UNITED.

A Novel.

BY

A. P. SINNETT,

AUTHOR OF

"KARMA," "ESOTERIC BUDDHISM," "THE OCCULT WORLD,"

ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

GEORGE REDWAY,

YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1886.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

UNITED.

CHAPTER I.

WAKENING TO THE WORLD.

Ferron Kinseyle had been sorely put out when his wife died. He would not have been rightly described as prostrate with grief; still less so as being heartlessly indifferent. But the principal interests of his life had long been those which gathered round his literary work; and when Mrs. Kinseyle, after ten or twelve years of a quiet existence at Compton Wood, dropped into the grave in a gentle, unobtrusive way, as if it was a matter of course, her husband, roused from his philological researches, realized for the first time that she had been seriously ill. He was very much distressed about it all, though ready to acknowledge, when Bryle,

the housekeeper, put it in that way, that Heaven was a better place, at all events for the poor mistress, than Compton Wood. But the recollection of his married life left no painful places in his conscience. "The poor mistress" had been poor by reason of no sins of omission or commission on his part. Bad health had been her worst trouble, and in a little while after that had been finally cured by the translation of the patient to the "better place," just spoken of, the lonely scholar's worst perplexity was developed by the question—what ought to be done about Edith?

Edith was his only daughter—his only child—and at the period referred to had attained the majestic age of six. Her mother, till then, had looked after her in all respects. There had been a nursemaid, of course; but the growth and furniture of Miss Edith's mind had been her mother's care altogether, except, indeed, so far as Miss Edith had partly taken the matter into her own hands—prosecuting independent studies for herself in the library, removing volumes as she wanted them in the early hours of the morning to her own quarters, and leaving

Mr. Kinseyle puzzled sometimes to think what could have become of some book of grave and serious import that he might wish to consult.

Edith's reading was not governed by any frivolous tastes at this stage of her existence, though what the instinct was which prompted her selection of books was a problem Mrs. Kinseyle never attempted to grapple with. The mere fact that the child could read at all, "to amuse herself," so soon, was sufficiently surprising, and not a little creditable to her abilities as a teacher, the admiring mother conceived. For the rest, Edith never consulted anyone as to the course she thought fit to pursue; and Mrs. Kinseyle regarded herself as existing rather to carry out than to constrain her youthful daughter's wishes. And this arrangement had worked so smoothly that the necessity of taking some entirely new departure was exceedingly trying to the widower. He had shrunk from the notion—never very seriously debated with his wife—of having a governess in the house even while Mrs. Kinseyle lived. Compton Wood was not a house of dimensions that would have permitted a life apart

for such an inmate, and the studious philologist was far too shy to bear the prospect of having a stranger always at his table—a lady to whom he would have to be polite, while feeling her presence, from the point of view of his native reserve, an unutterable nuisance. Now, however, the thing would have to be done under conditions much worse than those which had made it so unattractive before; or else Edith would have to be sent right away somewhere—to school, or to relations.

Ferron Kinseyle was not a man of large means, or of large estate; but he was a country gentleman, in his way, of eminently respectable lineage, and the old house, Compton Wood—a better sort of farmhouse originally—had been on the family property for altogether incalculable periods. Most of the land formerly attached to the name had gone away, through the female line, to another rich dynasty, and Ferron Kinseyle, succeeding from an offshoot parentage, owned merely a rag of the old Kinseyle estates. The Miltenhams of Deerbury Park were the lords of these now; but they did not make

a residence of Kinseyle Court—two miles across the fields and through its own park from Compton Wood—by reason of having a much more luxurious mansion of their own twenty miles away in another direction.

Kinseyle Court was just kept clean by a man and his wife at the lodge, and shown to visitors who wanted to inspect some old Roman remains preserved around the house. The Miltenhams were too well off to care to let the place; too respectful to its history, running back to the civil war and further, to neglect it altogether; but too fond of modern comfort to live in it.

The Miltenhams would have taken charge of Edith when her mother died—they were very good friends with the Kinseyles, though their habits of life lay apart—and that seemed the natural arrangement. It was cordially suggested, and at first accepted by the widower; but it was disturbed by an unforeseen embarrassment. Mr. Kinseyle had not up to that time been in the habit of conversing to any great extent with his small daughter. He had no natural affinity for children, and never found anything to say to

them. However, when he had in his own mind gratefully accepted Mrs. Miltenham's invitation concerning Edith, he took that young lady on his knee while wandering through the drawing-room and out into the garden one day, soon after the miserable business of the funeral—his usual regular habits of work being thrown out still—and officially informed her of the plans proposed. Then Miss Edith introduced the unforeseen embarrassment referred to.

"But, Papa," she said, "I don't want to go."

Mr. Kinseyle had not looked at the matter from that point of view before. He was too courteous a person to tell the young lady abruptly that nobody talked about her "going"—that the proposal was for her to be sent. Regardless of the risks attending the process when a lady of any age is concerned, he endeavoured to argue the matter.

"My dear Edy, it will be very much the nicest plan for you. There is a little girl about your age at Deerbury Park, and a little boy a year or two younger"—Edy shook her head slightly, but scornfully—"and—and you'll be ever so happy."

"Thank you, Papa, dear; but I would rather stop with you at Compton Wood."

"But, my dear Edy, we should have to have a governess, and that would be a terrible bore for both of us, you know." He did not like to be selfish, so he put the idea that way.

"We'll teach her to behave nicely, Papa," Miss Edith said confidently, and without the least sense of incongruity in thus inverting the natural order of things. And then, as Mr. Kinseyle still held out and pleaded for the Miltenham scheme, Edy brought up all her reserves with the unconscious genius of her sex.

"Oh, Papa!" she cried, more in sorrow than in anger, "you don't mean that you will send me away from you *against my will!*" and with that she melted into tears.

"My dear Edy, my pet, there, don't cry. It really never occurred to me," Mr. Kinseyle frankly confessed, "that you had a will in the matter. It is most curious, the unexpected way family matters may get complicated."

Of course the governess was obtained, and Mr. Kinseyle had to take all the responsi-

bility, in Mrs. Miltenham's eyes, of selfishly choosing an inferior destiny for his daughter, because his own tenderness as a father would not allow him to part with his pet plaything.

He had to face a great deal of acute discomfort when Miss Barkley, the governess Mrs. Miltenham scornfully procured for him, first came on the scene. He did not see, thinking over the matter in advance, how a middle course could be steered between treating the new-comer, on the one hand, as an upper servant—from which attitude he shrank, being very little given to self-assertion—and, on the other, in a way which might entitle her to think he wanted to marry her, which he did not wish to do in the least. But the reality of the situation soon showed itself as less alarming than the prospect. Miss Barkley was a tall, thin spinster, with very prominent teeth, a mild disposition, and a long experience of life. Mr. Kinseyle was relieved. He felt sure that Miss Barkley could not conscientiously expect to be married, and he began to feel more at ease. Perhaps Miss Edith, with her usual influence on all around her, succeeded in teaching her gover-

ness how to behave nicely, as she had promised. By degrees, life at Compton Wood resumed something of its old routine. The scholar subsided into his work, and Miss Barkley, impelled by conscience once or twice to inquire whether he wished Edith to do this or that, or leave something else undone, perceived so clearly that he did not wish at all events to be made the arbiter in such transactions, that she chose, practically, the wiser part in her relation with her interesting pupil, and followed that young lady's guidance in all problems of difficulty.

Edith, as the years advanced, consented graciously to pay some visits to Deerbury Park, but she never merged herself altogether in the life of that more brilliant establishment, and grew up in her own quiet home, accepting occasional distractions with cheerful satisfaction when her father, at rare intervals, found reason to spend a month or two in London, but never showing the least impatience of the uneventful and even current of existence at Compton Wood. As time went on, she promoted her father more and more into the rank of companion,

drew him out on philosophical questions, and took a friendly interest in his study of comparative Oriental philology, without being impelled herself, however, to follow up these inquiries in detail. As she was troubled by no rude mockery from brothers or sisters, the eccentric development of her mind suffered no offensive shocks, and Mr. Kinseyle's temperament, leading him to accept all the incidents of life as they came, without criticizing them closely unless he was reluctantly compelled to choose some course of action for himself, made him not indifferent to his daughter by any means, but unobservant of her peculiarities as such. Edith was subject in this way to no analytical watchfulness; and though Miss Barkley found strange traits in her character to wonder at sometimes, these were merely oddities, in that good lady's estimation, referable to her old-fashioned bringing up. By the time she was turned fifteen, a natural sense of the fitness of things had taught her to adapt her conversation with Miss Barkley to the governess's understanding, and in this course she was not conscious of any irksome self-restraint,

having a plentiful fund of good spirits and gaiety to spend upon the minor affairs of the hour.

One of the most serious difficulties that arose between Miss Barkley and her young charge—or young mistress as she might perhaps have been better described—had to do with an exasperating propensity Miss Edith developed when she was barely out of her childhood, of sitting late in the evening on a big stone near the entrance-gate of Compton Wood, "looking out for the ghost." The house, itself as old as the more stately Court in the neighbourhood, was approached by a long drive with a few trees about—not a regular avenue—with a gate at the end opening into the high-road. Just within the gate were some of the Roman remains scattered about that part of the country in great profusion, and an old labourer belonging to the nearest village, Wexley, declared that when he was a young man he had been frightened nearly out of his wits one night, when going home late from working at Compton Wood, by seeing a white knight on horseback ride in at the gate. He met the

figure, he declared, as he was walking in the road himself, and was just close to the gate. He had stepped aside in among the old Roman stones, and the knight had passed him without making any sound as the horse trod; and then the vision had faded away in the direction of the house, before it had got far enough on to have passed out of sight if it had been a veritable man on horseback. The labourer did not tell his story in this connected way, but this was what Edith, who took a great interest in the matter, had made out by prolonged cross-questioning. Investigation of this affair had employed her for many months, as Miss Barkley put every possible impediment in her way, and bitterly reviled an unlucky housemaid from whom she had picked up her original clue. It was a matter of principle with Miss Barkley all the while to repudiate the whole story with the utmost contempt; and it was only on the ground that Miss Edith's head ought not to be stuffed with nonsense that the housemaid was assailed. Edith, on her part, contended that nonsense might be great fun, and that it would be delightful to hunt out

the old labourer and see what he would say. Bit by bit, in successive walks with Miss Barkley on summer afternoons, Edith elicited all that Hodge could tell, though she failed entirely to get any corroboration of the tale from any other observer. Then Miss Barkley had been hoping the uncomfortable subject might be allowed to drop, when late in the dusk of one shortening evening in September, Edith, having been missed and having been seen strolling down the drive, was ultimately discovered by the horrified Miss Barkley sitting alone on the biggest of the Roman stones at the gate, "looking out for the ghost."

The vehement though disjointed protests that Miss Barkley raised on this occasion culminated in a reference to Mr. Kinseyle. She had only been able to get Edith away from the gate—where her own nerves were too much upset to argue coherently—by abject entreaties. In the lighted drawing-room the complicated issues involved were debated more at length. Miss Barkley adhered to the position that Edith's attempt was absurd, because ghosts did not exist,

but that she ran the risk of losing her senses with fright if she should see anything. It was clearly wicked to tempt Providence, and it was perilous, anyhow, in September, to sit out at night on damp stones, especially when she knew that her chest was delicate, and that her poor dear mother had died of consumption.

"And why you're not frightened to death at the mere thought of such a thing—a child like you—I can't understand."

"But dear Miss Barkley, what is there to be frightened of if there is not any white knight in the case at all? And that you say is impossible."

"If you think there's a white knight in the case," said Miss Barkley, stumbling in desperation on an argument with a certain force, "that's just as bad."

"I don't know that I think there is," Edith replied. "I want to find out."

The governess sought in vain to extort a promise from Edith that the rash attempt would not be repeated. Edith persisted in surrounding the whole question with an air of the brightest merriment. She generously

offered to let Miss Barkley watch for the ghost with her. She proposed that they should harden themselves for the encounter with the white knight by talking about ghosts a good deal in the dark, in their bedroom, and only desisted when Miss Barkley's strained imagination seemed to threaten hysterics.

The reference to Mr. Kinseyle was not made till twice or thrice again the fair Edith had visited her post of observation in the evening. Miss Barkley could neither reconcile it to her conscience to let this go on, nor venture to hang about the haunted gateway night after night in attendance on her pupil. She knew Mr. Kinseyle would be upset for days if called upon to consider a charge against Edith, and in any way give judgment in the cause; but the situation was desperate. She was miserably apologetic, but what was to be done about this new and unprecedented freak on Edith's part? "She has slipped out again this evening, and she's alone at that dreadful place at this moment, I'm sure. I'm going after her now, at once, of course; but I felt bound this time to tell you about it."

Mr. Kinseyle, perplexed and vaguely irritated against poor Miss Barkley, begged her to remain behind, and went in search of Edith himself. He found her on the big stone, and she got up at once and joined him.

"Where's the harm, Papa dear?" she urged, putting her arm through his to walk back down the drive. "I'm wrapped up, as you see, and as warm as a toast. Miss Barkley's so funny about my knight. She's quite frightened."

"But, my pet, young ladies must be taken care of at all times, and especially after dark. If there are no ghosts to be frightened of really—and, as for that, it seems to me very creditable on your part not to be frightened—there are rough men about the world sometimes—robbers, gipsies, and so on."

"But, *Papa!*" said Edith, putting quite a chain of reasoning into the long emphasis on the word, "I stop inside our own gate, and who has ever been robbed about Wexley?"

"Then you see, Edy, imagination is apt to play people tricks when they are expecting to see something supernatural, and—one can't

tell—though you're so brave about it to begin with—you might be frightened if you thought you saw something."

"I don't think I should be frightened, because I don't see what harm a ghost would want to do me—if there are ghosts at all. What do you think now, really, about that, Papa?"

Mr. Kinseyle fenced the question. He was too sincere a person to palm off statements on a child without feeling sure of his own convictions.

"I've not gone into the matter much, Edy. I should lean to the belief that there are not, but if there should be such manifestations in rare cases, I should say we were wisest to let alone what we understand so little about."

"It's very interesting," replied Edith, not entirely convinced by this reasoning.

Miss Barkley met them now in front of the house in a state of nervous agitation. Edith gave her a consolatory kiss, and relieved her, as it were, of all further responsibility in the matter by promising to talk it over with Papa.

"You won't be so cool and composed about it, Edith," Miss Barkley said later on, when they were alone together, "if some evening you do conjure up a dreadful apparition by all this watching."

"Not if it's dreadful, certainly; but I've confidence in my white knight. I have not seen him *plainly* yet, but——"

"What?" cried Miss Barkley, in amazement at the significance of the word thus emphasised.

"But I saw *something* this evening; something shadowy and vague, you know, but in the shape that would do for a man on horseback. Soon after that, Papa came up, and I had a feeling that it would be no use to wait any longer this evening, so I came away."

"Well, Edith, your nerves are something I don't understand. You've destroyed *my* night's rest by merely telling me—what you've just said."

"Dear B., your nerves are in fault though, this time, not mine, surely!"

Edith was contracting a habit about this time of calling her governess "B." as a

friendly abbreviation of her full name, which, used without the prefix, that grew troublesome in constant repetition, would have put her on too humble a level.

The young lady's visits to the Miltenhams, both at Deerbury Park and in London, gave her, as time went on, the *savoir vivre* befitting her natural station, without quenching her taste for the quiet life of her own home, where she fed her mind by enterprising excursions through realms of literature where B. found herself hopelessly unable to follow, and where her beauty expanded without involving her in the excitement it might have set in motion round her had she approached seventeen in the midst of an ebb and flow of society. She was slight but very gracefully developed in figure, *petite* rather than otherwise as to height, but with a very upright carriage and a self-confident composure of manner that gave an almost comic touch of stateliness to her small proportions, and her fair though richly tinted complexion, sweetly delicate features, large blue eyes, and golden hair, invested her with undeniable claims to admiration.

Her love of the quiet seclusion of Compton Wood was born of no shrinking timidity of nature, still less of any morose dislike of her fellow creatures. The sunny brightness of her own temperament gilded the old house with all the gaiety she required. Inheriting, though transmuting to a brighter phase, some of her father's attributes, she took things as they came, and never stopped to weigh and consider circumstances round her in a discontented or critical mood. Compton Wood was her home, so at Compton Wood she habitually abided; always treating her visits to the Miltenhams as such—to be enjoyed, certainly, while they lasted, but to terminate in due season, as a matter of course.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST MEETING.

The library at Kinseyle Court wooed her away, two or three years later, from the old Roman stones at the gate, where she had first developed her inclination for ghostly watching. Miss Barkley was hardly the gainer by the change, however, for the half deserted old house was not a "canny" habitation after dusk for people nervous about such fancies, and it was sometimes difficult to draw Edith away, as evening approached, if she was seized with an inclination to sit on in the old library, or in the "Countess's Study" attached; —a room reached up two or three steps from the larger chamber, and bearing that traditional name by virtue, as Edith discovered for herself in the course of her reading, of certain incidents connected with the past history of the family.

The Countess in question had been a daughter of the Kinseyle house, who returned home on her husband's death, during the troubles of the civil war. The luckless lady had resided for a long time almost alone at Kinseyle Court, the representative of the family at the time being a younger brother, away on his travels. Then, when he came home in due season with a wife, the Countess removed to a neighbouring house of her own —not very plainly identified in the old family memoirs from which Edith gleaned these particulars, but suspected by her to be Compton Wood—keeping only one room at Kinseyle Court, the aforesaid "study."

These comparatively trifling incidents had been recorded by a scholarly Kinseyle, of a literary turn, belonging to the following generation, because of the strange reports concerning the "Countess's Study," which he found current in his time, and set down with grave simplicity. The lady was alleged to have practised some variety of the "black art," and strange voices had been heard by servants from the grounds outside her windows when she was known to be alone

inside. After her death, her wraith had been seen at these same windows in the moonlight; and though the room was shut up and put to no ordinary uses by her immediate successors at the Court, it would sometimes be seen from afar lighted up with a steady white light, that suggested no alarm of fire, but even more acute, if more fantastic, terrors connected with the supernatural.

Since those days the room had been turned to ordinary uses by later generations of Kinseyles; but still it retained the old name, and remained furnished as a study or writing-room, though refitted and modernized, of course, more than once since the remote epoch in which it had served the needs of the mysterious Countess.

It pleased Edith to sit there in an old green Utrecht velvet arm-chair that stood by the table, or in one of the deep window-seats that looked out upon the park, and dream of the bygone time, or take some books up there from the library below, gathered at random from the shelves, and dive into them in the spirit of an explorer travelling through an unknown country. Perhaps these desultory

studies left no particular fruits of culture in her mind, but they interested her for the time; and Miss Barkley had learned long before the period at which Edith took to frequenting Kinseyle Court that her duties did *not* include the exercise of any censorship over the young lady's literary taste. Miss Barkley's anxiety in the matter had to do, not so much with the direction this took, as with the unseemly hours at which Edith persisted in gratifying it.

Dinner was an early ceremony at Compton Wood, for Mr. Kinseyle liked an evening that was something more than the ragged end of dessert, and, regardless of convention, took his principal meal at five o'clock. This left the ladies with so much daylight on their hands afterwards in the summer and autumn, that Edith was enabled to march her reluctant chaperone across the fields, sometimes in the evening for an eerie visit to the Countess's Study in the dusk. Miss Barkley would put impediments in the way as far as she could, preferring a simpler and more domestic routine; but Edith met all difficulties with her usual promptitude and determination. Squires could see them

home if they were tempted to stay too late. Squires, with his wife, constituted the caretaking establishment of Kinseyle Court, and resided at the lodge. Both by reason of orders from his regular superiors at Deerbury Park, and by virtue of his ready inclination to serve the young lady's caprices, he regarded her in all respects as having authority at the Court, and loyally put aside Miss Barkley's suggestion when the practice first arose—that it was a tax on his time to perform escort duty in the evening.

"I was quite sure Squires would be glad to be of use to me," Edith said graciously, with the air of a young queen conferring a favour in accepting her subject's homage; and the veteran retainer besought her "never to be within sending for Squires," whatsoever it might be that was wanted.

Of course Edith joyously recounted to Miss Barkley all the tales she could find in the old family memoir above mentioned which bore reference to spectral phenomena associated with the Countess's Study.

Miss Barkley scoffed—and shivered a little in secret at times—but would not give in to

Edith's whim so far as to recognise the danger of seeing the ghost as an objection attending evening visits to the Court. Indeed, there had been no pretence of any ghost in the case for several hundred years. It was too absurd of Edith to be making believe to expect one in this case.

"Then you *do* feel that in the other case Hodge's story about the White Knight is important?" Miss Edith maliciously urged in reply.

But "B." would only stand to her guns during the day time in safe places. In serious emergencies after sunset, she would fall back upon honest confessions of feeling fidgety and plaintive entreaties to be taken home. Then Edith would compromise matters, and promise to join her at the lodge in half an hour if left at peace and undisturbed in her dear old library or in the study, as the case might be, for the pleasant interval between the lights.

"It is quite unaccountable how Miss Edith can dare to stop alone in those old rooms, when it's getting dark like this," Miss Barkley exclaimed, in conversation with Mrs. Squires

at the lodge one evening under circumstances of this kind. "It isn't as if she was a masculine sort of girl. She isn't the least of a tomboy, but she actually likes to be alone in places that would make anybody else nervous with all sorts of foolish fancies."

"Bless your soul, m'm, it's all right," put in Mr. Squires from the little garden outside. Long familiarity with the Court, and its clean bill of health in regard to such matters as those Miss Barkley hinted at, made the custodian of the place disinclined to admit that anyone could incur peril there. "There ain't aught to be a-feared of at Kinseyle Court, night time or day."

"Of course I didn't say there was really," replied Miss Barkley, with a little asperity; "only for a girl like Miss Edith, one might expect that she would have been timid. And it is getting so late this evening. It's past the time she said she would join me here."

