this quietly, and his life became almost unbearable. And then one day he received a note by hand, with "To wait an answer" pencilled outside it. He recognised the writing, for it was that of the illiterate old woman whom he had formerly paid to watch Linda. On opening the missive he felt overcome with horror, for it contained the announcement of the death of the unhappy mother and child, both of whom had been run over by a tram on the previous evening, and killed on the spot.

He felt no regret, but a sort of terror assailed him, like that which may possibly drive a murderer to frenzy ; it is probably the first dawning ray of remorse ; anyhow, after these news reached him, he knew no more peace ; a spectre seemed to haunt him by day and night, and sleep forsook him ; he then took to chloral, and essayed various draughts calculated to produce and promote slumber, but these had no effect whatever. Oh ! the bitter anguish, the mental suffering of the wretched man, in this hell of his own creation ; sick in mind, he grew sick in body ; his spiritual soul was so dragged down by his animal soul, that for the time it could not act properly, and so the material half prevailed, and presently the physical brain refused to work ; the whole personality had grown unbalanced, unhinged, and madness crept on ; and at last Anthony Prior was a raving maniac.

And now let a veil be fully drawn over the remainder of his earth life. Suffice it to say that his days were numbered, and that the end soon came ; but his reason only returned on his death-bed, and those who were with him during those last moments affirm that he was in his right mind, and that he declared when dying, that Linda was

floating over him in glistening white garments with her child, and that the two were as radiant angels, and whispered forgiveness and comfort in his ear; but, he said, "they tell me that I have justly suffered for my misdeeds, which is true, but that I have still more mental agony to pass through, for remorse has begun, and that they will help me to bear my trials; and that, after many years, I may arrive in the happy world where they are abiding, which is not far, they say, from the Christ sphere"; and then he passed away.

It was impossible to prevent the report of the three deaths from reaching Anne. She was very grieved at hearing about Linda and her child; but when she learnt how Anthony had gone off his head, and had afterwards expired, she gave way completely, for she laboured under the delusion that she herself was the cause of his misfortune, and that his madness and sudden demise lay at her door because she had thrown him over. She was still weak from the effects of the catastrophe which had befallen her; and, since Linda's blighting visit, she had been a different girl. Madame Rose had taken her

back, and Anne had performed her work with conscientious scrupulousness, but without real interest; then she would return home from Bond Street in the evenings, and sit listlessly in her little room, often doing nothing till it was bedtime.

Since Alec called on that fateful day, she had never set eyes on him, and even Janet's company was an infliction to her, for she was too merry, and her gay laughter set all her nerves trembling and quivering, and so Anne shunned her; and now the news about Anthony supplied the last straw. She was incapable of bearing more, or of enduring further mental suffering, and a sort of brain fever utterly prostrated her. For weeks and weeks she lay tossing on her sick couch, nursed by kind Janet. Madame Rose sent her grapes and all kinds of delicacies, and Alec enquired for her almost daily. At last youth and nature conquered, and the fever abated. Then there was a tedious convalescence, which Janet and Alec—for she now looked forward to their coming—did their utmost to lighten and brighten; but to both good Samaritans was it a pleasure, indeed, to pass an hour or two with the sweet invalid. Of course,

Janet, having constituted herself nurse, was with the patient during nearly the whole course of the twenty-four hours, and she was always present when Alec paid his visits, in order to play propriety, and not to offend that important personage, Mrs. Grundy.

It must be mentioned here, that Alec was no longer employed by Jonas Moses. He gave up his situation as clerk in the Jew's office at about the time that Anthony lost his reason, and ever since then he had been in the house of Mr. Arthur Wargrove, where he occupied an excellent and leading position, and it was greatly owing to his good influence and example, that his generous and kind-hearted chief was already completely conquering his bad habit of indulging too freely in strong liquor.

Now, just as Anne had arrived at the stage in her recovery when she was allowed to go out for an hour in the fresh air at about noon every day, Alec was sent on a travelling expedition with samples of tea to some of the chief northern towns. This business kept him occupied for quite a fortnight, and he had no idea that he should be detained so long about it, and naturally

missed Anne fearfully, but he hardly dared to write to her, as he did not quite know how she might take it, and if she considered it presumption on his part, it would be more than he could bear, and, lately, she had been kinder to him. So he felt it was wiser to be cautious now, and although he hardly dared hope she would ever yield him more than her precious friendship, still—and Alec's heart gave a big leap, for what is life without hope? And, had he only known it, this enforced absence was the most judicious step he had taken to gain his lady's favour; it was, indeed, an unconscious and unpremeditated stroke of genius, for Anne had grown so accustomed to his constant society, that she now experienced what it was to be compelled to be without it, and she found that she was extremely dull. She had learnt to lean on Alec's stronger intellect, as it were, for support; he it was, strangely enough, who had, after much trouble, finally managed to relieve her mind of the imaginary notion that it was she who was instrumental in causing the chemist's attack of mania and premature death; and, once freed from this idea, which crushed all the vitality out of her, her health improved