Miss Barkley stepped out into the road and looked up the avenue, but it was already impossible to see far through the thick shade of the trees, and a slight turn in the road concealed the house itself from view from the

lodge, though the actual distance was inconsiderable. No comforting vision of the creamy white dress in which Edith's graceful figure was robed that day was to be discerned, and Miss Barkley had to go back and bring her patience to bear upon the trying situation. Mrs. Squires's gossip was not altogether to be despised by a resident at so quiet a house as Compton Wood, as she commanded news through Thracebridge, whence she drew her supplies, relating to a tract of country which lay beyond the jurisdiction of Wexley, the village with which Miss Barkley's household was in relations. Still, to be five-and-twenty minutes late in keeping an appointment which is only entitled to deal with a total period of half an hour, is to push unpunctuality too far. When Miss Barkley realized that she had been kept waiting so long, she was half indignant and half alarmed.

"What *can* be keeping her so long? It's actually getting dark! *Would* Mr. Squires mind going up to the house and asking her if she isn't coming?"

"I'll go and wait for her, m'm, if you

like, at the door; but I wouldn't like to go in for to disturb her if she sees fit for to stop," said Squires, after some consideration of the problem. "If you come along, too, m'm, you can go in and see if she's ready."

Miss Barkley hated poking about the old house after dark; and the situation was not made any better that evening by the fact that a full moon was rising.

"Miss Edith asked me to wait for her at the lodge," she answered, suddenly reverting to the theory that Miss Edith's will had to be obeyed to the letter.

Squires could not have analysed the fallacy involved in her position, as coupled with her wish to disturb the young lady vicariously, but was setting out up the drive, when the sudden barking of a black and tan retainer of the lodge household drew attention to two gentlemen who had come along the public road and were now pausing at the gate. Squires turned back and went to interview them.

"This is Kinseyle Court, isn't it?" said the taller of the two, leaning on the low iron gate that swung across the entrance to the drive, and holding out half-a-crown to Squires as he

approached. The gardener accepted the peace-offering with easy grace, and answered with the friendly cheerfulness that seemed due to an acquaintance so pleasantly begun. He opened the smaller side-gate as he spoke, and the visitors came in.

"There's no family living here, I understand?"

"*No—o*, sir, not for many a long day."

"Ah! We had a fancy to look at the place, which visitors are permitted to see, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; certainly."

"But I'm afraid it's too late this evening. We did not quite know how long it would take us to walk out here from Thracebridge."

The visitors seemed undecided, none the less, and strolled in a few steps beside Mr. Squires.

"Well, it is a bit late, sir, to see anything to-night, sir. Any time in the *day* you might be passing——"

"'M—yes. By-the-bye, it might be a good thing perhaps to rest a little before we return. Now, if you can give us chairs here in your

garden for ten minutes, that would be very obliging of you."

The speaker hardly looked like a person who would be prostrate with fatigue as the result of a walk from Thracebridge. He was a young man of eight-and-twenty or thirty, well made, with a vigorous athletic physique, a short-cut, brown beard, and moustache—clearly a gentleman by all external signs of dress and manner; and a finer observer than Mr. Squires might have been struck by the fact that his demand for the means of resting was not given out in the manner of a wearied wayfarer, but as if by a sudden happy inspiration. At any rate, the loan of a couple of chairs for ten minutes was well within the credit established by the half-crown, so Squires agreed cordially, and the strangers followed him into the little front-garden of the lodge. Then for the first time perceiving Mrs. Squires and Miss Barkley, who stood just outside the threshold, they lifted their hats to Miss Barkley, and looked a little discomfited.

"I beg your pardon. I hope we are not in your way. We were going to rest for a little

after a short walk—at least, after what I ought to call a long walk, if I feel tired."

Miss Barkley bowed, muttering a few words of vague courtesy; and Mr. Squires bade his wife get the gentlemen chairs. The shorter and slighter of the two—perhaps not the younger, though wearing no hair about his face beyond a slight fringe of light brown moustache; rather colourless as to complexion, but with a small, pale face of great intelligence, made all the more striking by large, dark eyes of piercing expression—said nothing, and seemed to be merely following the guidance of his friend. The friend went on talking—rather as though to combat a slight feeling of embarrassment than from having any purpose in what he said, though all the while speaking in a tone that implied finished breeding.

"Stupid of us to have come out so late. We had a wish to see this place, and stopped here on our way north. We ought to have stayed at the inn, and to have come out here in the morning."

"You are connected with the Kinseyle family, perhaps," Miss Barkley said.

"No, not at all. My people are from Gloucestershire; but I was particularly asked to look at Kinseyle Court by someone interested in the place. Not that there's any particular reason for it; it's only a fancy."

Miss Barkley's curiosity was beginning to assert itself about the stranger. Mrs. Squires now came out with the chairs; but the visitors remained standing, the talkative one willingly entering into conversation with Miss Barkley, as she remarked that Kinseyle Court was not much of a show place. It was only interesting for the sake of a few antiquities, and for its age and history.

"The people the place belongs to now never come here, then?"

"The Miltenhams? No; they live at Deerbury Park. The Court would have to be almost rebuilt, I believe, to suit them."

"And do not any members of the family come here? I thought I had been told something to that effect—about some of them having a special affection for the house."

"Oh dear no; they are quite a different kind of people to that. But, Squires, don't you think you had better be going up to the

house to see after Miss Edith? I really am getting uneasy."

The stranger caught with interest at this remark, as Squires prepared to do as he was asked, returning first to shut the side-gate into the road.

"Then there are some people staying at the Court at present, do I understand, though not any of the family you mentioned?"

"Not staying there; only my pupil, Miss Kinseyle, has been looking over some books in the library this afternoon, and I am waiting to go home with her." Miss Barkley always liked to give as well as to receive gossip. "Perhaps you are acquainted with Mr. Kinseyle of Compton Wood?"

"I have not that pleasure, though I should value it very highly. Pardon me if I seem very obtrusive and impertinent. My name is Ferrars—George Ferrars—and my sister, Mrs. Malcolm, must be acquainted, I fancy, with the young lady you have just spoken of. She especially asked me to go and look at Kinseyle Court, to tell her something about it she was curious to know. And now, I

think, as our friend the lodge-keeper seems to be going up to the house, I should like to walk up the avenue with him and glance at the outside, at all events—that may suffice for my purpose."

Hereupon, Miss Barkley declared that she would go also; her instinctive sense of duty as chaperone triumphing over her reluctance to return to the twilight shadows of the Court. As they all went up the avenue, she improved the opportunity for getting at the origin of Mr. Ferrars's curiosity.

"If you tell me what it is you want to know about the Court, I might be able to help you. I have lived a long while with Miss Kinseyle, and am often here."

"Ah—then Miss Kinseyle is doubtless the young lady I was referring to, who has an affection for the house, and is in some way specially identified with it. It is very strange."

"Why should it be strange? Miss Kinseyle is in one way the last representative of the old family."

"I beg your pardon again. My questions must seem rather crazy, even if you are good

enough to credit me with not being impertinent. How can I explain? Tell me; are you much in the way of hearing about queer coincidences, strange mental impressions, you know—clairvoyance and that sort of thing?"

"Oh, I dislike all that sort of thing *extremely*. I hear a great deal too much of it from Miss Kinseyle as it is, and I do not believe anything about it."

"But the young lady does, it would seem. That makes the matter all the more curious. Now, I will make a full confession, Miss —— at least; ah, I beg your pardon, I forgot that I had not been properly introduced."

Miss Barkley mentioned her name. Mr. Ferrars had a straightforward, confident manner that she would have been unable to resist even if she had had any motive for so doing.

"You see," he went on, "my sister, Mrs. Malcolm has a good deal to do with that sort of thing I was just speaking of, clairvoyance and what not. Personally, I am like you, you know, I haven't anything to do

with it to speak of. But my sister is different. And she has got an impression—I can't tell you how she has got it—that she very much wants to know a young lady who is somehow specially connected with an old house called Kinseyle Court. I had not even got the name quite right till to-day. She spelt it wrong. She did not know the young lady's name, nor where the house was situated, except that it was somewhere about England. I have had a lot of trouble about it with county directories, but now it would seem that I have got upon what she wants to know. And that is all that concerns me. Of course, I should not be impertinent enough to present myself to the young lady, and should have nothing to say to her if I did. But my sister knows everybody in London, and can easily get a proper introduction to anybody she wants to know, when once she knows who it is she wants to know, don't you know. The whole situation seems a little mixed, but it is very simple, really."

Miss Barkley wondered and marvelled over the strange coincidence, and did not

know whether it would be necessary to tell Miss Kinseyle anything about it; but admitted that there could be nothing to prevent Mrs. Malcolm seeking to make the acquaintance of the Kinseyle family through any of the usual channels of society.

When they got up to the house, she led the way round the front to the corner in which the library was situated, and called out to her pupil, but without getting any answer. The windows were too high from the ground to be looked into from the outside. This end of the building was now bathed in the light of the moon, which poured an almost level radiance across an open space that should have been a flower garden, and the twilight—of which, indeed, but little now survived—was entirely overcome by the whiter illumination. The tall lattice windows shone steadily in the moonlight, but no answering voice came from them, nor did any sign of Edith appear there.

"What can she be about?" Miss Barkley exclaimed in much vexation. "I must go in and see. Really, it is the strangest taste that can make her stop here so late."

"If I can be the slightest use, pray command me. Would you wish me to wait here, or to accompany you?"

"Really, I hardly know. Please just come into the hall, and then I will go in search of Miss Kinseyle, while you wait there. Goodness! it's quite dark in here." They had penetrated to the hall by this time, and Miss Barkley was advancing to the left with a beating heart, and towards the library door, dimly discernible up a few stairs and beyond a broad landing, lighted, though faintly just then, from above. As Miss Barkley opened the big door, light seemed to come freely from the room by reason of the moon shining brilliantly through the large windows at the end.

"Edith!" she cried in the same impatient tone as before, as she opened the door, and then again, '*Edith!*' in a wilder tone of alarm—almost a scream—as she stepped into the room. "What is the matter, in Heaven's name!"

Her cry of terror overbore the instructions she had given to her escort to remain in the hall. Both young men sprang up the half-

dozen stairs in a moment, and followed her into the library.

Edith was half kneeling, half lying prostrate on the floor, her creamy white dress shining as though luminous in the moonbeams, her hands clasped together, stretched before her and resting on a footstool, and her face turned upwards towards the side door, near the window end of the room, which led into the Countess's Study. She was in no faint, however, as Miss Barkley had supposed at the first glance. As the governess rushed forward towards her she rose on to her knees, motioning Miss Barkley back with her left hand, and then got up entirely, still gazing into the inner room.

"Oh, why did you disturb us?" she said in a dreamy tone, advancing towards the open door and standing with her right hand upon the side of the entrance.

"What do you mean by 'us,' Edith?" Miss Barkley replied piteously, with tears of nervous excitement in her voice. "Is anything the matter? You speak in such a strange way."

"The matter! Oh no!" — though Miss

Kinseyle's manner was dreamy it was not sad or oppressed: rapt, rather, and ecstatic. "I feel as if I had been in Heaven. But now she has gone."

She turned towards Miss Barkley, and for the first time saw Ferrars and his companion in the background, standing near the door of the library.

"Who is with you?"

"Only two gentlemen who came to my assistance. I was frightened about you. But you will come away, dear, now, won't you? You're not feeling ill, are you? You didn't faint?"

Miss Kinseyle was too deeply absorbed still by the impressions she had been going through to answer promptly to Miss Barkley's questions. Meanwhile Ferrars began to feel *de trop*.

"I came up the stairs because you cried out and seemed frightened," he said to Miss Barkley. "I will wait for you in the hall, as you told me," and with that he retired.

His companion, however, seemed more reluctant to move, and half turning as if to follow Ferrars, remained in the shadow of the doorway intently watching Miss Kin-

seyle, who was now seated on the stool she had been leaning across when they came in. Miss Barkley was kneeling beside her.

"Dear B., I'm quite well, only a little excited. A glass of water would be refreshing. Can you get me one, do you think?"

"Yes, dear, I'll try."

Miss Barkley was getting up, when the stranger interposed.

"May I be of service? Pray remain with the young lady, and let me go in search of the water."

"Oh, thank you—but you won't know where to get it."

"The keeper will show me."

He went off quickly on his errand.

"Who is it, B.? He has a pleasant voice."

"They are two gentlemen who came to see the Court. One of them has been talking to me as we came up the drive. There is something queer about it. I will tell you as we go home; but I'm so flurried and frightened—I don't know why. I do so wish we were back home."

"Poor B.," said Miss Kinseyle in a soothing, protecting tone. "Don't be alarmed; it's

an angel I have seen, not a ghost. I feel as if I could hardly tear myself away. Let me first stand a few moments where *she* has been standing," and she went up the two steps, remaining just within the door of the study. "Oh, B. dear, I have had such a glorious vision! The beautiful angel has been here, just where I am standing, talking to me for I don't know how long, filling my mind with such rapture, I can't describe it to you. I feel that still. I have been lifted up out of myself—I can't bear to come down again."

"My dear Edith, perhaps you have been dreaming. But you are not frightened, at any rate, that's one good thing."

"Frightened!" Miss Kinseyle answered, with a dreamy emphasis on the word that implied a wealth of feelings of quite an opposite kind; and then, turning inwards towards the smaller room, she stretched out her hands and murmured in a low voice, as though addressing some invisible presence, "Good-night, dearest—good-bye till I see you again, and may that be soon."

Then she came down into the library, and put her hand on Miss Barkley's arm,

feeling her tremble, and divining her nervous agitation.

"My poor B., don't you be frightened. There is nothing to be frightened about, I assure you. Sit down and recover yourself."

"I'm glad we are not quite alone here. It was really most providential those gentlemen coming up just when they did. I don't think there's any doubt about their really being gentlemen. The one I was talking to—the other one—says his people belong to Gloucestershire. His name is Ferrars."

"How dreadfully prosaic; and I suppose the other one has got some stupid name too, and 'people' in another county. I like people to be *themselves,* whoever they are, and not mere family appendages of somebody else."

"I don't know what the other one's name is——" Miss Barkley began, but at that moment he came back with the water.

"I hope this will refresh you," he said, bowing as he presented it.

Now that his hat was off, the most remarkable feature of his face was seen to be a broad high forehead, showing great in-

tellectual power, surmounted by closely-cut and not very thick light brown hair, parted in the middle. As he stood in the full and vivid moonlight, presenting the glass of water, the pallor of his complexion and the depth of his large dark eyes were both intensified; and Miss Kinseyle was conscious of a thrill of excitement she could hardly account for as he looked at her.

"You only feel, as it were, disinclined to move—neither weak nor alarmed?" he said in a tone of confident inquiry.

"That is just it," she replied. "I can't tear myself away, though I suppose I ought."

"Drink a little of the water, and you will feel light and active again."

"You have not put anything in it? I hate brandy and things of that sort."

"It is pure water, with only a little magic in it—for you, at this moment. And it will not be at war with your vision."

Vaguely wondering at the confident tone in which he spoke and seemed to understand her, but impelled to feel very trustful, Miss Kinseyle drank some of the water, looking at him all the while—fascinated, as it were, by

the keen look he bent upon her, and emancipated from the formalities of life by the singular conditions of the scene. She got up when she had returned him the glass of water, and they all went out of the library at once, and into the open air, as if that had been previously arranged. She said nothing about feeling stronger, but with animated interest, as they went, asked:

"What do you know about my vision?"

"Nothing concerning it," he said, "which may be private to yourself. Nothing concerning it which is definite at all; but I can see its reflection on your face, and it must have been a beautiful vision, and a noble one, to have left such traces."

"But what do such things mean? Can you tell me anything about them? Do you know?"

"About such things one may know just a little more than one's neighbour, and yet be only overwhelmed with a sense that we only know about their faintest fringes. If I said I knew nothing, I should mislead you. If I said I knew much, I should seem false to my own consciousness."

They were all standing in the open space before the house. Miss Barkley, feeling the strain of the situation to be relaxing, began to come again under the dominion of her sense of duty as chaperone.

"Squires will see to the hall door, dear," she said, "and follow us immediately. I'm sure we have to thank these gentlemen most warmly for coming to our assistance; but now I think of it, we must say good evening, and hurry home."

"Yes, we will walk on. We are all going the same way to the gate," said Miss Kinseyle, with the calm composure ensuing from her inner consciousness that her will, once defined plainly, was never practically disputed. She moved forward with her new friend by her side, and Miss Barkley followed them, closely attended by Mr. Ferrars.

"I dare say," Miss Kinseyle went on, "that what you call very little knowledge would seem a great deal to me. I know nothing. I understand nothing about what I see. I can only gaze and feel enraptured, and long to know more. And none of my people seem to understand me."

"You know more by the light of your own great gifts, evidently, than most of us who study these things can find out in a lifetime. It is so difficult to explain. We, who are students of the occult mysteries of nature—for I may at any rate call myself a student of these—spend our time groping through intricate theories for the means of compassing such visions as those that seem to come to you by nature. If I were privileged to be in any sense your teacher, it would only be in the beginning that I should be able to teach. I could only teach you to understand the priceless value of your own powers, and then it would be my part to learn of and through you."

"But you know I do not have such an experience as that I have had to-day at all often. I never had quite *such* a one before. Is it so rare for people to have visions of any sort? It has seemed to me sometimes as if the people round me must be the exceptional people in *not* seeing things sometimes."

"I understand your feeling; but it is a mistake, though natural to you. There are just enough of the highly endowed creatures

of your kind in the world to show us, who are students of Nature's mysteries, that you are dealing with realities, though these may only occasionally be observed. You are certainly not all self-deceived, nor imposing on the rest of the world, to the same effect, without any concert among yourselves."

"I am sure I never exaggerate anything, and yet people don't seem quite to believe what I tell them about impressions I have. It is so strange to feel quite sure you have seen so and so, whatever it may be, and then to have people look incredulous or pretend you were dreaming, when you know quite well you were wide awake."

"That is one of the little penalties of your superiority. But, sooner or later, you will be sure to meet many people who will understand you."

"You seem to be the first I have met yet; and you do not make me understand myself altogether."

"Have patience a little while longer—the rest will come,—a fuller comprehension of yourself, and of a great deal beyond. What is the use of attempting to go into so vast a

subject with so little time at my command. I am *sure* you will not have to wait long for the most helpful guidance and instruction you can need."

"Where will it be that I shall meet people who can help me? Will it be with my cousins, the Miltenhams? That is my only outlet into society. Do you know them?"

"No; but that is my fault. I lead a very retired life. It is necessary that I should for many reasons."

"Can I do nothing to seek help? I feel as if you know much more than you say—more even about me, though we are strangers—so far."

He made no immediate reply.

Miss Kinseyle could feel rather than see, in the darkness of the avenue, that he was grave and sad, and in no way responsive to what was almost an invitation on her part to a more intimate acquaintance.

Presently he said, with some flavour of constraint in his voice:

"Later on, if I can be of any use to you, you will have easy means of commanding my services. I hope, for your sake, you

will find others at your disposal better worth having. I rarely step outside a very narrow path in life."

The young lady felt a little mortified and rebuffed, and they walked on for a while in silence.

"My counsel," he resumed, after this interval, and the earnest tone in which he spoke, and its sadness, which now seemed to overshadow its constraint, changed her feeling of annoyance into one of undefined sympathy, "can only be just of transitory service for the moment—pending better. But for the moment I will presume to advise. Do not waste your confidence, as regards your own inner experiences, on people, however good and entitled to your affection in other ways, who take up that attitude you spoke of, of incredulity about them. You, evidently, have gifts which mark you out as one of a select few on this earth. You will assuredly meet your proper companions, as regards your higher spiritual life, as time goes on. Be patient, meanwhile, and watchful; treasuring up your higher experiences, and leading two lives for the moment—one outer, and

the other inner; but remembering that the inner is really by far the more important of the two. Do not let the other crush it. For all of us, if we could only realize it, the spiritual life is the more important; but only a few of us have the immense privilege you enjoy of being already able to secure that as a reality. That is the first great lesson for you to learn; but I think you have learned so much already. Forgive me, however, for presuming to preach; your own intuitions will show you all this a thousand times more forcibly than I can."

"But, indeed, I am asking you to preach as you call it. All you say is full of interest, and seems to clear things up for me more than I can tell you. You seem to wake up a consciousness of my own, that I did not rightly understand before. I do lead the double life you speak of, and it has fretted me hitherto; but now I understand the right attitude of mind about it."

They were nearing the gate now, but a sudden thought crossed Edith's fancy.

"How was it we came away from the

library so suddenly? I meant to have lingered on."

"You felt fresher and more active after you had drunk the water."

"But now I remember; what did you mean by saying there was a little magic in it?"

"You are very, very sensitive. It was merely my desire to make you feel stronger and better. Your vital energy had been a little impaired by your excitement."

"But how was your desire communicated to me? I do feel strong and energetic. I did not notice it before——"

The others closed up on them now, however, as they came opposite the lodge.

Mr. Squires had overtaken them, and Miss Barkley called to him to accompany them home. She was getting nervous about the prolonged interview with strangers, and anxious to part company, in a way which Mr. Ferrars perceived, not without internal amusement. She would have parted simply with gracious words and thanks and bows; but Edith held out her hand, first to Mr. Ferrars sa they all stood together by the gate, and

then to her companion. With the queenlike and composed dignity which sat so naturally on her, though so quaintly in contrast with her small slight figure, she said, as she did so:

"I should be glad to know to whom I am indebted for so much interesting conversation?"

"Allow me," said Ferrars, lifting his hat, "to present my friend—'Mr. Sidney Marston.'"

They all bowed, with a sudden access of formality, and the ladies turned up the road, followed by Squires, while the strangers retreated in the opposite direction towards Thracebridge.

CHAPTER III.

A ONE-SIDED ENGAGEMENT.

Marston, on whose slight physique the double walk, or some other influences, had told more than on his companion, went to his room to lie down with a book and a pipe soon after the apology for a dinner with which the village inn they were staying at supplied them; and Ferrars spent the evening writing to his sister a report of his proceedings, infused with much eulogy of the skill he had shown in following up her very inadequate clue.

"You tell me," he wrote, "that somewhere about England there is a young lady you want me to find for you, and you do not know her name, nor appearance, nor who she belongs to. You say, you fancy she must live at a place called Kinsale Court, probably situated in the British Islands. There isn't

any such place in existence, and there is no young lady living there ; but all the same, I have found you the young lady you want, and her name is Edith Kinseyle, and she is the daughter of a man named Ferron Kinseyle, who lives at Compton Wood, in Midhamptonshire. She must be your young lady, for she haunts the old house of her family, Kinseyle—not Kinsale—Court, and is evidently given to having ecstatic visions, quite in your line. How have I found her out ? By the exercise of superlative genius. How am I rewarded for my devotion to your behests ? By spending the evening in a den of a village inn—poor dear Sidney Marston, who came with me to bear me company, being seedy, and having gone to bed—writing, with a bad pen, on worse paper, by the light of a wretched couple of candles, on an absurd bedroom dressing-table ; when, if I had not come here, to serve a tyrannical sister, I should have been actually sitting at dinner, at this moment, beside Terra Fildare at Oatfield.

" Perhaps that would not necessarily have been heaven for me, you will argue—and I

freely grant that it might have been an arrangement with a spice of the other place, if Terra had been in a bad mood. But even if I have not finally conquered my Queen yet, I must be vigorously prosecuting the war, or life is unendurable. You resent the notion, do you not, that even a Terra Fildare should play fast and loose with your excellent brother. But it does not seem to me strange that such a princess should deliberate awhile before surrendering so grand a prize as herself to the first man who comes along and says, 'Please come and be my property for the rest of your life.' The oddity of the situation is merely in the confidence there is between you and me; but then we are not like other brothers and sisters. We are all in all to each other, and it is merely a mystery of love that I can be filled in every pore with passionate enthusiasm for Terra, and yet be entirely devoted to you, as I always have been since life gave me any memory of my emotions, and always must be to the end. And you are so penetrating in your comprehension of this, that you can love Terra with me, and only reserve your-

self the right of hating her if she decides to do without me.

"There is the only mistake you make—though so pardonable in you. She will be quite within her right either way, and I shall love her either way—to my sorrow or my joy, as she may settle things; and I do not see how it is conceivable that, in that way, I can ever love another woman. In talking over this with you we are apt to get desultory, so I think I have not wasted this evening altogether in putting the idea into accurate words."

Ferrars posted his letter the following morning on his way to the railway station, where the two friends parted, Mr. Marston returning to London, Ferrars going on North. Mr. Squires was thus disappointed of the other half-crown he counted on from the gentlemen who had been so eager to see Kinseyle Court. It had not occurred to Ferrars the previous evening to explain that having achieved success in the final purpose with which he had come to see the Court, it would be unnecessary for him to return the next day. So Squires looked out for him and

even mentioned that he was still expecting the two gentlemen, when Edith and Miss Barkley came across, the day after the young lady's vision in the library. This midday visit was a sort of compromise. Miss Kinseyle had proposed that they should again go after dinner, but Miss Barkley had suffered much over the prospect. Did Edith wish to drive herself mad, or sell herself to the Evil One, or give a handle to superstition, by letting herself fancy she had made acquaintance with a ghost, when everybody knew perfectly well that Kinseyle Court was quite free of any nuisance of the kind, so far? It would be Edith who would be responsible for spoiling the character of the house, if she went about deliberately encouraging ghosts to come there; and would it not be only right at all events to discuss the whole subject with her father? On that point Miss Barkley scored. Edith could not deny that this would be a proper course to pursue, but there was no hurry. She would like to make quite sure of some things first before talking to Papa.

"My dear Edith, what things?" Miss

Barkley apprehended that the young lady contemplated some fresh reference to the ghost.

"Some things about the history of the family, I mean. I can't remember everything *She* said to me. I can't remember a quarter of it, and I am longing to see her again. But for the moment what I want is to look up something in the Kinseyle Annals."

"We need not wait till the gray of the evening for that, at all events," Miss Barkley pointed out. "Why not go over this morning?"

On reflection Edith agreed, and it was only when she remarked later, as they were walking across the fields, that very likely Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Marston would be at the Court during the morning, that Miss Barkley perceived she had swayed over from Scylla to Charybdis. To avoid the ghost she had steered her pupil into the companionship of strange gentlemen of a somewhat obtrusive temperament—possibly undesirable admirers in disguise. But, as already stated, the anxiety she felt on this subject was thrown away.

Neither Mr. Ferrars nor his friend turned up at all, and—without avowing it to herself even, still less to Miss Barkley—Edith perhaps shared, for different reasons, the regret and disapproval Mr. Squires frankly expressed.

"I don't see what call he had to make out he was in such a hurry to see the Court. I don't understand that chap," said the lodge-keeper, vaguely suspicious, when the ladies bade him good-bye in the afternoon.

Ferrars, meanwhile, was speeding on his way North towards the country house near the Lakes, at which he was looking forward to meeting the lady, of whom he had written to his sister. Oatfield was the pleasant seat of a county magnate, who in his time had represented his Sovereign abroad on one or two ornamental occasions—Sir James Margreave. Ferrars—himself in the early stages of the diplomatic career—had served under Sir James, and had been his guest at Oatfield since then, on two or three occasions, when at home on leave. Terra Fildare was a niece of the baronet, daughter of a colonel in the service of the Government of India,

who had married his sister, since dead. She had no money to speak of, but a splendid physique—the head and bust of a Roman Empress—tawny hair, cut short, for a whim of the wearer, but massive and abundant and curling low over her forehead; a glowing complexion, a majestic figure—the poses of which, however, were quite unstudied, for her nature was impulsive and her vitality too vigorous to be compatible with any queenly langour—and an almost unruly love of outdoor activity in all the forms accessible to her as a girl. A hankering after some that were thus inaccessible made her sometimes impatient of her sex. She had spent some years of early girlhood with her father in India; had shot a tiger from an elephant's howdah—an exploit organized for her by a Spanish Count, who had been travelling through the North-west Provinces at the time, and the fame of which spread far too widely for her pleasure and comfort or her father's approval; and had soon after this been sent home, for fear she should fall a victim in her turn to some one or other of a crowd of young officers at the station where

Colonel Fildare found himself fixed for a year or two at least. Lady Margreave had given her a long invitation, privately promising the Colonel to dispose of the young lady to better advantage than amongst the enamoured subalterns at Chuckapore.

Lady Margreave was the one other person besides his sister to whom Ferrars had confided the fact that he had invested his prospects of happiness in the uncertain issue of the siege he had laid to Terra Fildare's heart. She had neither favoured nor opposed his views. At first she had counted on a rather brilliant settlement for her splendid niece. Her own family of sons left her ambition as a matchmaker free to concentrate itself on Terra. But acute observation soon showed her that Terra was more admired than sought after. Her haughty and imperious temper was perhaps more on the surface than in the inner nature of the girl, but it operated to frighten off men who would not have been insensible to her charms if these had been softened by a gentler manner. Terra was not the "hit" in society that her aunt had at first expected her to

prove. Lady Margreave diagnosed the situation quite correctly, and endeavoured to suggest a remedy. But Terra grew savage with unspent energy, when her aunt tried to keep down her physical activity, and vented her fretful moods on the gentlemen she was set to dance with, or dine beside. She loved as well as obeyed Lady Margreave, so the elder lady had no ground or inclination to be angry with her. The question was simply, whether for her own sake she could be cured of her faults; and when she divined the purpose with which Lady Margreave was trying to cure her, she pleaded for mercy in an agony of protest.

"My own dearest Aunt Mary!" she cried, throwing herself on the ground beside Lady Margreave's chair; the conversation had taken place in Park Street where the Margreaves lived when in town, and the morning after a ball. "Make me a dairymaid at Oatfield, if you like; send me back to poor Papa at that miserable hole where he is stationed; or leave me to live on my own income, my own way, instead of spending it in gloves; but don't set me to mince and simper for the

sake of captivating a husband. Oh, Heavens! the notion of marrying a man who could be caught that way. Besides, I don't want to be married, I hate the idea of getting married; I don't like men as such. They make me angry and not tender. I can be friends with them up to a certain point, if they don't want to be tender to me; but then I simply turn furious."

"And show it, my dear Terra, so plainly, that anyone who knows you, can perceive it across two rooms."

"That's wrong of me, as a question of good taste, but justifiable considering the provocation. I love *you*, Aunty, and Victoria Maxwell; and when you get tired of me I shall know it in my nerves, and shall softly and silently vanish away like the baker in "Hunting the Snark." But, till then, let me love you in peace."

She had been sitting on the ground with her arm across Lady Margreave's knees, and now, swinging into a new attitude with the easy grace of a leopard, she leaned her head back on her aunt's lap and held up both hands towards her, clasping them round her neck

as she leaned forward to bestow the caress thus invited.

Lady Margreave, who had an eye for female beauty, felt very strongly that Terra was mismanaging her life, though she could hardly rebuke her for not putting herself up to auction in a calculating spirit. She saw that it would be best to wait for events to develope themselves, and so the first season of Terra's association with the Margreave household passed without leading to any results.

It was in the course of the second that she met George Ferrars. She had seen him ride in a steeplechase, and ride the winner. This was at a country meeting during Easter. Ten days afterwards at the Margreave's, in town, he was appointed to take Terra down to dinner. Something happened to his heart-strings during the ceremony—as he afterwards explained to Mrs. Malcolm — and whether it was foolish or whether it was the *coup d'œil* of genius, he knew when he rose at the end of the feast and drew back Terra's chair for her, that he should propose for her at the first opportunity. Terra, for her part,

was well disposed to him to begin with. Circumstances had not yet advanced far enough for him to be tender in his manner. Their conversation had been bright and unembarrassed. She started with good first impressions, as she knew at any rate that he was no milk-sop. But they fell into a talk of books and some social movements and the duties of different people in life — drawing-room metaphysics generally—that interested her and made her forgetful of personalities—of her own especially.

"And here, we have never said a word about the Briceborough Cup!" she remarked within a few minutes of the time the ladies were drawn off.

"And it is quite the best that no words should be said about it. My reputation as an *attaché* would be ruined with Lord Maxborough, if he thought I was infected with horsiness, which I am not. I rode to oblige a friend."

"And what has Lord Maxborough got to do with it?"

"He is my chief, my ambassador, the architect, let us trust, of my future fortunes." Then

he added, as the thought crossed his mind that he would be on firm ground, such as it was with Miss Fildare from the first, and surprise her into no concessions which she might make on the assumption that he was a greater man in the world than was really the case. "There are diplomatists, like our host you know, who are careless of the loaves and fishes, and there are other diplomatists, who are constrained to care about them very much, like me."

Miss Fildare was a hundred leagues from divining the purpose of this speech, but it made Ferrars rather more interesting than before in her sight, as a combatant on the world's stage. In truth it overshot the mark, as regards the sense in which she took the words, for Ferrars, though no heir of large fortune, had some moderate means of his own independently of his ornamental profession. Without this he would hardly have formed the resolution, spoken of already, as crossing his mind when he drew back Terra Fildare's chair.

The opportunity for putting this resolution in practice occurred almost within a week of

their first meeting. Chance had favoured him in furnishing two or three further opportunities of talking with Miss Fildare, but in none of these had he hinted at any deep feelings, or made love in veiled phrases. He had been simple, straightforward, and natural, talking to her about things, places, and people—her own tastes; and even rather disparaging some of these, for he was too serious in his purpose with her to be insincere, even in trifles.

"I enjoy sport thoroughly," he said, "to put the matter in a paradoxical way, as long as I have a sub-consciousness of the fact that I don't really care about it. If I came to suspect that I did, I think I should turn away from it in disgust. I once heard a friend of mine say amongst a lot of men talking about smoke and drink, and that sort of thing, 'If I found myself with a habit I could not break, I should break myself of it next day.' That puts the whole thing far more neatly and rightly, than if one were to to spread out the idea in a formal logical sentence."

"You're a man, and you always do what

you like, so you never fret for anything. It is only not getting a thing one wants, that makes one want it especially."

"That depends on the thing. About one class of things, what you say is quite true, and the fact that that is so, condemns them really as things not worth wanting. Another class of things—the more you get them the more you want them."

"Money?"

"No, I don't mean money. In a bad sense what I have just said is true, perhaps, of money; but it is still truer in regard to having your life fairly well filled with interests that you can respect yourself for being interested in. And it is true, I think, of yet another kind of thing."

The conversation was taking place in Park Street. Ferrars had met the Margreave party at a concert, and had gone home with them by invitation for afternoon tea. Lady Margreave was talking to another visitor in the principal drawing-room. Ferrars and Terra had gone into a smaller room, opening out of this at one corner—a kind of boudoir looking over the Park, to inspect a small

picture lately added to its art treasures, and there had remained talking.

"And your other kind of thing, whatever it is, will again be found, I am sure, to be accessible to men only. Women have a poor fate at the best; but as compared with dress and driving about town, I think grouse shooting is a better sort of interest, not to speak of tigers."

"My other kind of thing is not inaccessible to women; and I may as well tell you what it is, Miss Fildare, now, as later."

Terra was standing by the window, Ferrars leaning on the top of a low-seated, tall-backed chair close by, but he did not move from this position, and calmly went on:

"All the other interests of my life have now come to be subordinate to one. Don't be startled at what I am going to say, though I put it very abruptly. I can even explain why I am so abrupt if you listen quietly."

Terra turned round from the window to look full at him, with open eyes, as he spoke across the chair that divided them.

"My supreme purpose in life now, Miss Fildare, has come to be to get you to share

it with me. Let us consider why that is so afterwards. First, I want you to know—because I like to be honest and straightforward—what I mean in seeking your society—what I am hoping to persuade you to do in the end."

Miss Fildare was taken too much by surprise to say anything for the moment, beyond a half articulate exclamation of wonder. She leaned back against the embrasure of the window, still looking Ferrars straight in the eyes, but whether with the expression of a hunted animal at bay, or with the exhilaration of a sudden excitement that was not disagreeable, it might have been difficult to determine.

"You are too splendidly honest a creature, Miss Fildare, to tolerate cunning manœuvres designed to win you by degrees. I have loved you altogether, unreservedly, from the first day I met you, and if I did not tell you so, I should be acting a false part every time I came near you. But do not suppose I expect you to come down off your throne, and give yourself to me all at once. Only let me argue the matter with you

reasonably, and not be beating about the bush."

"I've always hated the idea of getting married," said Terra, slowly and intensely.

"I don't see why you should hate the idea of being the embodied sunshine of a true man's life; but I divined that feeling in you that you speak of, and I only hope to show you by degrees that it is a mistaken feeling. But first of all I want you to take one resolution, which surely must be a wise one. Do not decide this matter against my wishes hastily. I will be patient on my side. You can see, of course, that I would rather take you in my arms now, than do any other earthly thing——"

"Don't, I tell you, I hate all that——"

"I won't," said Ferrars, still without moving from his first attitude. "That's what I mean —I tell you plainly, I love you utterly and finally, with passion as well as with fixity of purpose. But I do not see that that gives me any rights over you, unless you choose to accept my love."

"I suppose I'm differently made in some way from other women? Most girls, they say,

like to be made love to; but it drives me mad, and it is only because you talk so reasonably in one way, that I can bear it now as I do. Goodness knows it isn't reasonable on your part to want to make love to me. Surely you don't want to marry a girl because you think her handsome, merely, and what is there to recommend me but the outside? I'm a hard, fretful, discontented creature, and I believe I ought to have been a man."

"You don't understand yourself in the least little bit. You might as well show me your hand with a glove on it, and say that is the shape of the glove and not of the hand. Your real inner nature must correspond to the glorious outside you talk about."

"I never said it was glorious."

"No; that's what I think——"

Lady Margreave came into the smaller room at this juncture to show her visitor the picture. There was nothing odd about the grouping of the young people to suggest that they had been interrupted. Terra left the room while the picture was under examination. Then the visitor went, and then

Ferrars explained the situation to Lady Margreave.

Thus was established the order of things referred to in the letter Ferrars wrote to his sister from the village inn. Terra Fildare was not engaged: that had to be formally recognized by all parties concerned, at intervals, and she would point out with great emphasis that the situation was most unfair and trying to Mr. Ferrars—as he himself would grant in regard to its being a trial; while pointing out in his turn that his case would not in any way be alleviated if on the ground that it was hard to begin with, it should be made a great deal worse by the destruction of the hopes with which, at all events so far, it was associated. Then, although Terra declared herself simply unable to recognize that she was honestly in love in return, without which, the notion of engaging herself to be married would be unendurable, there were comparatively sunny gleams during the strange courtship to which she found herself subject, when Ferrars' vows of total abstinence in regard to the usual demonstrations of a lover's feeling were a

little broken into. There had been, for example, a somewhat greater expansion of sentiment than usual when Ferrars bade her good-bye, before going abroad to his appointment for a few weeks, before the visit to Oatfield, in the course of which he took Kinseyle Court *en route.*

"My darling, that may be," he said, when the parting embrace took place; "and, my only love, in any case, you are free as air, though I do carry away these sweet recollections of you. Nothing will impair that freedom but your own deliberate choice and spoken word. So do not be afraid that I shall misunderstand a moment's kind impulse when I am going away."

And with this recognition of her irresponsibility, Terra suffered herself to be magnetised for the moment by her lover's enthusiasm, and to be so far responsive as to tremble for a while on the verge of an unconditional surrender. If Ferrars had been less faithful to the promises and principles of his courtship, he might, perhaps, have carried all before him in that critical instant, and later events might

have fallen out differently; but he loyally tore himself away from her without attempting to snatch an advantage from a transitory weakness of hers, and long bore in his recollection the parting look of tenderness that suffused her glowing beauty, and the moisture that glittered in her eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

UNPROMISING SYMPTOMS.

Oatfield, though bearing that unpretending name, was a stately edifice of historical interest, with a central painted hall for a dining-room, high enough to be dominated by a broad gallery at one end on a level with the bedroom floor, covered by a vaulted and carven roof and lighted with stained-glass windows. A long picture gallery, with two gigantic fireplaces—themselves elaborate works of sculpture—ran along the front of one side of the house on the ground level, and this, enlarging at the further end into an L-shaped morning-room, and that again opening into the largest conservatory of the establishment, constituted the favourite haunt of the family when no special ceremonial claimed the use of the great drawing-room beyond the dining-hall.

"In the gallery, Sir!" Ferrars was told he would find her ladyship, on his arrival about six. And he passed up the room, hearing voices at the further end, though he neither saw nor was seen till he reached the corner where the L turned. Then he came on a group of people with the remains of tea on a low table in their midst, gathered round the entrance to the conservatory. Lady Margreave was knitting in a low armchair. A dark-haired, bright, beady-eyed, high complexioned girl of middle stature was seated at the tea-table, looking up laughing at Terra Fildare, who was standing just within the conservatory. Terra was dressed in a severe, dark-green braided costume —short for walking—with a small round hat of the same colour and cloth fastened on her wavy mass of red gold hair, and in her right hand she held by the barrels—the butt resting on the pavement —a gun. Within the room was a man in country walking costume—dark brown clothes and lighter brown gaiters; tall, slender, with a close black beard and moustache covering his mouth and chin,

and a long, but not prominent nose that gave an impassive, rather saturnine, expression to his otherwise undoubtedly handsome face. The two had evidently come in from the grounds. A footman was standing near Miss Fildare, having apparently been summoned to take charge of the gun.

The greetings incidental to Ferrars' arrival, gave a new turn to the conversation. The gun was given up to the footman, and taken away. The young lady herself shook hands with Ferrars with a certain formality, ensuing perhaps, from a sense of having been surprised in the display of that instinct in her nature with which he was least sympathetic; and then Lady Margreave presented him to the two members of the party with whom he was unacquainted: Miss Maxwell and Count Garciola.

A meeting with Terra under these conditions was a painful contrast for Ferrars, with his recollections of their last parting, but he could only sit down, accept tea, and join in the talk going on. Terra was taciturn, and, grandly beautiful though she could not

help being at all times, was in one of her least amiable moods.

"I planned to have you with us yesterday," said Lady Margreave, kindly disposed to make things as pleasant as possible for her guest, whose constraint and annoyance at having no opportunity of greeting Terra more freely, she readily divined: "The Morrisons came over to dine, and we had some nice music in the evening."

"It was very good of you. I should have been here yesterday, but for a mission I had to fulfil for my sister. Life is full of contrarieties. I spent the evening all by myself at a village inn, when I might have been so much better employed."

Miss Maxwell, turning to the Count, detached herself from the dialogue thus set on foot, and picked up the thread of what they had been talking about before Ferrars joined them.

"I think it must have been your story of the bull-fight that made Terra so bloodthirsty this morning, months before any respectably brought up birds are ready for slaughter. If you had us in Spain, Count

Garciola, we should all be wearing stilettoes and using them on one another in a fortnight, I believe."

"You ladies are armed with stilettoes by nature, Miss Maxwell," said the Count, speaking slowly in a deep, melodious voice, with the least imaginable foreign accent, "and your eyelids are their sheaths. But you do not use them most on one another."

"We have got weapons for one another," said Terra, "but they are not our eyes. Some of us find our tongues more deadly."

Ferrars, only half engrossed with answering Lady Margreave's questions about his adventures *en route*, caught the general flavour of this badinage with a sense of discomfort.

"That," said the Count, "is no doubt why you can dispense with the weapons of our beautiful barbarians in Spain. To carry the dagger, also, would be indeed superfluous."

"I deny that we have any weapons," said Miss Maxwell. "Leave us our northern meekness as our only shield. But it is nice to talk about your southern ferocities. When

is it etiquette for Spanish ladies to stab people?"