rapidly. Therefore, on the young man's return, her delight was unfeigned, and a less conceited mortal—though, indeed, he was modest enough—could not have failed to observe it. Alec's joy was overwhelming, and he was at no pains to disguise or conceal it. Presently Anne was permitted to do as she pleased, being pronounced "cured," and then Alec, without the faintest hesitation, offered himself as her companion in strolls after his work was done, and, of course, Lupin was also a constant and faithful attendant. And so it occurred, before very long, when Anne seemed to be in a softer and more pensive mood than usual, at the hour of twilight, that Alec took heart, and, telling her once more how dear she was to him, asked her again to be his wife, and this time she did not say him "Nay"; for, indeed, without either having thought or known that her affections were going out to him so absolutely and completely, she found, suddenly, that they had gone, and were nestling near his soul, and she recognized the true worth of the man, whilst, in the radiancy of the light which broke upon her, she marvelled how she could have formerly rejected one so truly noble, for such a miserable

creature as the chemist, for she had discovered that the love she had imagined herself to have harboured for him was but a girlish fancy, born of fairy romance and illusion, twined, weaved, and wreathed around a personality who was in possession of a strong and attractive magnetic power, of which he was fully aware, and could exercise at will, and so she had become deluded by her own mind, and infatuated by his odylic fascinations. And now she knew that, in her blindness, she had passed by and scorned the beautiful real affection that had waited for her so patiently. And she remembered how frequently she had felt, when conversing with Alec, that she was raised upwards, heavenwards, away from sordid, grovelling, material things, and how she had oftentimes been filled with wonder at finding that they comprehended one another so well. And yet she had not then perceived that this was true love—a union of spirit with spirit. And there was not a tinge of restlessness in the feeling she experienced for Alec, but, instead, all was perfect peace.

Soon the wedding-day was fixed, for what need was there of waiting? There was no fear of a hasty marriage to be followed by a quick repent-

ance for these two; for did they not understand each other thoroughly? Yes; even before the still, unspoken words had risen to their lips, were the thoughts and wishes telegraphed from hearts and eyes. And so it came to pass that on a sunny morning towards the end of chill October, Alec and Anne were made man and wife, in a quiet little church in an unfashionable neighbourhood. All their friends were present. Janet was at last able to fill the post of bridesmaid, and failing a relative of any kind, or a nearer friend, Mr. Arthur Wargrove gave the bride away, whilst Tim, who was much puffed up by his extraordinary importance, acted as best man, and Madame Rose was, of course, an imposing figure in the scene, whereas last, but not least, in a most prominent position, or "permanent," as she called it, there stood the great Mrs. Tiggs, who had placed a huge red and yellow bow at her neck to enhance the beauty of the usual black silk gown, and who wore a brand-new pair of mittens, and an enormous red peony stuck on the top of her lace bonnet, so as to render full honour to the occasion.

On leaving the edifice, the wicked little Tim, with his red hair well plastered down with

scented oil, was unable to refrain from whispering in Anne's ear—

“Didn't I tell yer as how he were sweet on yer,” and he nodded at Alec with his knowing wink. Then he added: “Oh, my! Don't old Mother Tiggs look as if she'd just stepped out of the room of 'orrers at Madame Tussaud's!”

The wedding-party then repaired to the residence of the kind milliner, who had provided a bountiful collation, and afterwards the bride and bridegroom left for Torquay, where they intended passing the honeymoon.

During the whole of the afternoon, it was noticed that Mr. Arthur Wargrove paid marked attentions to Miss Janet Robinson, scarcely leaving her side, and it created but small surprise, when, in a fortnight's time, their engagement was announced, and Mr. and Mrs. Alec Tarn were overjoyed on hearing the good news. As for Tim, the tea merchant took a fancy to the mischievous urchin at once, and found him a comfortable berth in his house; he was last seen, sitting at his desk, with a pen stuck behind his ear in the approved clerkly style, and before him a piled-up tray of eatables, such as jam rolls,

penny buns, and unwholesome currant cakes, besides several sticks of chocolate, and bull's eyes unlimited. It would be too bad to forget Lupin; if he had been glad and joyous during the days of Alec's bachelorhood, he was in elysium now that he was married, for Anne never ceased petting him, and even when, by-and-bye, a little Alec appeared on this earth's stage, he had no cause for jealousy, although, indeed, he was too broad-minded a dog to exhibit such a low passion, for his mistress was able to divide her attention between the two helpless beings, the baby naturally requiring the most care!

The reader may smile here, but never mind! And Lupin's good master never omitted or neglected to give his four-footed companion his due amount of exercise, and never was a more blissful or contented family party seen than this one. Anne engaged a young maid-servant to assist her, as soon as she started housekeeping, and it was not long before she kept two, for Mr. Wargrove had, generously, considerably increased Alec's salary, and in a few years' time, he raised him to the rank of partner, and so the

young man became as prosperous as he deserved. Mr. and Mrs. Wargrove and Alec and his wife continue to be staunch friends, and as true genuine affection is the one thing that lasts, so will these four probably meet under still happier circumstances, in a more advanced state of being, in a world of brightness, where the sun never sets, and all is glorious light; one resplendent shine without a shadow.

THE END.





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