"When their lovers are untrue, mademoiselle; but there are ways of keeping lovers true, more certain than the fear of steel—more deadly, as Miss Fildare tells us."

Terra was generally so impatient of sentimental talk, that Ferrars expected her to manifest some kind of contempt for this empty frivolity. But this time she merely answered lightly:

"I would like the steel best. You must send to Madrid and get me a trustworthy poniard."

"What nonsense you children are talking!" said Lady Margreave. "I don't believe Spanish ladies ever use any sharper instrument than a fan. But how did you know where to go, Mr. Ferrars, if your sister merely sent you in search of a young lady without giving you her name or address?"

"She gave me something like the name of the house she belonged to, and I found it out with the help of Burke and the County Directories; and then I, or rather we, for I had a friend with me to share my adventures,

came on the young lady, as it happened, in a deserted old house all by herself, in a trance or a fit. It was quite a romantic incident, I assure you."

"What on earth do you mean. Was she a female hermit, or a Lady of Shalott?"

"By no means; there was a governess in waiting and a gamekeeper. The young lady came to of her own accord, and went away."

"But does she live all by herself in the deserted house with the governess and the gamekeeper? You have made friends with a very extraordinary family!"

"And why did you let her go away?" asked lively Miss Maxwell, joining in the talk. "Wasn't she pretty? or wasn't she so young as she had been?"

"She was a charming girl about eighteen or nineteen, I suppose; and yet I came on north next morning," said Ferrars, "and did not try to find out any more about her than just her name and address, which I sent to Mrs. Malcolm. Then my business was over."

"I do not understand the situation in the least," said Lady Margreave. "But diplomatists are nothing if they are not mysterious."

"And when they don't understand situations themselves," Ferrars replied, "then their solemnity gets most impressive. The mystery of the young lady is so far unfathomable. Why she haunts the deserted house in the dusk of the evening; why her governess is frightened to go near the place; why my friend and I find ourselves waiting in an unknown hall for two ladies whom we don't know; why we hear piercing shrieks and rush up to their assistance, and are then told that there is nothing the matter and get no further explanation, I am wholly unable to say."

"Good gracious!" said Miss Maxwell; "this is the first we hear of the piercing shrieks."

"But who shrieked? and why?" asked Lady Margreave.

"I haven't the least conception," said Ferrars, purposely entangling his narrative for the sake of humouring the position. "I think now it must have been the ghost."

"Is there a lunatic asylum at hand, dear Lady Margreave," asked Miss Maxwell, "in case any of us go crazy?"

"Oatfield will be one by the time Mr.

Ferrars has finished his story. But pray tell us more about the ghost. What was he like?"

"I did not see the ghost. I only heard the scream. Then the ladies came away, and I made myself agreeable to the governess, while my friend talked to the young lady, and the house was locked up."

"And the ladies locked out?" said Miss Maxwell. "Then where do they sleep?—on the roads?"

"I don't know; but it is easy to understand that the ghost may prefer to be left alone at night. And, besides, the house does not belong to the ladies at all. The keeper sees them safely home when they have finished screaming."

"I can quite understand that they want a keeper,' said Miss Maxwell. "Does she look dangerous, the Lady of Shalott, or only melancholy?"

"Not melancholy, at any rate—bright and beautiful in quite a remarkable degree."

"We must try and elicit the truth from him by degrees," said Lady Margreave, "when he is off his guard. You must never ask a

diplomatist a straightforward question. But meanwhile let us have a little fresh air. Will you come to the garden, Terra, and let us gather some roses?"

Miss Maxwell tripped off to get Lady Margreave a hat. The rest went out into the conservatory, and stood about looking at the plants for a little while, then round the outer door; but when the hat was brought, Terra declared that she had been walking about enough, and would go to her room to be lazy till dinner.

"I will do execution on the roses to-morrow, Aunt Mary," she said, "and make a clean sweep of the old ones all through the house."

Ferrars only had the opportunity, as they moved about the conservatory, of exchanging half a dozen words with her.

"You got my letter from the Hague?"

"Yes; I had no need to answer, as I knew you were coming here. Besides, I had nothing fresh to tell you. I like being in the country, you know, and I've merely been enjoying myself."

"I hope you may do that always, wherever you are."

Lady Margreave and Ferrars went out into the grounds by themselves after all, as Terra commanded Miss Maxwell's attendance on herself, and the Count said he was promised half an hour with Sir James.

"He's hooked on to the Spanish embassy, is he not?" said Ferrars.

"Yes; something to do with commercial treaties. He's a great traveller. He knew Terra and her father in India. Spent some time with them, apparently, when they were at Allahabad."

"He was the hero of the tiger episode in India then, I suppose?"

"Yes; Terra has a desperate penchant for excitement of that kind. She is young, and strong, and full of vitality, and will tone down in time, I hope; but for the present I do not think it would be wise to put too heavy a restraint upon her. That is why I humoured her whim this afternoon, when she got excited with the thought of going out with Count Garciola in search of rabbits. You must not suppose that she has been making a practice of that sort of thing."

"I haven't any right to complain in any

case. Whatever she does, lies between her and you."

"It is a trying position for you, Mr. Ferrars, but the way you behave in the matter wins my sympathy, at all events. I hope Terra will learn to be quite responsive in the end, and there is no reason that I can see why she should not. She certainly does not care about anybody else; but perhaps her overabundant vitality prevents her heart from speaking for the moment. At all events, there is nothing petty or unreliable about her. If she does say anything, she is so utterly sincere that you may trust her then altogether."

For the time being, however, Miss Fildare seemed in no mood for discussing any of the questions Ferrars had chiefly at heart. The evening furnished no opportunities for this. They only met again in the drawing-room shortly before dinner, and though Ferrars was directed to take the young lady in, Count Garciola, whose arm had been taken by Lady Margreave, sat on the other side, and the conversation at that end of the table was mixed. During the rest of the evening,

after dinner, Terra kept her friend, Miss Maxwell, by her side. There were other guests in the house; some music went on, some whist, and then there was an adjournment to the billiard-room, whence the ladies took their departure to bed finally, while Ferrars was engaged in the uninteresting duties of a four-handed game.

Next morning, Ferrars snatched an opportunity, as people were breaking up from the breakfast-table, to ask Terra to stroll "round the lake"—a small tarn lying within the grounds behind the house, and encircled by a shrubbery. She wavered a little, then agreed; but last of all a certain Mrs. Appleby, an elderly lady of the party who had not heard the arrangement made, was found to be setting out in search of morning air and gentle exercise in the same direction, and went with them, wholly unconscious at first, at any rate, of being in any way *de trop*. The morning would have been fruitless, from Ferrars' point of view, had not they met Lady Margreave at the further side of the lake. She had come round the contrary way with one of her children, and drew off

Mrs. Appleby, making a suggestion at the same time that Terra and Ferrars should go on and give certain directions from her to the housekeeper at Marton Grange. This was an old house half a mile off, belonging to Sir James, and generally let, though for the moment it was untenanted. The walk through a small plantation and across a couple of fields was no great ordeal in itself on a lovely summer morning; still Terra made excuses. Miss Maxwell was waiting to give her a painting lesson—she had merely come out for a turn round the lake, and had promised to be back directly; so the proposed walk was not carried out, though, as they returned to the house, the two elder ladies went on in front, and Terra found herself alone with Ferrars for a short time in the rear. The opportunity was not altogether a favourable one for entering on serious conversation.

"I have a hundred things to say to you," Ferrars began, after a few of the precious moments had been wasted in silence; "but I must wait to say them till you can give me a longer hearing. I am glad to be near you

again, but I must hope to find you more at leisure some time to explain to you how glad."

"I hate to be driven," said Miss Fildare. "It was such a glaring thing for Aunt Mary to want to send us off that way to Marton."

"It was meant very kindly to me, and I am grateful for the intention."

Miss Fildare had merely prepared herself for the walk by putting on a broad-brimmed straw hat, and the light-coloured dress of a pliant, woollen fabric that she wore, though loosely made, could not disguise the opulent curves of her magnificent figure. Her firmly moulded features, richly tinted complexion, and large steely-blue eyes, of the kind that have their intensity heightened by a darker shade of colour round the outer rim of the iris, with brows and lashes a shade or two darker than the tawny masses of her hair, drew Ferrars' earnest gaze upon her as they walked along; but she looked up with no answering smile, and her lover's recollection of the all-but-decisive tenderness of her look when they last parted, gave a peculiar poignancy to the disappointment he felt at

finding her thus out of reach again and more unconquered than ever.

"Nothing of that kind can be wisely done, at all events," she said in return. "Mr. Ferrars," looking up at him fearlessly and frankly—almost fiercely, "I can see you are of the same mind about me as before. I don't want to be affected about it, but I do want you to leave me alone to choose the time when I will have a serious talk with you during the next few days. It may be stupid of me, but if I feel hunted I can't help turning to bay, as it were. How long are you going to stop here?"

"That depends! but I will stop until I have had that serious talk with you—or, rather, let me correct that. I am not hunting you; I am not going to manœuvre to catch you alone; I will not try to bind you, even by fixing a time for my stay, to give me the serious talk you promise, against your inclination in the end, perhaps. I *am* of the same mind about you as before. Let that be clearly understood; and understand also, what in your utter freedom from affectation and self-consciousness you may hardly realize

always, that I am longing for your companionship—not merely for one talk, but for you altogether—with an intensity that is sometimes almost maddening. But my pride with you—my only pride that is personal to myself in my dealing with you—is that I offer you my great love to take or to leave, and that whatever way you settle the matter, I will hold you in my sight, and in that of the only two people who know of my love for you, entirely in the right and blameless."

"Your behaviour to me is perfect; unless for what was, perhaps, the original mistake of ever noticing me at all. As for me, after all, though the situation may be trying for you, I cannot see that I *am* to blame in any way."

"You are *not*. I do not mean that I will hold you blameless in the sense of screening you from anybody's disapproval: I only mean that I will have the truth in that matter clearly appear and fully acknowledge it myself, if there ever comes a time when there could conceivably be a discussion of the matter."

"I do not know whether that will be or not.

That is what makes me angry with myself. Other girls, I fancy, know, when men propose to them, whether they want to say 'Yes' or 'No.' Perhaps I ought to have said 'No' at once, merely because I was not at once impelled to say 'Yes.'"

"That would neither have been fair nor wise. For you may find it possible to say 'Yes,' Terra, and you may find that beyond such a 'Yes' lies happiness. I do not value myself at any extraordinary rate, and yet—and I have thought over this for hours together, and days—I do not see how you could be unhappy with me, once fairly started with me. I know the reality of my love for you—the singleness of intention in my own character, and its steadfastness in some things."

"I do feel you are honest and true; but——"

They had come back now round the lake to a little rustic bridge leading back on to the lawn before the principal face of the house. The two elder ladies had already crossed this. Terra paused on the bridge and leaned on the balustrade, as though

looking at the water, so as not to bring their conversation to an abrupt close by entering the house.

"But what?"

"I do not think what you say quite follows."

"That was not what you had on your tongue to say a moment ago."

"It's quite to the point, at any rate. Suppose it is not in me to be galvanized, even by your feeling for me, into any emotion worth speaking about in return. Supposing I want something in life"—again she paused and hesitated—"something different from love, some other form of excitement—but if I go on talking of vague fancies, you will misunderstand me."

"It might clear up your own mind to talk. It is so important to you that you should understand things and yourself rightly just now."

"Well, I can't go on talking now, at all events; though I feel in a way as if it did me good to be with you. I'm a strange mixture—we all are, I suppose, one way or another."

She put her hand lying on the bridge-rail over towards him as she spoke. They were too much in view for him to do more than take it for a moment.

"It seems as if I were saying good-bye to you, though we are staying under the same roof. But you must do, my Queen, about this glorious gift of yourself, *as* you think fit—when, and how you think fit."

"Thanks; you are so loyal! But I don't mean that we shall not talk together sometimes, only you must not hunt me."

She looked up with a brighter smile than she had given him since his arrival the previous day as she said this; and then they went up the lawn and into the house.

CHAPTER V.

"IT CANNOT BE."

If Ferrars may not have been in a position during the next few days to congratulate himself as a lover, he had nothing to find fault with in his treatment at Oatfield as a guest. The party was large enough to keep always in activity; there were plenty of picturesque places in the neighbourhood to visit, and adequate means of locomotion in the stables. Terra generally rode when any excursion took place, and whether she was more perfectly splendid in a habit or in an evening dress, was a question which might have left room for argument on both sides.

The explanation, such as it was, that had passed between herself and Ferrars, had cleared away the embarrassment that had clouded her manner when he first came.

Her behaviour to him was cheerful and friendly, though she made no opportunities for much private conversation. She seemed to distribute herself fairly amongst the three or four gentlemen of the party, who were more or less competing for the lighter favours of her companionship; and if Ferrars may have been conscious of a keener sense of annoyance when the pursuit of pleasure—the joyous hunt in which they were all engaged—threw her with Count Garciola especially, than when they set her riding beside or strolling apart with anyone else at a picnic, a lover's intuition, rather than any outward evidence of a special feeling on her part, may have inspired his distrust.

"Have you had any private talk with Terra?" Lady Margreave asked him, when about a week of this sort of life had passed.

They were driving together to the neighbouring station to meet Mrs. Malcolm, who had telegraphed a day or two previously to intimate her wish to come for a few days to Oatfield. She was on terms with Lady Margreave which fully justified her message: "Am wanting a talk with George.

Can you take me in for a few days?" The reply had been: "My dear, of course." And when the day of her arrival had come, Lady Margreave had asked Ferrars to drive with her to meet the train.

"A dozen words or so," Ferrars replied, "the first day I came, in the shrubbery; and, Lady Margreave, it is coming over me gradually, and now it seems that speaking to you on the subject has deepened the impression that I am not destined to have any private talk with her of the kind you mean at all. It is all a very simple transaction in its externals. Terra does not see her way clear to give me what I want. She can't do that to oblige me if she is not impelled to do it for her own sake, and in the absence of such an impulse there is simply nothing more to be said. Then Marian's coming down makes the thing look settled."

"How do you mean? What has that got to do with it?"

"Marian is always drawn to me if I am in any sort of trouble, and her strange presentiments warn her of such matters in advance. You know what Marian is in a measure—

and much better than most people. But nobody knows her as I do—nobody else has had the opportunity. All that she calls her inner life is so sacred to her that she never gossips about it; and a great many things happen to her that she never speaks of to anyone, except me, at all events. Perhaps she does not even tell me everything."

"I know she is under some sort of mystic guidance, and has mysterious warning of future events sometimes—or thinks she has. I have never tried to make up my mind what I think about it. She is such an exquisitely lovable woman, so wise and calm and dignified. I could not bear to think she was under delusions of any kind, and yet that sort of thing is so apt to be a delusion."

"That is how I feel, in a way, only more so, and with a difference. It is not a very logical position of mind, because in theory I concur with you that that sort of thing, as you say, is generally a delusion. But all the same, I believe in Marian altogether, more firmly than I believe in anything else in or out of this world. She's totally unlike any-

one else I ever met or heard about; and then, as regards myself, I *know* she knows, somehow, by her own inner feelings, in a general way, whatever I am feeling strongly about, and whenever anything of importance happens to me. It is useless for anybody to tell me, or for me to tell myself, that it is not reasonable. It has occurred too often for me to doubt the fact. I shall ask her as soon as we are alone together whether anything is going to be the matter, and if she says 'Yes,' I shall know that Terra has made up her mind not to have me, just as certainly as if I had had the whole thing over with her."

Mrs. Malcolm, who duly arrived by the expected train, was tall, statuesque, and handsome in a grave and dignified way, with very regular features, that did not break frequently into smiles, with dark brown hair and eyes, a very smooth and rather pale skin, but slighter movements of her face than would have been noticeable with people of more mobile expression would illuminate it with pleasure or sympathy. She kissed Lady Margreave, and then her brother, with tender sincerity, rather than

with effusion. Then the ladies got into the carriage. George made arrangements about the luggage, and joined them in a few minutes.

Lady Margreave knew the house from which she had just come. Talk about the people there, and about the party then at Oatfield, occupied them during the drive. Nothing was said between the three about the subject that really preoccupied each the most. When they got back it was still the mid-afternoon. Lady Margreave suggested that Ferrars should take his sister for a turn in the grounds before her things came from the railway; and in this way they all strolled through the principal hall—itself a large and habitable room, furnished with sofas and easy-chairs — and through an archway and passage beyond, leading to the glass door in the other face of the house, which gave on a terrace and the lawn sloping down to the lake. Ferrars was in advance, and he went on to open the door, while the ladies stopped to look at a statue recently added to the adornments of the mansion at the foot of the main staircase.

As Ferrars opened the door and passed out, he saw two persons just crossing the rustic bridge already spoken of, leading from the lower end of the lawn into the shrubbery—Terra Fildare and Count Garciola. They seemed to have been pausing on the bridge, which commanded a favourite view of the lake and grounds. The Count was in the act of turning aside from the balustrade on which he had been leaning, and, bending slightly down to speak to his companion as he went, passed a turn in the path with her, and both of them were concealed from view by the trees. Then Lady Margreave went up the staircase, and Mrs. Malcolm joined her brother.

"Come, dear," said George, as he put his hand through her arm and turned with her to the right along the terrace, "you are as welcome as health to a sick man, though I fear your coming is ominous."

"Ah!" she said, with an expression of pain, "if you feel in that way my impressions may have been an omen."

"My feelings, dear Marian, are nothing to the purpose; I can only go upon evidences

of a more direct kind. But tell me about your impressions."

"Let us turn off the gravel," said Mrs. Malcolm, drawing her brother off the terrace on to the grass, and moving by this change of direction towards the bridge. "We can walk round the lake. I have wanted to be near you, and have been uncertain whether that sprang from a warning that you had need of me, or from my own wish to see you and talk over a matter about which I have need of you; but I will tell you of that afterwards. First, about yourself and Miss Fildare; matters are still as they were?"

"I am not so sure of that. Matters may be worse than they were. Terra, you know, was never bound to me by any promise whatever. It was I who insisted on leaving the question open. I merely asked her for certain things, and begged her to take time to consider her reply."

"You want to shield her from the blame of playing fast and loose with you."

"There is no blame reasonably possible in the case. She so far deferred to my wish as to take time to reply; but it would be most

unfair on my part if I tried to argue that that crippled her freedom of action."

"Have you been talking with her much about here?" Mrs. Malcolm asked as they came upon the little bridge, pausing and looking vaguely about.

"It is about the only place where I have talked with her at all seriously since I have been down here; but that is a week ago nearly."

"Strange. I had a sort of impression about her as we came on to the bridge that—that would not correspond with what you say at all. George, does she love anyone else who is here?"

As the question was asked, the sight of the two figures he had just seen pass up the path they were approaching came with painful distinctness before Ferrars's fancy.

"No one else would imagine it, I believe," he said; "but to me it seems but too possible. But, dear Marian, it will add to whatever I may have to suffer if you are the least unjust to her in thought. Remember, she has the full right to love whom she pleases."

"My poor George, so loyal and true, be at

ease about that. I have a new feeling about Terra Fildare—a sort of sorrowful compassion I can hardly describe. I thought I should come to hate her if she refused you; and yet, now that I realize that she has done this in her heart already, I am only conscious of an immense pity for her. To have your fair choice between good and evil, and to choose evil—that is so sad."

"If her choice turns out evil for her," George began; "but I won't be melodramatic. I can't help loathing the man; but even that feeling may be mean. Why should he not try to win her?"

"Who is he?"

"Count Garciola — a Spaniard. They passed over this bridge together a few minutes ago, when you were talking to Lady Margreave. Let us turn back and go somewhere else."

"They passed here together! Now I understand. Poor Terra!"

"But have you got any painful presentiments about her future, Marian?"

"I know nothing of the man," Mrs. Malcolm replied; "I *see* nothing about him."

Then, after a little hesitation, as they turned away together and walked in another direction, "Perhaps even he is not specially to blame. I may only be guided by the feeling that it is so mad of her to fling away the happiness she might have had."

"Talking with you, Marian," Ferrars said after a while, "is like thinking to myself. I can't leave off thinking about it all, or else I should say, Let us talk of it no more."

Their conversation, however, was disjointed and broken up by pauses. After a while Ferrars asked:

"But tell me, Marian, what was the possible need of me that you had in your mind as another reason for wanting to see me?"

"It is not urgent for to-day, dear; but I have need of you, and shall appeal to you as soon as this matter of yours is decided."

"Do you think it is uncertain?"

"I do not; but still you must go through some plain explanations, I suppose. Only I think you might exact these without delay."

Some further talk followed about the promise George had given to force no inter-

view on Miss Fildare, and then of many other minor topics, with the major subject ever and anon coming to the surface. When they came back to the house—round to the front again—and returned into the principal hall, they found a number of people gathered there, including Terra and the Count. There was a clatter of voices and laughter going on round the cage of a parrot, who had been giving vent to some general remarks that his admirers had found entertaining. Terra looked even more brilliant than usual. This time she was in a summer shepherdess kind of costume—a pinkish flavour about it, from rose-coloured flowers in the pattern, and pink bows at the throat and elbows, and a looped up skirt. She was altogether bright, sunny and joyous. She had been among the busiest with the parrot, but she left him to greet Mrs. Malcolm as the brother and sister entered. The contrast between the two women—both handsome as they were, both rather tall and commanding in figure—was very striking, and they might have been painted, as they stood together, as symbolical figures of night

and morning. Terra's gaiety was quenched a little, however, as she took Mrs. Malcolm's hand—not by any reproachful look she encountered, but by thoughts which arose as they met. From Mrs. Malcolm she glanced at her brother, who said a few commonplace words to her in an ordinary tone.

"And now," said Lady Margreave, "whoever can tear themselves from Polly, will find tea at the end of the gallery. But I shall go upstairs with you, dear, first"—to Mrs. Malcolm—"and see that you are properly provided for."

"Mr. Ferrars," said Terra, turning to him as the group thus dispersed in various directions, "unless you are absolutely perishing for want of that tea, you must first come and see my picture of the old beech-tree. I finished it this morning, and it is on view in Lady Margreave's morning-room. I want your serious and earnest criticism."

The picture of the beech-tree really was in the room, but neither thought of it as they went up a side passage and into the room indicated, which was a little distance off. When they were alone, she spoke :

"I am *so* sorry, Mr. Ferrars, but it can't be."

"I know."

He leaned with his back against the mantelpiece and his arms outstretched on each side along the marble slab. She had come up near to him, with her hands together in sincere and earnest sympathy for him. It would have been almost natural for him to have bent forward to fold her in a farewell embrace, and the impulse to do this half asserted itself in action, but he repressed it and remained still.

"How do you know? What do you mean?"

"I suppose in some strange way my love for you has made me aware of the crisis in your heart that has settled this matter—to my bitter sorrow."

Terra's brow contracted, but more in anxiety than anger, though she began as if to repudiate the idea that she was to blame for having caused this sorrow.

"How could I help what has happened?" Then she checked herself, real regret for the pain she was giving overmastering the strong

impulse of her nature to assert herself always in the right. "But I dare say I was to blame for misunderstanding my own feelings. I was a fool not to know if a girl does not feel eager to say 'Yes,' in such a case, she ought to say 'No' at once. I see that now."

"That is as it may be," said Ferrars, quietly enough, though shrinking inwardly at the suggestion embodied in her words that a later experience had taught her how a girl felt when 'Yes' would be the appropriate answer. He moved from the mantel piece and sat down in a chair close by. "It seemed best to wait while there was the faintest chance—and that chance once seemed near——"

"I had intended to say so much to you—to explain things, and to argue that it must be the best for you in the end to marry some one unlike me. And now I feel so sorry. It is like insulting you to say anything, except, that I am so *very* sorry, for your sake, that it cannot be as you wish."

"You could not say anything that would be any good, of course. It is kind of you to

feel so keenly about it; but nothing you would say would seem insulting—it would only be quite in vain. I have been mortally wounded, Terra, on that side of my nature, and the rest of my life will be a physical existence without a soul in it. But that is fate. I feel earnestly that it is no fault of yours. That is the only thing that excuses me for speaking in this way, at the risk of provoking regret on your part. However, I would rather, if you will, that you should think of me as true to my ideal love for you, and incurable in a loyal sort of way, whatever happens. It won't amount to anything, of course; but I should like to think that you were absolutely sure, at any time through life, you could call upon me to do anything for you that you might want done; of course, without any notion of having a claim upon you, on that account, for reward or thanks—in a loyal way, I mean. I am talking awkwardly, but never mind. It doesn't matter—nothing matters now, in one way. Do you go abroad?"

"I *must* lead a larger, a more exciting life."

The phrase revealed so much as to the impulses under which she was acting, and as to the little security for her happiness that resided in such a love as that her wilder aspirations had conjured up, that Ferrars vividly remembered, as she spoke, his sister's words about the great compassion Marian had felt for her instead of resentment. A sense that she might be sealing her choice of an evil destiny in giving way to her craving for excitement came upon her lover's heart with the force of a sudden emotion, and almost overcame his self-control. He paused a little while before replying, and she fancied that it was his own pain that was nearly too much to bear.

"Oh, I do hope so earnestly you will find some one to love less of a savage than I am, who will make you happy after all."

"Spare me that wish, my lost love, and remember what I have said."

She moved a step back in the direction of the door. Their conversation was really over, and there was nothing more to be added. But she lingered, hardly knowing how to get away without seeming cruelly abrupt.

"Good-bye," she said, putting out her hand.

"Good-bye," he answered, sadly and gently, getting up from his seat and taking her hand, "and Heaven shield you!" Then he put his other arm round her and kissed her once upon the cheek, she accepting the farewell caress, as it were, with humility. He released her at once, and she went away, slowly closing the door after her.

Ferrars walked to the window, and looked out and noticed a gardener's assistant at a little distance, sweeping up fallen leaves and putting them into a wheelbarrow; and then noticed, as a strange psychological fact, that he had been observing the man as if idly *insouciant*. "I know I shall never get over this," he thought to himself, "and yet I feel more as if I were tired than anything else. I can't face those people at tea. I had better go up to my own room."

He went upstairs with the feeling that something had happened that he would pay attention to presently, but with a numbed sensation of not realizing the truth yet. The physical craving for tobacco, incident on

the strain his nerves had gone through, asserted itself, and he filled and lighted a pipe. Then, in a few moments, a wave of painful emotion passing through his heart made him throw it aside; and it struck him that the small illustration afforded by his behaviour with the pipe would show how all occupations and distractions to which he might turn now in life, would, in the same way, excite impatient disgust directly afterwards.

A knock came at his door in a few minutes, and he called "Come in," knowing well who was there. Nothing but the peculiar relations existing between Mrs. Malcolm and her brother—relations altogether transcending the mere tie of blood, would have justified her in disturbing him just then, or have made her presence endurable. As it was, her coming seemed a matter of course.

"Shall I tell you now what it was I wanted you to do for me, George?" she asked, without saying a word about the interview that had just taken place, and sitting down on a sofa at right angles to the fireplace—"or would you rather I put it off till to-morrow?"

"I'm afraid I'll be too stupid to understand, dear," he answered; "or else to-day and to-morrow are all one."

"To-morrow will be worse than to-day, dear. The after-taste of sorrow is always the worse; and she is very attractive. I feel, as I told you, more sorry for her than angry, after all. It is not what I expected to feel; but I may have absorbed some of your feeling into my own nature. We could not feel very differently about this matter, any more than about anything else."

"If you had felt very differently, that would certainly have made the thing worse for me. How wise you are, Marian, on my behalf. I wonder if there is another sister in the world, who in a case like this would have had the sagacity not to abuse Terra? But then it is not sagacity in the calculating sense, with you. It is the perfection of true sympathy."

"I suppose that is so, really. Certainly I am not acting a part in saying what I do."

"I wonder what it was turned her, Marian? She was *mine* when I parted from

her on going back last to the Hague. Looking back now, I think I might have won a promise from her then, that might have guarded her from this."

"If you had," Marian said, "it might have saved her."

In the completeness of her sympathy, she was thus capable of even joining him in blaming himself for the bygone error.

"It is useless to look back upon it now; and yet, perhaps, if that is really so, there is one life—mine—perhaps two, wrecked for want of promptitude and decision at the right moment, for a single error of judgment; and that was, after all, a sort of overstrained delicacy."

They went on for some time with vague speculation of this kind. Then, eventually, Mrs. Malcolm remarked:

"I could never get any guidance as to how you ought to act with Terra, though I tried so hard to get a hint. I once thought I was going to have a clue, but it never came."

"How do you mean?"

"I talk of this with no one but you, George; you understand?"

"I know, dear," Ferrars answered gravely. "It is sacred for you, so it is sacred for me, though the thing itself is quite incomprehensible."

"Incomprehensible, but not incredible, I hope, George."

"I believe in you, you know, so absolutely that I believe through you in anything you believe in. I wish my feeling about this were more complete, for both our sakes."

"I suppose that is the nearest you can come to at present. But at all events, you understand that my Guardian Angel is as real to me as any living friend I have—as real to me as you are. In a sort of way, more real; for sometimes I feel very strongly that to one another in this world we are masked somehow. When we come to know each other, in another, better world, we shall find that we are something different from what we now imagine. People who truly love one another will not be disappointed at the change—quite otherwise, I expect. The change will be some kind of revelation and unfoldment of new knowledge about one another, which will probably be very delight-

ful. But still there will be a change, and for that reason, two loving people cannot know one another thoroughly. Now, it seems to me, as if I already knew my Guardian, as she *is* in actual reality in the higher world. When my turn comes to go there too, I shall find her there as I know her now; only instead of getting mere glimpses of her, I shall be with her altogether—see her face to face without any veil between us—as there is always when I see her now."

"Do you mean by a veil the difficulty of seeing her distinctly?"

"I mean by that what you say, and also an actual visible veil she seems to wear; that, I suppose, is intended to symbolize the difficulty. Perhaps it is impossible for her to make her features quite distinct to me while I am looking at her with the eyes of the flesh, so she shows herself to me with a veil. But it is a veil, you must understand, of the faintest and most diaphanous kind, so that I seem almost to know her face."

"Has she appeared to you often of late?"

"Several times; and always with the same object in view. She wishes me to

become acquainted with the girl I asked you to find out for me."

"I thought you said you had been asking about my relations with Terra?" Ferrars said recurring to the subject nearest his heart.

"I sought to know about that, of course; but without success."

"What was the clue you thought yourself about to obtain?"

Mrs. Malcolm paused a little, as if in embarrassment; then she said:

"I do not understand it, George, and you must not misunderstand it. I feel that she could not neglect any promise she made me. She could not speak idly, and yet it would seem as if she had not told me what she wanted to tell. She said, when I besought her for guidance in the matter nearest to you, and therefore nearest to me, that she would give it at the fitting time. And yet, now, the time for advice in the matter has altogether gone by. It bewilders me, for it is my religion, or a part of my religion, that she cannot err."

George was silent. He would not say

anything to wound his sister's most delicate susceptibilities; and yet he felt that in this matter her spirit-guide had mocked her confidence.

"At all events," he said, "I have no misleading advice to complain of; and whatever I have done wrong, has been done through my own folly."

"Don't dwell on that, George, dear," Mrs. Malcolm pleaded. "Sooner or later, I shall come to understand what she meant. It may be that no good advice was possible—that what has taken place had to be accomplished. I do not know—but my Guardian must know—I have told you this simply because I will never keep anything from you; but you will not let it weaken your readiness to help me in following her guidance in the other matter?"

"My dear Marian, whatever you wish me to do, I will do on that account. I do not want any other motive."

"Well, it must be so for the present. I want you to come with me, when I go in search of this girl. I do not know yet why I particularly want that, except that *she*

wishes it. That is enough for me. And for you—you say you will do what I wish for my sake."

"It will be easy for me to go anywhere with you, Marian. There is no one else I could bear to be with just now. When are we to go—and where?"

"I suppose you would be glad to go from here—the sooner the better?"

"Certainly; the sooner the better. To-morrow, better than the next day; to-day, better than to-morrow. But that is impossible, I fear."

"Lady Margreave will understand, and anyone else will accept any explanation she chooses to give. Let it be to-morrow. To-day, of course, is impossible. It is getting to be evening already."

The dinner-party and the evening afterwards proved less trying in fact than in anticipation for the brother and sister. With care for Ferrars' feelings, Miss Fildare effaced herself as much as possible; was taken in to dinner by an entirely neutral guest, spoke scarcely at all with Count Garciola, who was allotted to Miss Maxwell

at table, and monopolised by that young lady as far as possible afterwards.

Ferrars went into the billiard-room after dinner. Lady Margreave, who had been apprised by Mrs. Malcolm of what had occurred, avoided any of the kindly devices she had been hitherto employing to throw Terra and Mr. Ferrars together, and the evening wore away.

By the connivance of their hostess, the brother and sister slipped off quietly the following morning to the station, and no one noticed their departure. Ferrars had no other leave-taking with Terra than that which had already taken place in the morning-room.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE UNION ACCOMPLISHED.

About a week after Mrs. Malcolm and Ferrars left Oatfield, Edith Kinseyle, as she sat at breakfast with her father and Miss Barkley, received a letter from a country neighbour, Mrs. Graham-Lee. Her acquaintance with this lady was so slight, that she began to make surprised comments as she read the letter.

"Papa, dear, have you, oh! *have you* been paying marked attentions to Mrs. Graham-Lee? Why does she suddenly want to come and see me? Why does she thirst to visit Kinseyle Court? She cannot expect to find a fox there in July. Why does she want to introduce her friends to 'the intellectual lion of the neighbourhood?' Can you really imagine that Mrs. Graham-Lee knows Arabic from Choctaw?"

"And who is Mrs. Graham-Lee, Birdie? and what does she want?"

"Oh, Papa! what dreadful dissimulation. She is coming to Compton Wood to call, and it can't be for me, for she barely knows I exist, and probably thinks of me as aged five. She must have designs upon your heart. It might be a very suitable match, Papa. She belongs to hugely rich people in New York, but is quite settled now in England; Midhamptonshire property — and a blooming widow of forty. But you would have to hunt at least three times a week."

"Is there such a person, Miss Barkley?" asked Mr. Kinseyle. Edith's bright spirits made the sunshine of Compton Wood, and her father always played up willingly to her badinage when they were together. "Or has Edith invented her?"

"Poor Papa! I am afraid you must be far gone. The disguise is too thin. But what's this she says at the end? 'My friend, Mrs. Malcolm, is a stranger to you; but her brother, who is with her and staying with me for a few days, says he has had the

honour of a very informal presentation to you already. His name is Ferrars.' "

Miss Edith was caught in her own trap as she read out the conclusion of the note. The name was instantly recognised by both ladies; and even Mr. Kinseyle, though no close observer, caught the inflection of surprise in Edith's voice.

"So, then," he remarked, though more in the tone of the previous banter than as taking the matter seriously, "Birdie appears to understand everything as soon as a gentleman's name is mentioned. And who is Mr. Ferrars? I hope he is well connected, and with property in Midhamptonshire."

"My acquaintance with Mr. Ferrars, Papa?"—Edith began as in exculpation; but then the humour of the situation caught her fancy, and she finished the sentence in a tone of mock complacency, "is very satisfactory, so far. I really don't know that he has a fault."

"Goodness, Edith!" began Miss Barkley, "why——"

"My dear B., I am con*vinced* that you know nothing against Mr. Ferrars either,

and you know him much better even than I."

"And who is Mr. Ferrars, Birdie? Who does he belong to, and what is he like?"

"Let us be systematic, Papa. I can't answer all those questions at once. What is he like? Let us deal with that first. Describe him, B.; you know him best, as I have said."

"Oh, I don't know. He is just an ordinary gentlemanly kind of young man."

"Just an ordinary young man! Why, I assure you, Papa, the only time we were all three together, B. fairly monopolised him. I could not get in a single word. And I, who was simply *out of it*, can tell you more than that. Mr. Ferrars is a reasonably tall young man, with an unmistakable flavour of good society. Thick brown hair, coming forward and rather heavy, don't you know, at the top of the forehead; short beard and moustache—not a a great straggling bunch, but neat and curly" (making appropriate gestures with her fingers round her own rose-red lips and dimpled, rounded chin), "very bright brown eyes, and a quick impulsive sort of

manner. Apt to be carried away by his feelings, I should think, as B. can tell you, no doubt, better than I."

"I will tell the story my way, if you like, Mr. Kinseyle," said Miss Barkley, making a conscientious professional protest against all these insinuations, but aware that submission to Edith's statements, as also to her will in all things, was her first practical rule of behaviour.

"Birdie seems to know all about the matter," said Mr. Kinseyle. "And who is he, besides being——?"

"Besides being an ornament to society. Ah, now I can tell no more. We must refer to B."

"But how does Miss Barkley know anything about him. Isn't he some one you have met with the Miltenhams?"

Miss Kinseyle kept up the mystification as long as it afforded her amusement, and then brushed it all lightly away.

"We don't either of us know Mr. Ferrars at all, Papa, dear. That is the whole explanation of the affair. But he and another gentleman with him were visitors to Kin-

seyle Court one day we were there, and they were presented to us—if by anybody—by Mr. Squires. It was so recently that I happened to remember the name."

Mr. Kinseyle was not given to imagining complications that were not pressed on his attention, and hardly remembered the letter of the morning when the afternoon brought the expected guests. Edith and Miss Barkley watched for their arrival from a little arbour near the house, under two or three tall trees beside the miniature lawn, which commanded a view of the drive. Mrs. Graham-Lee, a prosperous widow of American origin, fond of society and horseflesh, drove up with her guests about four o'clock in a comfortable landau, and then Miss Kinseyle, attended by her maid-of-honour, went to meet them in the drawing-room.

"I have been longing to have Mrs. Malcolm come and stay with me for ever so long," said the voluble widow, "and here she has dropped into my arms at last, like ripe fruit, of her own accord. Didn't know she could come a fortnight ago, but now she's here I want to show her all the charms

of the neighbourhood, so of course I have brought her to see *you*, Miss Kinseyle. I wonder would your father come over and bring you to dine with us one evening? We must talk about that seriously before we part. But, do you know, my dear, it is perfectly appalling how time flies. I doubt if you were born when I was first brought to Midhamptonshire, and here you are looking like a young Queen already. Doesn't she look like a young Queen, Mrs. Malcolm?" and then, before the other lady had time to reply, she rattled on with other talk about the Miltenhams, in whose care in London she had last seen Edith, and so on.

Edith and Mrs. Malcolm had been gazing at one another, meanwhile, with eager interest on both sides. Edith had previously been thinking more of Mr. Ferrars as the central personage of the afternoon, and less of him on his own account than as a possible link of renewed communication with his friend; but though on the first entrance of the callers he had been formally presented, as well as Mrs. Malcolm, it was to the lady's face that Edith felt her gaze attracted as if by some powerful

influence; and while Mrs. Graham-Lee kept up her stream of chatter, she remained with her eyes fixed on those of her, so far, silent visitor.

"It is a great pleasure to me to meet you," said Mrs. Malcolm at the first opportunity, and the tones of her voice—always sweet, dignified and impressive—imparted a peculiar thrill to Edith's delicately sensitive nerves. A sense of eager curiosity took possession of her, and it was with more earnestness than the occasion seemed to claim that, when Mrs. Malcolm finished her sentence by adding, "I have heard of you before to-day," she asked:

"From whom? Where did you hear of me?"

"I am sure we must have many mutual friends," replied Mrs. Malcolm, "besides my brother, you know," she said with a smile—"if he may be reckoned one."

"You are none the worse for . . . your adventures of the evening when I first had the pleasure of meeting you?" asked Ferrars.

Mrs. Graham-Lee was engaged in telling Miss Barkley some facts connected with her

early life in New York, to which she had passed, by a rapid transition, from noticing the peculiar position of independence in which the circumstances of her life had placed Edith, and the other three were together.

"Much the better for them, thank you. By-the-bye, did you think me *quite* insane when you saw me in the moonlight that evening, or only having a fit? But poor Squires was dreadfully disappointed at not seeing either you or your friend again the following day. He thought you were burning with impatience to explore Kinseyle Court from the roof to the cellars, and you never came back at all."

Ferrars answered with lightly-worded apologies. They grouped themselves about the room—Mrs. Malcolm and Edith side by side on a sofa, the others slightly separated; but the room was too small to allow of any confidential talk. Eventually a movement to the garden, suggested by Mrs. Malcolm, and then Mr. Kinseyle's appearance on the scene, afforded an opportunity for a little dispersion. Mrs. Malcolm and Edith moved away, apart from the others.

"I cannot explain to you all at once, Miss Kinseyle, how interesting it is to me to make your acquaintance. But you, I am sure, will understand what it is to be guided in one's action by a higher influence."

The words were not very explicit, but Edith's intuitions were quick. And it was one of her sweetest peculiarities, that though her manner was generally bright and vivacious, it responded instantly to a serious appeal when this touched her inner and more exalted nature. It was with a sweet and earnest gravity, in tune with Mrs. Malcolm's allusion, that she replied:

"I know what it is to *feel* a higher influence. I can see that you will be able to understand me. What a delight! This accounts for the extraordinary effect you have had upon me from the first moment I looked at you. And this, then, is the vindication of Mr. ——, of the prophecy made by your brother's friend."

"My brother's friend? Oh, the gentleman who was with him when he first saw you—Mr. Marston."

"Yes, that was the name. He told me

much that was very interesting in the short conversation I had with him. Do you know him?"

"Poor Mr. Marston? Yes, I know him. I forgot he had been with my brother when you met."

"Why do you call him poor?"

"He has had unusual troubles in life, which have saddened him greatly. He is almost a recluse, but much attached to George."

Miss Kinseyle waited to hear more, but Mrs. Malcolm was not communicative on this topic, and the young lady was shy of pressing for further information. Mrs. Malcolm, on the other hand, questioned her.

"But what was the prophecy you spoke of that Mr. Marston ventured upon?"

"That I should very soon meet people who would understand my inner life and visions, and explain them to me. You seem to have come by appointment with destiny."

"We shall understand one another, and I shall not be the one to enjoy that the least. We have not time to exchange many words yet, but an exchange of sympathy between

us may be instantaneous, for we both have some attributes, I suspect, in common."

"Oh, it is so intensely interesting to meet some one who can explain what only bewilders me, though it is so glorious. Do you also see——?"

She hesitated how to finish the sentence, but Mrs. Malcolm accepted it as it stood.

"Yes, I also see; but I am too deeply filled with rapture when that happens to seek any other explanation than my perfect faith supplies."

"But you have had more experience than I. Can I do anything to assist—*her*—to show herself to me again? Shall you be able to tell me what happens to you?"

"Yes; I shall be able to tell you as I can tell no one else—not even my brother; for though he sympathizes with me perfectly, and believes in me perfectly, he does not realize what I tell him by the light of his own experience, as you will be able to do."

"Tell me, what is the vision that you see?"

"An exquisite spiritual being whom I call and think of as my Guardian Angel. I do not

mean to assert anything about her by calling her that; I only know that she comes to me from time to time, and especially at difficult crises of my life, and that her influence and guidance are always for good, and that her presence always strengthens and refreshes me."

"It is like the Countess with me."

"The Countess?"

"I think of her as that. There was an ancestress of our family who lived in the room where I have best seen my glorious vision, and where I seem drawn always by a sort of sweet fascination. I don't know, but it always seems to me the spirit of the Countess."

"How does she seem to say about that? Have you made an effort to know?"

"What a revelation it is about you—the mere way you put the question! I know what you mean by 'seems to say.' I could not tell you what her words were, or if there were any, but it has seemed to me that she approved when I have felt sure she was the Countess."

"We shall have so much to recognise in

one another's experience, I can see. And does the emotion envelope you? You know what I mean."

"Of course I do; and it is just that. One seems to be bathed in a kind of ecstasy that is like no other feeling imaginable. Don't you remember the effect for days afterwards?"

"I never forget it. I am always longing for it; but you *feel* it as it were for days afterwards, before it quite disappears. And don't you find that it is always right to do as she tells you?"

"I don't know," replied Edith, "that she has ever told me to do anything definite, that I could understand. You know, it is only quite lately that I have seen her distinctly when I have been awake. Before that, and since, I constantly dream about her, and indeed it seems to me sometimes as if it was not a dream at all while it is going on; but then I wake after it is over, as if it had been. That puzzles me."

"But she does not talk to you in definite words?"

"I think she does at the time, but it seems

as if I had forgotten afterwards. That annoys me excessively. But when I saw her in the library at Kinseyle Court, there was one thing she said that I remember: 'You will soon know more.' I do not know what it refers to, and most of the time I was simply enraptured at the sight of her, and did not seem as if I had sense to say anything or ask any questions."

"'You will soon know more,'" repeated Mrs. Malcolm reflectively. "Yes; that hinges perfectly on what has been said to me: but I do not know yet exactly how the promise is to be fulfilled, though it must be that I am appointed in some way to aid in its fulfilment."

"Do you mean, then, that what you have been having, relates to me in any way?"

"It relates to you in the most urgent and emphatic way. If I had found you less prepared, I should have hesitated to say that at once; but you are evidently prepared for anything—prepared to understand everything, I mean—that I have to tell. For some time past, all the guidance I have received has been directed to this meeting with you. I

have been told to find you out, and communicate with you, and since, as you well understand, my Guardian never gave me your name and address as a living person would—or rather as a person living in the flesh would have done—I have had no little trouble, I assure you, in obeying her injunction."

"Of course; I see. I was the object of your brother's quest when he first came to this neighbourhood?"

"Exactly."

"But what do you think the Spirit, your Guardian, wishes me to do?"

"I have not any idea as yet. My feeling has rather been that I am required to render you some service, but what that is I do not yet understand. The explanation will come now, I have no doubt. So far I have been able to carry out my first orders."

"And your next are to clear my vision by working with me. What! I beg your pardon for putting the idea in that way. It sounds very absurd for me to say what your orders are. I spoke without thinking."

"My dearest child, you spoke under some sort of direction perhaps, without knowing

it. If you did not deliberately frame the sentence in that way, that is all the more likely. I am more than willing to work with you. That is it, to begin with, at all events, of course. For some reason, your senses, beautiful and delicate as they are, are not fully awake. Your own Guardian cannot direct them freely. I have been longer under this sort of influence than you have yet, and contact with me may have some magnetic effect upon you; that will clear your vision in the way you say."

They had been walking up and down a long, straight path, running past the back of the house and along the lawn which lay at one side. They came just at this time within calling distance of the others, who were gathered round the arbour, and some seats out on the grass at the further end; and Mrs. Lee broke into their conversation with an inquiry about the next proceedings contemplated.

"How about our visit to Kinseyle Court, Mrs. Malcolm? Would you like to go; and would Miss Kinseyle like to come with us?"

Miss Kinseyle at once fell back into her

usual bright, every-day manner, declared herself delighted, and was shortly afterwards carried off in the landau, Mrs. Graham-Lee going security for her safe restoration to Compton Wood. She sat beside Ferrars on the front seat of the carriage, and for politeness' sake he did his best to talk to her as they went along, though the scenes he had gone through at Oatfield had left effects on him which made even the grace and beauty of his companion a mere circumstance of the moment, that failed in any way to thrill his emotions. It was with a sober, brotherly courtesy, rather than the spirit of incipient gallantry which generally warms a man's behaviour to an interesting girl, that he asked her now about the evening on which he had first seen her. Edith was not eager to go into details, with the double check of Mrs. Malcolm's and Mrs. Lee's presence to restrain her, but was answering some of Ferrars's questions with vague and almost evasive replies, when Mrs. Lee herself supplied the antidote to the embarrassment of her presence by pouring forth an account of some curious experiences of her own.

These merely had to do with a dream that was verified; but the voluble widow was deeply impressed by the circumstance, and claimed the fullest attention of her companions for all its details. The conversation arising out of this narrative filled up the time the drive lasted.

"I could have wished," Mrs. Malcolm said to Edith, on their arrival at the Court, as they stood aside for a moment together in the hall, "that we had come here by ourselves; but we must hope to do that some other time."

"Perhaps I could just show you the place where I saw her, while the others are looking at the museum?"

A room at the Court which contained an accumulation of Roman stones, together with banners and weapons of the Middle Ages, bore this title, and was supposed to be one of the principal features of interest about the place for visitors.

This arrangement was effected after a while. The museum was on the other side of the hall from the library, and opened into the principal drawing-room of the stately

old mansion, whose faded glories of gold and amber brocade greatly caught the fancy of the American lady. She lay back in the corner of an old sofa that commanded a view of a knight in full armour, or, rather, of the full armour without the knight, through the open doors of the museum, and of the rather neglected but still beautiful grounds through the drawing-room windows, and discoursed on the relative merits of American energy and English picturesqueness. Mrs. Malcolm and Edith, who had not followed her into the drawing-room, retreated at this juncture, leaving Ferrars to play listener, and made their way to the library.

"It was just here I have seen her," Edith explained, setting open the door of the Countess's room, and standing before it on the slightly lower level of the library. "It was later than this, however; dusk, and the moon was shining. And she stood, the time I saw her plainly, just here;" and Edith went up the two steps and stood for a little while in the doorway. "Come in here for awhile, Mrs. Malcolm. I used to sit here, mostly, in the window-seat and read; and it

was here, indeed, that I first fancied I saw something, and got the idea it was the Countess's spirit. Poor Miss Barkley was so terrified when I told her!'

"People are always terrified about spiritual appearances, if they have no natural psychic affinities in their nature; and to them it is amazing that we are not." Then after a little time spent in further talk and in looking about the room, Mrs. Malcolm said: "What do you think? Might it be possible we should get some sign if we stood together where you last saw her?"

"Let us try!" replied Edith eagerly, and they went back into the library.

Edith pushed a small couch into a convenient position, and they sat down on this side by side. By an impulse, to which Edith quickly responded, Mrs. Malcolm took one of her hands and held it on her lap, and put her other arm round her. They sat so undisturbed for some ten minutes, but were not rewarded by any manifestation. Then they heard the cheerful voice of Mrs. Lee approaching, and got up.

"Do you know," Edith said, "I could

imagine some influence comes into me from you? It is very slight, but I can feel a something different in this arm that you have been holding the hand of, from the other."

"I do not think I am magnetic," Mrs. Malcolm answered. "I am in the habit of thinking of myself rather as sensitive to magnetism than productive of it; my brother is for me the magnetic battery at which I refresh myself sometimes. By-the-bye, that is an idea. If he were to mesmerise you here on the scene of your former vision, that might enable you to see."

"I shall be very glad."

"I would rather we had been alone; still, Mrs. Lee will not interfere with us, really; especially if I explain to her."

Mrs. Lee and Ferrars coming in just then interrupted them. After a little interval of general talk as they looked about the library, the couples were rearranged, and Ferrars was left with Edith in the Countess's room.

"You ought to have a web here and a looking-glass. When I told the people I was on my way to see, when I was last here,

of the adventure I had had on my way, they spoke of you as the Lady of Shalott, and I have thought of you by that title ever since."

"But I do not in the *least* feel so sentimental as Elaine. I think she made the greatest possible mistake. There was not enough to die for in her case."

"Don't you think love enough to die for? But in truth," added Ferrars, hurrying on as if to deprecate a direct answer to his question, "I do not see that it is, or can be, for a woman. Perhaps the knights are to blame, and they have gone off frightfully since King Arthur's days. Certainly I cannot imagine a nineteenth century lover worth dying for!"

"And still less a nineteenth century young lady."

"C'est selon."

He uttered the phrase with a half sad, half contemptuous intonation, and not with the implication that might have turned it into a compliment.

Edith said:

"You put it very nicely; but I am afraid the nineteenth century young lady is too

painfully sensible, for the most part, to be very sentimental: or, in other words, she is too selfish and small to be capable of Elaine's beautiful folly. If she is sometimes idealized by her lover, the colour all comes from his own imagination."

"And sometimes she absorbs the colour, it may be, and becomes what her lover has made her in his fancy. Sometimes, of course, she does not—for various reasons."

"That is a pretty idea; though you put a bitter end to it. It would be the magnetism of love that fructifies in the heart."

"Or fails to?"

"Or may never be developed. I do not suppose all the knights are magnetic now, any more than in Elaine's time."

"So much the better for them, perhaps; the ordinary destinies of people in our time do not match well with emotions of romantic intensity."

Mrs. Malcolm and Mrs. Lee here came up into the inner room.

"George," said Mrs. Malcolm, "I want you to see if you can put Miss Kinseyle into a mesmeric sleep. Here, in this old room

that she is fond of, the results might be especially interesting."

"If Miss Kinseyle would like me to try, of course," said Ferrars, rather taken by surprise. "But I do not think much of my powers that way, you know."

"You can influence me; and it might be the same with her. Indeed, I feel almost sure it might be."

Mrs. Lee was deeply interested, and arranged herself in a commanding position to observe what took place.

Miss Kinseyle was made comfortable in the large old velvet armchair, and as this was too low in the back for her to rest her head, Mrs. Malcolm sat just beside and partly behind, with her arm extended so that Edith could lean her head against her shoulder. Ferrars held her hands for a little while, laid his own on her forehead, and made passes for some time, but without any startling effect.

"It does not make me feel sleepy," said Miss Kinseyle; "though it makes me feel odd; somehow, I get impressions of a curious kind."

"Can you describe them at all?" Mrs. Malcolm asked after a little pause, during which Edith frowned with the effort to understand something that was perplexing her.

"That is just the difficulty. There is a man and a woman in the matter somehow. I don't *see* them, you know; but the idea of them comes before me, as if of people I have seen some time or other in reality. It seems to me that they are quarrelling. There is such an atmosphere of anger about the whole feeling—as if the woman reproaches the man bitterly, and then turns and rushes away from him."

"What are they like to look at?"

"The woman or the girl is tall, with red gold hair low on her forehead—massive—altogether like marble."

The description gave a simultaneous thrill of excitement both to Ferrars and his sister.

"What is the man like?" asked Ferrars.

"Dark—very dark. That's all I feel about him. Black as night. Does it all mean anything to you? I don't understand it in the least."

"It is very bewildering," Ferrars replied. "It might mean something. At least, I can partly identify the people you speak of. But you do not tell us much about them."

"I have nothing to tell, I am afraid, unless it is two or three words. And I don't know how those came into my head."

"What are they?"

"As I tell you, it may be the merest nonsense. I don't know why I thought of those words in connection with the woman; but the words were: 'George, George! how can you ever forgive me?'"

Ferrars had desisted from all further mesmeric attempts during the conversation, and sat down now on the edge of the table, saying nothing, but puzzled as well as excited. Mrs. Malcolm looked disturbed and annoyed.

"It is no use to go on at present," she said. "There seems to be some cross influence at work. This was not at all the kind of result I was hoping for."

"Well," Mrs. Lee frankly observed, "there isn't much result of any sort about that. Won't she mesmerise?"

"It is only with my sister that I am any good at that sort of thing," Ferrars remarked. "We ought to have Sidney Marston here. He really can mesmerise people, I fancy; and he knows all about such matters."

"He seemed to me to know a great deal," Miss Kinseyle promptly added. "It would be very interesting for him to try. But then he is not at hand, unfortunately."

Mrs. Malcolm got up with a little sigh, making no other remark.

"Who's Sidney Marston?" asked Mrs. Lee. "I don't know him, do I?"

"Very likely not," Ferrars answered; "but I don't know anybody better worth knowing. He has all sorts of knowledge, and all sorts of good qualities. I look upon him as my greatest friend. But he's a great recluse."

"What's the matter with him? Has he got a history?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"Well, for one thing," answered Ferrars, "he is very keen upon occult studies of all sorts. Belongs to some queer societies in London that keep themselves desperately

secret. I never press him for reasons about anything."

Mrs. Lee now suggested that they had better be going home, and they went out to the carriage.

Ferrars was preoccupied and thoughtful during the drive back to Compton Wood. Edith and Mrs. Malcolm said little to one another, but this little showed them to be both revolving means for another speedy meeting.

"Could Mrs. Lee spare you to spend a long evening with me?" Edith asked. "I want to talk to you about so many things."

"Mrs. Lee," said that lady herself, "is no tyrant, and lets her guests do whatever they like. But if you can, come over to Highton, my dear, with your father or by yourself, at any time. If you let me know half an hour before dinner, so much the better, and if that isn't convenient, come without warning."

Miss Kinseyle expressed appropriate gratitude, but was bent for the moment on having Mrs. Malcolm as her own guest.

"Of course, we shall be delighted if Mr. Ferrars will come too," she added.

Mrs. Lee's good-nature proved equal to the supply of a carriage for the expedition, and it was arranged for the following night but one, some dinner arrangements having been already made at Highton for the following evening, which Mrs. Malcolm was reluctant to throw out.

Edith guaranteed her father's cordial endorsement of any invitations she might give, and, loftily assuring Mrs. Malcolm that it was quite unnecessary for her to refer the matter to him in the first instance, bade her new friends good-bye at the door of her own home with the usual queenly air that so well became her.

CHAPTER VII.

"I SUPPOSE SHE IS BEAUTIFUL."

"SHE's a perfectly charming girl!" Mrs. Lee said as they drove off, "even though she wouldn't mesmerise."

"She would mesmerise fast enough with a better man to manage her, I have no doubt," Ferrars pointed out. "I dare say Marston could put her off in five minutes."

"Why don't you send for him? Where is he?"

"In town, no doubt. He rarely goes away anywhere. But I don't know that he could come. Besides——"

Ferrars looked inquiringly at his sister, without finishing the sentence.

"It is very kind of you, Mrs. Lee," Mrs. Malcolm said. "But—Mr. Marston is a friend of ours, certainly—but it would seem

rather abrupt, would it not, if you do not know him ?"

"I don't know. I carry my rough American ways with me all about your English society, and I find they answer just as well as at home. The man's a gentleman—isn't he ?"

"Most assuredly !"

"And a friend of yours. What more is wanted ? Telegraph and tell him we shall be delighted to see him, and that he is wanted at once to mesmerise a charming young lady. That ought to fetch him."

"Perhaps George might succeed on a second attempt," Mrs. Malcolm suggested, rather fencing with the proposal thus forced upon her.

"Oh, stuff and nonsense, my dear ! You all say the other man understands the business. Why not have him down and try ? Unless 'George' likes trying so much that he won't be turned off."

"George," said that gentleman himself, "is just in the hands of you ladies, to be done with as you think fit; but personally, he thinks he is no good as a mesmerist."

"Well," Mrs. Malcolm was driven to con-

cede, "I will telegraph to Mr. Marston in the morning, if we are all of the same mind then."

The brother and sister had some talk together in private when they got back to the house, before dressing for dinner.

"If you feel so sure about her psychic powers," Ferrars argued, "they cannot have been random words she uttered. Besides, though the few words of description she gave would not have meant much to anybody else, they corresponded so exactly."

"I suppose your mind was filled with Terra's image at the time," Mrs. Malcolm said a little sadly. "She may have caught a clairvoyant impression of her from your thought. As for what was said, that seems to me unintelligible."

"Unless the impression were correct. Unless there has been a quarrel!"

Mrs. Malcolm shook her head.

"That is the sad part of what has occurred. It unsettles your mind; but I should know if anything had occurred. Lady Margreave has promised to keep me informed of everything that passes. She would be sure to let me know if anything so

important as a quarrel had taken place. It is no use worrying you with news from day to day. You will trust my judgment to tell you at once if anything requires to be told, will you not, George?"

"All right, dear; of course."

"There has been no quarrel—nothing in the remotest degree resembling one. It is a mere guess of mine; but the 'atmosphere of anger' she spoke of may have arisen in some way from the contact of the two auras — yours and his — as your thought brought her perceptions into relation with him. I would not dwell upon it."

"There could be no harm," began Ferrars, after a little musing. "But no; never mind. I will leave the thing as you suggest. It is the worst of clairvoyant information, that, wonderful as it often is, one never feels that it is quite trustworthy to act upon."

"Does not that depend upon the kind of action there is to take? Has it not guided me rightly to Miss Kinseyle? Perhaps—you will not misunderstand what I say as implying want of sympathy—perhaps, it is only trustworthy when we have no selfish

interests at all involved. Our own desires, however harmless in themselves, may be such a confusing medium. I am sure my Guardian is telling us what is best for Edith. I feel as if she were my sister, and love her as such. We are sisters, I am sure, by our higher natures, in some way."

"She is a very sweet and deeply interesting girl. I should be glad to look upon her as a sister, too, most assuredly."

"I am glad of that, and I should have been still more glad if your influence with her could have been more decisive. It would have been good for you to have been serviceable to her, and I have a strong impression that it is mesmerism she wants to develope her powers. I still think, if you went on trying——"

"It is just a matter, I fear, in which trying is no good if you haven't got it in you."

"It is so embarrassing, bringing poor Sidney Marston on the scene, not to speak of my own wishes."

"But do you think he will come? He will get you out of the difficulty by giving some excuse, you will find."

"I think that, too; but there is a want of straightforwardness about sending him an invitation, and hoping all the time he will decline it."

"If he does not mind coming, I do not know why we should, under the circumstances."

"There is a want of straightforwardness about it, and Mrs. Lee might not like to have him if she knew. Poor, dear fellow!"

"Dear old Sidney! It's awfully hard upon him."

"I suppose he must be judge of the matter for himself. I will tell him all about how the difficulty has arisen; though it will seem like suggesting that he should not come, and that is cruel."

Mrs. Malcolm's brow was a little clouded during the evening by the pressure of the situation, but in the morning all anxiety seemed to have been swept away. She made an early opportunity of saying a few words to Ferrars apart.

"I have no doubt any more what to do about Sidney Marston. I asked for help last night, and got it. I am to ask him to come."

So the telegram was sent as Mrs. Lee had desired, and Mrs. Malcolm passed the invitation on with the straightforward simplicity with which it was given.

Miss Kinseyle had not unduly swaggered concerning her authority in the Compton Wood household, when she had invited her new friends to dinner.

"Papa dear," she said, going into her father's study—which was something she graciously forbore from doing during mid working hours—but when she returned from Kinseyle Court it was near their dinner time, and she knew that if Mr. Kinseyle had not left off writing, he ought to be warned to do so. "Papa dear, I simply adore Mrs. Malcolm, and she is going to bless this roof by dining with us the day after to-morrow."

"Goodness, Birdie, but when have we got to have dinner then?"

"At our usual time, Papa. Do not be afraid I would take a mean advantage of you in that way."

"And does Mrs. Malcolm simply adore you, that she does such an unheard-of thing

as dine at half-past five for the sake of your company?"

"She worships me, Papa dear—but really it is not a thing to joke about. It is not a sudden fancy we have taken to one another, it is a mutual discovery we have made about one another. We are of the same kind. We are natural sisters. She can *see*, also, such things as I see sometimes."

Mr. Kinseyle was never prone to talk much with his daughter on topics of this kind. He was never quite easy about the effect that would be wrought on her mind if she were encouraged to dwell on her abnormal experiences, and he never put an entire faith in their reality, though he dealt with them politely, gently, and with a broad spirit of intelligence, treating the question as to whether Edith might or might not be subject to some poetic kind of hallucination, as a problem that he was not so far in a position to decide either way. He was greatly struck in reality by the statement Edith now made, that she was suddenly in a position to bring up a witness to the truth of her view of the subject; but he was a quiet reflective man, who made

no immediate sign of excitement when assailed by a new idea, and he merely now looked into his inkstand with interest, his head slightly on one side, and said, after a little interval, that it was curious; he would like to talk to Mrs. Malcolm about it.

"You shall have an opportunity the day after to-morrow—owing, you see, to my careful forethought."

When Mrs. Malcolm and her brother came at the appointed time, there had been an interchange of telegrams between Mr. Marston and his friends at Highton. He had declined the invitation to Mrs. Lee's hospitable roof, but had declared himself in readiness to come down, as before, to the inn at Thracebridge for one night, and meet Miss Kinseyle at the old house at any time that might be appointed, when a trial could be made to see if his magnetic powers would be of any service to her. If so, they should be at her disposition.

"But what a singular arrangement," Miss Kinseyle remarked. "Why should he prefer to stop at a horrid little inn, instead of going to comfortable quarters at Highton?"

"Don't press me, dear, for an explanation of his motives," Mrs. Malcolm urged. "I think he does wisely and rightly, but I cannot explain without breaking confidence I have no right to interfere with. Will you trust me in this matter? She has approved. I saw her the night after I was with you last. He is the last man to make mysteries that can be avoided, but he is resolute about not going into general society. I am only surprised that he should have consented to come down at all."

"But how am I to get any good out of Mr. Marston's ministrations, if he can only come down for one evening? That does not seem likely to lead to very much, does it?"

"I have formed a little plan of my own about that," Mrs. Malcolm answered. "If there seems reason to expect good for you from Mr. Marston's influence, I wonder would your father spare you to come to me for a little visit at Richmond. There Mr. Marston could come out to us as often as we wished, and it would be delightful to me to have you with me,"

Edith declared it would be a heavenly arrangement. She was promised, she said, to the Miltenhams for some time in August. They were away from home just then, but were returning to Deerbury Park the following month. If a visit to Mrs. Malcolm could be arranged in the interim, that would be perfect.

"If that would suit your other engagements."

"My engagements of any other sort would be so much cobweb," Mrs. Malcolm replied, "in comparison with serving you, dear, and doing *her* behests."

"It is beautiful to hear you say that. I wish I was as far advanced as you are. For my part—I suppose I have got to live my life like other girls, and I must be more with the Miltenhams in future than I have been. I am eighteen now, you know," Edith added with a grave little sigh, as she contemplated the large responsibility this heavy weight of years brought with it.

"But what do you mean by leading your life?"

"I have thought it all over frequently,"

Edith answered. "I am not an heiress, you see. And Papa's means are small, but even this house and the property belonging to it go ultimately to a cousin we hardly know. The family affairs of the Kinseyles seem to have fallen out very crosswise. All the boys ought to have been girls, and all the girls boys, to have kept the property together. Sooner or later I suppose I shall have to face the common lot, and marry somebody."

"It may be a very dreary lot, if it is accepted merely as a necessity," Mrs. Malcolm returned dreamily, after a little pause.

They were sitting together in the little arbour in the garden after dinner, in the dusk of a still summer evening. During dinner there had been some conversation about Edith's peculiarities between Mr. Kinseyle and Mrs. Malcolm—his questions being of a politely circuitous and careful kind, and her replies veiled by the reserve she always felt in talking to a person without psychic intuitions to meet her own; and beyond feeling that in every way Mrs. Malcolm was evidently a very good and proper friend for his

daughter, Mr. Kinseyle had not learned much from what passed. He had joined them for a little while in the garden afterwards, and had then retired to his study, while Miss Barkley had discreetly withdrawn, feeling that her presence was not required. George had strolled off to smoke a cigar by himself, and the two ladies had thus been left together.

"That," Edith said, in answer to Mrs. Malcolm's last reflection, "is just why I have resolved not to shut myself up too much henceforward. If marriage were a thing to take or let alone as one pleased—just as it is with a man—there would be no need to think about it beforehand. But I do not mean to do anything rash. I mean to see plenty of people, and make my choice with great care."

Some listeners might have been disposed to take most notice of the comic side of the young lady's sedate philosophy, grounded as it was on the calm assumption that an infinite range of choice would necessarily await her; but Mrs. Malcolm was never especially attentive to the ludicrous side of things, and

only dwelt upon the peculiar hazards that would affect the marriage question with a girl of such abnormal gifts as Edith's.

"But *please*, dear Mrs. Malcolm," the young lady pleaded, "do not think of me as intending to hunt the covers of society for a suitable husband. I only mean that I do not think it would be right or wise for me to go on leading quite as quiet a life in future as I have in the past. Let us talk now of what is *much* more interesting. I shall never give up my spiritual life, whatever happens; you may be sure of that."

Mrs. Malcolm did not press the subject any further, and their talk reverted to the ever-interesting topic of Edith's experiences. This led to some account of her earlier enthusiasm about the white knight, and to a vivacious proposal—a sudden inspiration of hers—that they two should go and watch for him at the gate.

Mrs. Malcolm was inclined to disapprove of the commonplace ghost as an unseemly companion for a budding seeress like Edith, but gave way to the girl's impulsive entreaties.

"It would be such fun," she urged, "for me to tell B.," and she tripped lightly forward to the house calling for Miss Barkley.

That lady appeared at the so-called "schoolroom" window, on the ground-floor, and inquired what was wanted.

"Wouldn't you like to come with us, dear B. We are going for a little walk."

"Why, of course, if you want me," Miss Barkley began.

"We are going to sit at the gate as it gets dark and look out for the white knight. I'm *sure* you'd like to come."

"Oh, goodness, Edith! how can you? Oh, Mrs. Malcolm! pray don't take her to do anything so—so unwholesome and so unnatural."

Edith was doubly delighted at Miss Barkley's easily excited horror, and at the inappropriate charge implied against Mrs. Malcolm, of being the promoter of the enterprise.

"Resistance is in vain, my poor B. Her will is supreme. Nothing but your presence will save me. Unless you come too, the white knight will carry me off, and you will never see me again."

"Oh, Edith! what nonsense you talk. I don't believe Mrs. Malcolm wants to go at all."

"Insist upon my going, on your peril," said Edith to Mrs. Malcolm in a stage aside, and, without waiting for a reply, slipped her arm round the lady's waist and hurried her off towards the side of the house. "Fare thee well, B.," she cried, waving her other hand to the governess; "and if for ever, still for ever fare thee well," her effervescent spirits bubbling over in joyous laughter as they went.

"I was too frivolous for my white knight," she declared when they came back later in the evening, having indeed wandered off, after a little fruitless waiting at the gate, down the briar-scented road, talking seriously again about the subjects that interested them more deeply. They had met Ferrars coming back from his moody stroll, and all three had returned together, Miss Barkley being still possessed with the tremors Edith's unhallowed purpose had awakened in her nervous system.

"It was your fault, B., I am afraid. You

made me laugh, and the knight must have been shocked at my apparent levity. We must try and do something together to propitiate him."

They had tea served in the drawing-room before the guests departed, and Edith sang to them one or two songs, with Ferrars in attendance at the piano, while Mr. Kinseyle and Mrs. Malcolm talked about her on the sofa.

"She has a wonderful flow of spirits," Mrs. Malcolm said.

"A dear child,' her father replied reflectively. "I think I appreciate her in my quiet way. The house is very dull without her, but I am ashamed almost to keep her so much with me. She ought to have pleasure at her age. But she is as good as she is light-hearted, and makes herself contented here."

"She might be in greater danger in a less secluded home. With her gifts and extraordinary charm and her great beauty, the world will be a place for her where she will be too much sought after not to need the most loving watchfulness."

"Is she beautiful, do you think? How

odd I never thought much about that. A child grows up, and one gets so used to her, one hardly thinks of that. Yes; I suppose she is beautiful."

"Certainly she is beautiful; and that wonderful vivacity of manner she has, and her brightness, makes her beauty ten times more effective than it would be if her character were different. Then, with the fresh gaiety of a child, she has the wise thoughtfulness of a grown woman; and yet all that I have said about her is as nothing compared with her psychic gifts—in my eyes, at least."

"I am greatly interested in what you say," Mr. Kinseyle remarked, after a thoughtful pause. "I should greatly like to talk with you more at leisure about her. Your experience and knowledge of the world might be of great service to me in her interest."

She had been singing an "Ave Maria" with the rapt look of a devotee while this conversation had been going on in a low tone; or rather, the conversation had begun while she was preluding, and had been carried on during the earlier part of the song.

"I am greatly flattered," she said at the end, with mock displeasure, "at having secured your attention *at last;* but tears and entreaties would not suffice to make me sing anything more of a serious kind. I'll give you something suited to your frivolous tastes," and with that she dashed into a nonsensical popular ballad of the day, picked up from a comic operetta, and rattled off its absurdities with the keenest enjoyment of the task.

"Papa dear," she said, slipping across to the sofa at its conclusion, and putting her arms round Mrs. Malcolm's neck from behind. "Do tell Mrs. Malcolm that by nature I am pensive and intense. Only Miss Barkley has brought me up to sing comic songs occasionally to avert the consequences of over-study."

Mrs. Malcolm had no faculty for badinage.

"Many a true word is spoken in jest," she said, as she pressed one of the small hands put round her. "I can quite understand that you are most your true self when you are most in earnest; delightful though you are at other times also."

"Fly, some one, for pen and ink, to put me that in writing! But about to-morrow?" for Mrs. Malcolm rose to go.

It was arranged that Mrs. Malcolm should pick Edith up in the afternoon, on her way to Kinseyle Court, and should afterwards take her back to Highton for dinner. She could return in the evening, she said, in their own phaeton, which would come and fetch her. There was no sort of difficulty in the matter, and her father raised no objection.

"What are you doing at the Court again?" he asked, rather in politeness than from any disposition to interfere with his daughter's liberty.

Mrs. Malcolm looked disturbed. The purpose of the expedition was difficult to explain, but no one had a better right to have it explained than Mr. Kinseyle.

Edith came to the rescue, however, with an easy grace, though with a sweet little touch of solemnity in her manner.

"I'm going to see if Mrs. Malcolm can help me to see again and understand something I have seen there once before, Papa."

"What do you think it is that she has seen?' Mr. Kinseyle asked of Mrs. Malcolm, with a puzzled air.

"How can we tell? But if she sees what I see, as I believe, she will see what has at any rate been the consolation and noblest inspiration of my life in my own case. Of course, nothing of this kind must be done without your consent; but will you trust me to watch over her for this one afternoon, at any rate? It is so difficult to explain in detail, but at all events, I look upon the trust as a most sacred one."

"I'm sure you will take care of her;" Mr. Kinseyle almost eagerly assured her, in reply to the earnest appeal, "I was not wanting to interfere. I'm sure, indeed, that Edith's own instincts are altogether to be trusted."

He spoke almost apologetically, as if to escape from the responsibility which his own question had threatened to bring upon him, and pressed no further inquiries. The two ladies went upstairs together in search of Mrs. Malcolm's hat and wraps.

"You are wonderfully free to do as you

like, my dear; almost alarmingly so," Mrs. Malcolm said in the bedroom.

"How funny that it should strike you in that way. I could not conceive any other state of things. I have always done as I like."

"It is an immense responsibility," said Mrs. Malcolm earnestly, picking up her hat off the dressing-table and looking at the reflection of Edith in the glass.

The girl, in sheer sportiveness, was balancing herself on the edge of her fender—a solid, simply-made, low iron rail in front of her fireplace; and with skirts a little picked up, as she lightly laughed at Mrs. Malcolm's solemn enunciation of this idea, stood on one foot and kept her equilibrum by swaying the other from side to side. She did not notice the intentness with which Mrs. Malcolm gazed into the mirror, but kept her balance for a few seconds, and was then just losing it and all but tilting over against the mantelpiece, when Mrs. Malcolm, with a sort of suppressed cry, turned round, and springing towards her, caught her round the waist.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Edith, half laughing, half startled.

"Nothing, really, and I knew there was nothing really, but I could not help myself. I imagined you falling."

"But I've fallen off this fender a hundred times. I can't fall more than four inches."

"I know. But the picture was too overpowering. It seemed to me as I looked at you in the glass that the mantelpiece and the wall there had all melted away, and left nothing but horrible rocks and precipices. It was an allegorical fancy merely, but as you balanced yourself, all your life seemed to hang upon the question whether you would go over to that side or this. I thought you were going over to the rocks, and I simply couldn't help springing forward to save you."

Edith's fancy was too nearly akin to Mrs. Malcolm's for her to take the explanation otherwise than quite seriously.

"Then was I really falling the wrong way? What a frightful idea. But I really don't think it was certain which way I was going. It's almost a pity you did not wait to see."

"May I be guarded from ever seeing a bad omen about you."

"At all events, dear, you saved me in time. I did not actually touch the mantelpiece, though I believe I slipped down on the wrong side of the fender!"

"Well, let us make a good omen of it anyhow, and may I be always at hand if you want help, as you go on balancing yourself through life."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIGHT INFLUENCE.

Mrs. Malcolm and Edith found Marston waiting for them when they arrived the following afternoon at Kinseyle Court. They came alone, for George Ferrars had remained at Highton, and Mrs. Malcolm's companionship released Miss Barkley from her usual attendance on her pupil. Marston met them in the hall, and all three went at once into the library.

"It is very good of you to have come down," Edith said, "for I understand you have come altogether on my account."

Marston was very grave, and almost stiff in manner.

"Thanks," Mrs. Malcolm said to him, almost at the same time as she gave him her hand. "I know it is right for you to have come, for I know I did right to ask

you. It is a comfort to be sure of that much."

"I feel as though I ought to apologise for seeming boorish in making conditions about coming," he said to Edith, merely bowing an acknowledgment of Mrs. Malcolm's few words, "but,—I never accept invitations." He spoke in an awkward harsh tone, making no excuses for the behaviour which he said must seem boorish; but Edith was too much impressed with the vague mystery which seemed to surround him to have thought of his conditions in that light. Moreover, she was too much interested in meeting him again, having entertained a vivid recollection of their brief conversation on the former occasion, to be critical of minor circumstances. Her feeling of satisfaction at his reappearance overpowered all others, and found expression in the cordiality of her look and manner.

"Then I am all the more obliged and flattered at drawing so confirmed a recluse from his den. With you and Mrs. Malcolm, I feel lifted right out of my own humdrum life into the midst of—I hardly know what—

grand and beautiful ideas that you have got to explain to me. Oh, isn't it delightful, Marian?"—Mrs. Malcolm had taught her by this time to use the more intimate name; "we've got a whole long afternoon before us, we three, with no outsiders to interfere with us. I believe this is going to be a turning-point in my life. Let us all go and sit round the window in the Countess's study and talk. Do you know," she went on a little later, when her wishes had been fulfilled, and addressing Marston, "I realize now that I have been quite anxious all day lest something should have occurred to prevent you from coming; I am so glad to find our programme is to be carried out."

Marston's rigidity thawed under the influences of her sunny good spirits, and the dawning smile with which he looked at her, in its sweetness and wistfulness, would have shown an acute observer that his stiff manner at first had sprung from discontentment with himself, and not with his companions. If they were not displeased there was nothing left in the situation for him to fret over. As small, slightly-made men often are, he was

very neatly dressed, but the merit of his costume had to do with its perfect make and taste, not with any showy characteristics. His bearing was very erect, his dark eyes seemed larger and more luminous than ever, but his voice, when he spoke again, had recovered a softer and more natural tone than that in which his first greetings had been uttered.

"It shall be carried out, if that lies with me, but now let me hear what it is."

"Ah, now I recognise your voice again," Edith said; "I did not, for the moment, at first. But now I remember how you promised me, when we were talking together before, that I should soon be helped to understand my visions, and so forth. Your voice brings back the prophecy, which has been most honestly fulfilled, only you have had to take some part yourself in its fulfilment, after all."

"You know nearly as much about our programme as we do," Mrs. Malcolm put in, "for you know that I want you to put Miss Kinseyle into a mesmeric sleep, in order that she may tell us, if possible, and herself

afterwards through us, more about the Spirit she has seen, and what is required of her. Do you think you can mesmerise her ?"

Marston turned his head, without immediately answering, to Edith, and fixed his eyes upon her with gentle but earnest interest. She looked back at him with a frank, trustful gaze, and a smile that seemed to meet his answer half way, and then Marston said, in a very low voice :

"I am quite sure of it."

"I am so glad," answered Edith. "I fancied you would be able; but Mr. Ferrars found me an unmanageable subject, and I half feared there might be something wrong."

"And now, having answered your question frankly, let me beg pardon for having spoken as if boastfully of my own powers. But, in anything so serious as real mesmerism, truth must come first, conventional self-depreciation afterwards."

"But please spare us that altogether," said Edith. "Let us have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, this afternoon."

"Happily, the truth will not require me

to boast again. The reason why I am so sure of being able to magnetise you is, that I know, at all events, enough of occult laws to comprehend some, at any rate, of your own characteristics. But I will lecture afterwards, if you want me to. That will come best after the demonstration of the fact."

"But I like the lecture. Please go on."

"We have got the afternoon before us, as Edith says," Mrs. Malcolm added. "We can talk quietly for awhile. To be three people together who sympathize with one another on the psychic plane, is to hold quite an occult festival. For my part, I very rarely meet anyone I can talk to about my own inner life, but with you both I can open the sanctuary without seeming to profane it."

"In one sense," Marston answered, "all of us who have an inner sanctuary have it in common with each other. The difficulty is to get free access to it ourselves, whenever we wish. You, and I imagine Miss Kinseyle too, can both retreat into it very easily compared to most of us."

"I am not conscious," said Edith, "of

being able to do anything at all; but I am all attention, and only too eager to learn."

"How shall I explain what I mean?" Marston went on. "In some Indian book, I believe, there is a saying to this effect. At the first blush of the words it sounds irreverent, but that is merely because a truly reverent idea is cast in a paradoxical form: 'Whoso worships God and does not know that he is worshipping himself, to God that man is like the cattle in the fields.' The point of the idea is that, failing to appreciate the highest element in our own natures, which is an emanation from Deity, we remain outside the possibilities of truly human development. We are external to the divine consciousness if we do not realize that there is a fibre vibrating with the divine consciousness within us. Realize that, and you know that in worshipping God, you are at the same time worshipping the highest potentiality in your own nature—preparing it for fuller consciousness—retreating, in fact, into the sanctuary we were talking of just now. That must be an intellectual process only for most of us, but for exceptional people, gifted as

you are, every now and then you see as if with actual eyesight some manifestation of your own higher consciousness. I take it—though I should not venture to dogmatise about the personality, so to speak, of the visions you both have seen—that these are only possible for you because the element of divine consciousness in you is functioning more actively than with other people."

"It's very interesting," Edith said, having paid the deepest attention; "but I don't feel how it applies to me."

"It is very puzzling at first—the earliest attainments in occult knowledge are so intangible and so subtle. It is merely a recognition, in fact, in their proper bearings, of things you have known all along. When you reach after a thought in your mind, pondering how can this or that be so, and then, when an idea flashes upon you or dawns upon you, where do you suppose it comes from?"

"I don't know. But everybody has ideas come up in their minds in that way."

"They do; and all human beings have some attributes in common. But the ideas that come up in different minds are of very

varying degrees of dignity, and, not to confuse the matter by dealing with the trumpery ones, let us ask whence do the very elevated ideas come from."

Edith shook her head, merely to indicate that she did not see the answer.

Marston looked at her fixedly. The nature of their conversation was such that he could do this without embarrassment; and she gazed back, absorbed in the subject they were talking of.

"Never mind me," said Marston. He had been sitting in a chair, while the two ladies were in the window-seat of the square projecting window; and now he rose, standing beside Edith, and put one hand on her forehead, visible under a wide-brimmed hat that turned back on the side next to him. "Go on thinking of what we were talking about. When you dive into the recesses of your mind in search of some idea, whence does the idea come? That was the question I was asking."

"Oh, you mean from the higher streak of consciousness you were talking about—the divine element."

"Exactly," said Marston, dropping back into his chair; "which, in your wonderful organism, is so susceptible to an external influence even, that magnetic contact with me for a moment, when I had that idea intensely imprinted on my own mind, was enough to present it to yours, and as that was the idea you were wanting, you recognised it, and instantly seized it."

"How do you mean? Then you were actually able to put that idea into my head?"

"I was able," Marston said, with a grave smile and bow, "because of the peculiarities of the head."

"Why, that's mesmerising me already, before you have begun. Oh, Marian! isn't that wonderful?"

"Yes," Marston himself answered; "it is wonderful: full of just cause for that sort of reverent wonder that is a kind of worship. But keep hold of the idea, please, in all its bearings, and it will throw light on what we were talking of before—the way in which the proper recognition of familiar things may constitute a great advance of knowledge.

The ideas that rise in your mind as you think of a problem—ideas that come into your head—have a source from which they come: a great fountain-head of ideas always abundantly flowing. Along more or less choked and narrow channels all men may draw intellectual sustenance from that fountain; though in the vanity—which is a sad sort of ignorance really—which makes them repudiate their own best attribute, they will have it generally that they think out or develope such few drops as may trickle from it, for themselves. Now your peculiar gifts—attributes of your organism—enable you to realize some things that other people, at best, can only speculate about, and this among them. If you feel that thoughts may come into your mind from an external source—even though that is only so humble a one as another mind—you will no longer be in doubt as to the possibility that some of your thoughts, at any rate—or subjective impressions, we may call them, if you like—when no companion mind is in the case at all, may come from an external spiritual source, and then, in time, you will do more and be able

to discriminate among your thoughts, and comprehend which are so derived and which are relatively commonplace."

"And would that be the way the Countess would talk to me? Is that the way," turning to Mrs. Malcolm, "your Guardian talks to you?"

Marston waited for Mrs. Malcolm to reply, but she only said:

"Let Mr. Marston answer for me. I feel how things are with me; but he will explain it better."

"I take it that Mrs. Malcolm feels as you, no doubt, will come to feel, that the communication is much more direct. The sifting-out process, the faculty of distinguishing thoughts drawn from the higher regions of our consciousness, from those which arise by simple association of ideas in the lower, is possible for almost any reflective and intelligent people. For you, therefore, that is possible, as I have said; but for you a great deal more is possible also, because, with your higher consciousness awake and at work, it will show you pictures at least—perhaps very great and beautiful realities

belonging to that plane—and then, when the corresponding thoughts flow into your mind, it will be as though such thoughts were plainly spoken to you by the beings of your visions, as, in truth, may be really the case. As I am trying to show, the process will not be only inferred about and worked out intellectually by you, but perceived without an effort."

"It is immensely instructive already. What you have done in putting a thought into my head, by some mysterious influence of your own thought, is wonderful."

"What I have to do is to teach you to appreciate yourself. The simplest way will, perhaps, be the most striking at first. Now, for instance——'

He looked round. On the table in the middle of the room were some books—some of the old family records that Edith had been studying. He went to one of these and opened it at random—in the middle—leaving it lying on the table, and having glanced at the top of the page, he came back to Edith's side, saying :

"The first word at the top of that page is

in my mind. You will be able to read it, letter by letter, through me, as you did the idea we were talking of just now." He put his hand again upon her forehead. "Now, what is the first letter? Say whatever comes first into your mind to say. Don't make an effort."

He remained for a few moments standing silent and motionless, with his eyes shut.

"Good gracious!" said Edith, "it isn't L, is it? I seemed to see an L, bright on a dark background, for a moment."

"Of course, it is L," answered Marston. "That is why you saw it."

"No! How wonderful!"

"Now give us the second letter."

In the same way, after varying intervals of hesitation, but without mentioning any wrong letter, Edith gave three letters successively, "L A U." For the fourth letter she said "K."

"Ah! pardon me. I beg your pardon," said Marston.

"Why; what do you mean?"

"Because it is not a 'K'; it is an 'R.' The two letters are something alike when

you try to picture them to yourself, and the awkwardly-formed 'R' in my mind looked to you apparently like a 'K.'"

"But that was my fault, evidently. I don't suppose your 'R' was awkwardly formed at all."

"Miss Kinseyle," said Marston, sitting down again, "I have learned more this afternoon already than I have taught you; and if anything fails with you, at any time, in any such experiment as this, rest assured that you are no more in fault than a perfect instrument is in fault when a musician plays a wrong note. Let me be candid. That was an experiment we have just tried. Perhaps I was wrong to try it; because, if it had failed, it might have impaired my confidence and perhaps, therefore, my usefulness to you in anything you want to do this afternoon. But I divined the perfection of your sensitiveness and could not resist testing it. To have done what you have just done is an absolutely splendid feat. I have known it done before, but it is enormously difficult. To have said that at first would, perhaps, have thrown you off the right atti-

tude of mind; but now the course is clear before us. I have not got to *act* confidence with you — the confidence is established, absolutely and overwhelmingly."

Edith accepted the compliments graciously and pleasantly. They were too obviously sincere to excite any distrust; but she declared herself in need of more explanation.

"And I do not see why the result is not to be accounted for by your own extraordinary power. You must have that, for I feel strange feelings in my head from your hand."

"Well; let it be for the present as you please. I *have* power for the moment, at all events; though it may be you who have given it me."

"But are we not to go on with the word?"

"It is no matter now. You have shown the delicacy of your psychic sense in a manner which is perfectly splendid. It would be waste of effort to go on with that."

"But what was the word, then?" said Edith, going to the table and looking at the open book. "'Laura!' good gracious! there it is—the first word on the page: L, A, U.

I wish I had not been so stupid with the R."

"Stupid!" said Marston; "you are like a millionnaire complaining that he is poor for not having a hundred a year more than he possesses."

Perhaps Edith was playing with the idea, from her usual inclination towards making fun of things, perhaps she did not dislike the eager declaration of Marston's admiration for her powers; so she smiled demurely, and declared that Mr. Marston was trying to give her confidence in herself, no doubt.

"At all events, I am getting confidence in your powers, Mr. Marston. What is the next exercise your potent will may be pleased to guide me to?"

"It is a happy phrase," Marston replied. "My will shall be your guide; for your guide may be your servant all the time. While holding the sacred trust, believe me, it shall always be that, and exercised over your soul at the bidding only of your waking consciousness."

Edith felt the earnestness of the promise without fully understanding it.

"I am sure you will take all possible care of me, and I am not in the least afraid."

Marston bowed. Mrs. Malcolm intervened before more was said, and proposed that they should go on with their project.

"We can darken the rooms a little if there is too much light."

"Yes, that will be better; but first let me put Miss Kinseyle perfectly at ease. That chair is not comfortable enough. I will bring in the couch from the library."

But Edith declared she loved the old chair, and when this was put back against the angle of the projecting moulding that encircled the window recess, with cushions propped against the wall behind, and a lower chair in front for her feet, she was at last made comfortable enough even to suit Mr. Marston's anxiety on that head.

"I would spare you the trouble," he said to Mrs. Malcolm, as she was closing the shutters, "but I ought to remain quite quiet for the present."

"Of course. I can manage the windows, and there is no hurry. I'll close some of those in the library too."

Edith faced the open door leading into the library as she lay back in her improvised nest of cushions. Marston stood by her side, looking down on her half upturned face. The light of the room was subdued by the closed, but not barred, shutters — not entirely darkened.

"Is it well for you to tell me beforehand what is going to happen?" she asked.

"That will be for you to decide, as soon as you are free to look about you. What I shall be able to do will be to put your physical senses to sleep in such a way as to leave your psychic senses in their natural bright activity. And yet your sleeping lips will tell us what these see, and I am always at hand to draw you back at the least sign that you may make. It is exactly as if you were swimming, with a line round your waist that some one should be holding. We can draw you to shore whenever you look tired or give the order. As for what will happen—that is, what you will see—your own higher consciousness will dictate that, not your humble, though very faithful guide."

"You are so absolutely sure of your power

over me, that you do not even care to assume the masterful tone."

"Yes, in one way; I am so absolutely sure of my power to bring music out of the wonderful instrument in my hands, that there is no need to claim that the music is in my fingers. May I take your hands for a little while?" Edith resigned them to him at once. "Now, as soon as Mrs. Malcolm has settled the shutters and herself in a seat near us, you shall give me the order to put you to sleep, and you will not remember the next minute, as far as this room is concerned."

"How my arms thrill. I thought you would have to make passes with your hands for a long time before I felt anything. You seem to be able to do everything at a word only. Where did you learn it all?"

"Ask them whom you may see presently, if you like."

"I seem to know instinctively, in a vague sort of way. In the school of suffering—is that so?"

"Perhaps."

Mrs. Malcolm came back through the door-

way now, and took her seat on a low ottoman a little in front of Edith on the left side, Marston standing beside her on her right.

"Are you comfortable, Marian dear?" Edith inquired.

"Quite, thank you; and you?"

"Then I'm off. Good-bye. Put me to sleep," she said to Marston, in a little tone of command, obeying his wish with a subtle sweetness in assuming this, and emphasising the order with a slight pressure of her hand in his.

He brought both of these into one of his own, and drawing the other down over her forehead and eyes, repeated the word, bending close over her as he spoke in a low earnest tone:

"Sleep—sleep—sleep."

Then he left her hands on her lap and made passes over her face for a little while, but she did not move after the words had been spoken, and only rolled her head a little from side to side two or three times on her cushion.

"Tell me what you see?" Marston said to her, "as soon as you can look about you."

Edith made one or two hardly articulate sounds. Marston moved his fingers quickly about just in front of her mouth, and then in a few moments, though speaking as in the profoundest slumber as far as her physical state was concerned, she said, a little more clearly—

"I'm only just waking up; I don't see anything, except the light. It's too bright to see anything."

"It does not dazzle you, though, does it?"

"No, it doesn't dazzle."

"What is the scene around you like?"

"I can't see anything clearly—a sort of plain. There are some rocks in the distance. No; they are close by. Oh! I am rushing along; flying somehow."

"Isn't there anyone with you?"

"I think so—" after a little pause, "but I do not see anybody. Ah——"

"What made you cry out?"

"We seemed to dash up against a cliff, but it did not do any harm. I hardly felt it. What's this?"

"Have you stopped anywhere?"

"Yes, on a kind of grassy ledge, a little

valley up among mountains. It's so pleasant." She smiled, though her eyes remained closed; then, after a few moments of silence, called out sharply, "Take care of that thread."

"Trust me to take care of the thread," said Marston in a confident tone. "Does it seem very thin?"

"Yes; thin, fine, and silvery. I seemed to feel some one pulling at it. It is all right now. Oh!—" in a less contented tone, "where does it lead to?"

"Never mind that now. Look round you. Is there anyone with you in the valley?"

"No, I don't see anyone, but I feel as if some one was with me—some one who loves me. Oh!" in a low voice, "SHE's here. I see her now shining before me. She's a glorious spirit. My Queen!"

"That's right. You have seen her before, have you not?"

"Of course I have; I know her. I have always known her. Now I see the real person. What!—of course I will."

"Will you tell me what she has just said to you?"

For the first time since her trance had

begun Edith did not immediately answer the question, but after a little interval began to murmur half articulate words of affectionate adoration and broken replies to some conversation, which she was carrying on in another state of consciousness. Marston took one of her hands again—he had not touched her before since she had been put to sleep—and laid his other hand on her forehead.

"You must come back to us if you will not answer me."

"Take care of the thread," she said petulantly.

"Tell me what the beautiful Spirit is saying to you."

"She tells me I may come to her altogether soon, if I like. I shall not have to stay long in that horrible body."

"Ask her if we are doing right to mesmerise you in this way, and if that is what she wanted."

"Yes, she meant that; that is why she sent Marian to me. You are to go on every few days, and soon I shall be able to understand all she says better."

"Has she any particular orders for you?"

"What—I'm sure she may, to me, and I will obey her."

"What is that she says?" Marston said very emphatically.

"Don't pull that thread! She says——"

"What does she say?"

"I don't know exactly. She makes me feel heavenly. It does not matter."

"But I must know whether she has any orders for you. Ask her that."

Edith smiled very sweetly, ejaculating "dearest," then "Very well," and then replying at last to Marston's question.

"She has no orders for me, she says, only encouragement. But she will be able to talk more plainly to me later on. When I am more at home with her. At any rate, I'm glad I have not got to stay long down there."

Mrs. Malcolm asked in a low voice, "Has she any message for me?"

Mr. Marston repeated the question.

"Has she any message for Mrs. Malcolm?"

"Who?" said Edith, with a little frown.

"Has she any message for Marian?"

Marston glanced round as if to apologise for the use of the name, but Mrs. Malcolm, quickly comprehending the idea, nodded acquiescence, and Edith accepted the amendment.

"Oh, for Marian! Yes, she says I shall amply reward her for the trouble she has taken, and that SHE is grateful. She smiles, oh, so beautifully. How glorious she is."

"Ask her whether it is not time for you to come back."

"Oh, I couldn't *think* of going back at present."

It had an odd effect for the protest, considering its nature, to take the familiar colouring in this way of Edith's ordinary waking manner, a little emphasis being put on one word in the sentence, and the whole given with her usual assured way of announcing her will and pleasure, when her mind was made up about anything.

"I shall bring you back unless you can tell me that SHE says you may stop longer."

"Don't worry. What? yes; she says I may stay a little longer. Only a little?"—these last words in a pleading tone. "As

long as she stays with me I may stop. I am bathed in her sweet influence. It is so perfect. I would never want anything more than this. To be always with her—what perpetual Heaven!" These and a few more disjointed phrases of the same kind were spoken at intervals, and Edith's face, all the while upturned as she lay back against her cushions, beamed with a rapt expression of delight. Presently, however, it clouded. "Oh, she is going away! I will go with her. But I can't; I don't know where she has gone. She has gone somehow—where?"

"Never mind," said Marston, "you will see her again another time. Now you have got to come away yourself, you know; that was what she said."

"But I *don't want* to come away," Edith answered quite crossly. "Can't you take care of the thread!"

"Remember, she told you to come back when she left you. Now she is gone, and you must obey her. So I am going to draw you back, whether you like it or not. Sorry to be rude; but you must come."

"No! no!"

Very gently Marston laid one hand on her head and one on her left side, and speaking tenderly, but firmly, repeated:

"You must come. Come back—slowly, gently now," as Edith moved restlessly in her chair, and made a few sounds as of pettish protest. "That's right; you are coming back now, aren't you? Sleep quietly now for a moment." The restlessness died away, and Edith's face sank into repose again, losing the varied expressions that had been chasing one another over her features during her trance.

"That's it!" said Marston. "Beautifully brought back. Now you can wake up as soon as you like." And he waved his hands upward several times in front of her face. "Wake up! You are all here again, and we are wanting to talk to you. Ah——"

He dropped his hands as Edith suddenly opened her eyes, sat up in her chair, and exclaimed:

"Goodness! Have I been asleep? What has been happening?"

Marston drew back a little from her side and sat down on one of the formal old high-

backed chairs that stood near the table. Mrs. Malcolm rose, and came to her in his place, embracing her with affectionate earnestness.

"My dear Edith, you have been in Heaven, and telling us all about it. You have been having a glorious vision."

"I remember, now. Mr. Marston said I should tell him when to put me to sleep, and that I should go off at once. So I did. I don't recollect anything after that. It's perfectly wonderful how he did it in an instant like that."

"But don't you remember anything of your vision? You saw HER, you know—beautifully."

Edith put her hand to her head, and tried to recall something.

"I seem as if I should remember something directly, but I don't know what it is. All I can think of is, that I was somehow told to 'come back.'"

"Ah!" cried Marston. "How stupid of me! It is my fault that you do not remember better."

"You managed her splendidly," Mrs.

Malcolm said. "I am sure you have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"But tell me all about it," said Edith. "I am all in the dark."

"But first, you feel none the worse?"

"I feel delightfully. I am much the better. I don't want to move, for fear of breaking the spell."

"Don't move for the present," Marston said. "In a few minutes you must let me mesmerise you again a little, to restore your physical strength thoroughly. Meanwhile, you can lie quiet, and hear Mrs. Malcolm's report of what you have been saying."

"Do you feel weakened, Mr. Marston?" Mrs. Malcolm asked.

"Weakened? No; certainly not. Tired for the moment, but in five minutes I shall be thoroughly wound up again."

The answer, confident as it was, excited Edith's attention, and there was some little conversation on the subject. Then she wanted to know why she had been so "abnormally stupid" as to have remembered nothing of the vision he had procured for her.

"It is just as I explained before about the R and the K," Marston said. "My fault—I did not impress upon you to remember."

"I do not object to the theory in the *least*," Edith said. "Whenever I make any mistake, that is always to be regarded in future as somebody else's fault. It is very kind of me—having been so particularly stupid this time—but I will forgive you if you will explain how you could have made even me remember, if you had managed something differently."

Marston did not rise very cheerfully to the airy gaiety of her manner. There was something more wistful than light-hearted in the smile with which he replied to it. In words, he said very simply:

"I ought to have impressed upon you at the time to remember the salient features of your vision. Clairvoyants, who go right out of the body, as you did, frequently remember nothing when they return, unless they are so impressed. What you said about remembering that you had been told to come back, just illustrates the thing. I appealed to you

to remember that your guardian spirit had said you were to come back when she went away."

They went on talking over all that had passed, and all the characteristics of the trance, and eventually Edith was put in possession of the whole case, and of all that she had said, except as regards the few words she had spoken indicating the probability of her own early death. Both Mrs. Malcolm and Marston avoided this part of the story, and a look of intelligence passed between them as each saw that the other was avoiding the same thing. They told Edith how cross she had been about her "thread."

"All clairvoyant wanderers from the fleshly prison see this magnetic filament that connects them with the body," Marston explained. "I do not suppose it is really in any danger of breaking, in the mechanical sense of the word; but the clairvoyant associates an earthly notion with it, and if its attraction draws upon him, will generally get nervous about it."

"And was I very anxious about my thread?"

"Very snappish, my dear, I assure you, when Mr. Marston would not let you break away from us altogether, and leave us nothing but an empty body; and you showed a reluctance to come back to such low company as our own, after being with spirits in Heaven, in a way that was much more emphatic than complimentary."

"It was disgracefully rude of me, seeing that you put me in Heaven for the time; but like all other bad behaviour of mine, I suppose that is Mr. Marston's fault. Mr. Marston, I am shocked at you when I think that I have been rude."

"This time I am not responsible. That you should prefer Heaven to earth is entirely due to your own characteristics."

"So Mr. Marston managed me splendidly you say, Marian?" Edith remarked, acknowledging the compliment with a pleasant smile only. "How *can* you keep control over me when I am right away in unknown regions, and out of sight altogether? Or am I out of sight indeed? Can you see what I am about all the while, and where I am going?"

"I wish I could. We are not all endowed with the power of consciousness on that plane. The only control I can exercise is a watchfulness over your body, which is still in magnetic relations with your soul all the while. It is drawing upon you continually with its vital attraction, or whatever we like to call it, and when necessary I can somehow augment that vital attraction so that it brings you back in spite of your disinclination to come. That is all the use I am to you. I can drag you back to earth."

"But as I can't get away from earth to begin with without your help, I have not so much to complain of. And if you did not drag me back, should I never come back at all?"

"That I would not venture to say. That there would be danger, even to your life, if you were sent wandering in space under mesmeric influences and not watched over from this side, seems to me probable; but you might return, exhausted as it were, at last, of your own accord even then, and the effect of such an adventure would be very bad for your nervous system certainly. As it is, the use

I am of is to enable you to visit your natural home, where your own affinities carry you, without any risk of physical bad effects afterwards. At all events, I can guarantee you from those."

"I am sure you can. I feel exhilarated, and altogether a superior person to what I was before. But now suppose—since your power over me is so complete—that you send me forth again to seek my fortune, and make me remember this time all I shall see."

Marston demurred to this proposal, however, and Mrs. Malcolm also had a feeling against it. There might be some risks in forcing Miss Kinseyle's capabilities too much at first. She might not be again able so soon to realize the former vision a second time. There were all sorts of psychic risks to be considered. Edith begged to be allowed one more excursion, but with affectionate and respectful resolution both her friends clung to the idea that enough had been done for a first attempt.

"Now, if you will let me mesmerise you a little," Marston said, "to restore your physical strength completely, in case that has been

tried in any way, we can conclude the performances."

"Mesmerise me by all means," replied Edith. "I shall go to sleep again under it, and we will see what happens."

Marston took his place again by her side at once, but assured her she would not be able to go to sleep this time, however much she might desire it.

"It is an influence of quite a different kind that is upon you now," he said, as he touched her forehead again, and then began long passes over her, from her head to her waist. "You are not feeling sleepy this time, are you?"

Edith shut her eyes and pretended to be going to sleep, but could not keep her countenance long, and laughed with a mock protest against the tyranny she was subject to.

"Well, then, I submit," she said, as another idea crossed her fancy. "I *will not* go to sleep. This time you shall not put me to sleep. I defy you to do it. I'm sure you can't."

"That's the right attitude of mind at

present," Marston returned, in a tone of perfect satisfaction. "That will prevent you going to sleep, and will keep all the mesmeric influence on the physical plane. Besides, since you *will not* go to sleep, I would not attempt to constrain you for worlds."

"Not even to be goaded or taunted into giving way, Mr. Marston?" said Edith, with an affectation of stiffness. "Do you know, if it was not for one consideration, you would fall under the frightful weight of my displeasure?"

"And what protects me?"

Glancing up for a moment with a gravity of expression sweeter, under the circumstances, than any smile could have been, she answered:

"The fact that I trust you altogether—to know best and to do best."

Marston made no immediate reply in words, but looked the thanks that could perhaps only have been weakened by expression. He went on with the mesmeric process for a little while, and then said:

"I think you will be none the worse now.

Perhaps rather stronger and more vigorous than before."

During the conversation that had immediately followed the trance, Mrs. Malcolm had opened the shutters again. They now went back for a time to their former seats in the recess of the window, and fully talked over the achievement of the afternoon in all its bearings. The settlement of a plan of future operations engaged their serious attention. The proceedings of the afternoon had been clearly experimental in their nature. It was impossible on the face of things for Mr. Marston to be constantly coming down from London and meeting the ladies at Kinseyle Court, when no one would be able to understand why, if his business with them was so important, he should not go to one of their houses. Besides, Mrs. Malcolm was at Highton and Edith at Compton Wood.

"There is only one satisfactory plan, and that is for Miss Kinseyle to come and stay with me at Richmond."

"That must be done soon, if it is to be before I go to the Miltenhams," Edith suggested.

"I have nothing to say except that you can command my attendance at Richmond whenever you choose."

"And till we meet again there I fall back into my original helplessness. Can't I do anything by myself, don't you think, Mr. Marston. It is frightfully tantalising to be told one is such a wonderful creature, but to feel all the while the most ordinary sort of clay, incapable of doing anything oneself."

"I do not know enough yet," said Marston, "of the object in view to be able to give any advice. Great spiritual potencies of some sort are clearly interested in you. That you should get used, under mesmeric treatment, to freer intercourse with them, is clearly in the programme, but till they have told us, through you, something more of what is wanted, we can only wait, it seems to me, and go on as we have begun."

"Couldn't I learn something of the knowledge you possess? Can you tell me any books to read against the time when I shall meet you next?"

"I might send you some books, if you wish it, but you are exempt really from all need of

taking the trouble which we humbler mortals have to take."

"I forbid you to make fun of me, Mr. Marston."

"I'll remember the order if I am ever tempted," said Marston, "but it is not relevant to what I was saying. It is not worth while for me, is it, to prescribe rules for you to follow in order to get blue eyes or golden hair—or to acquire the faculty of clairvoyance?"

"But above all," put in Mrs. Malcolm, "it is not necessary for us to be making any programme for the time between this and our establishment at Richmond. That might be a few days hence, if Miss Kinseyle can arrange to come."

And with the resolution that the plan should be carried out without loss of time they ultimately parted. Marston would not be driven back to Thracebridge. He would not consent to so long a détour for the ladies. They all walked down the avenue together, and the ladies got into their carriage at the gate, Marston setting off on his walk in the opposite direction. He turned to look after

them as long as they were in sight. Edith looked back and waved her hand, her face bright with one of her sunniest smiles; and again just before a bend in the road carried them off finally, he saw that she turned and repeated the sign, though the distance was too great to see more.

CHAPTER IX.

SOCIAL DUTIES IN THE WAY.

The Richmond plan did not prove quite such plain sailing as in the first instance both Mrs. Malcolm and Edith had supposed it. Mrs. Malcolm came over to Compton Wood the following day to lay her proposals formally before Mr. Kinseyle, but found the usually quiet household already invaded by visitors. Mrs. Miltenham, accompanied by one of her daughters, had driven over from Deerbury Park, on the other side of the county, a two hours' drive, having announced her coming by a letter, which reached Compton Wood by the early post in the morning. An old friend, Lady Margreave, she explained to Mr. Kinseyle and Edith, who lived in Westmoreland, had been asking her to go and stay there. She had arranged to go for a week or ten days, at a date that had now

all but arrived; and Lady Margreave had just written to ask her to bring any of her girls if she was inclined. There was a wedding in prospect, and this might give rise to interesting questions about bridesmaids. It had suddenly occurred to Mrs. Miltenham that she might take Edith as one of her girls. Florence, the daughter then with her, and Edith's principal friend in the Miltenham household, could go, and would be delighted to have Edith go with her. It was a charming house, sure to be full of people, and the visit would be a very pleasant thing for Edith, and an introduction to very desirable friends. Then there would be the wedding afterwards, when she would assuredly be welcome as a bridesmaid, and in any case she had been coming to Deerbury Park in about a fortnight, so it was merely advancing matters a little for her to come at once.

Mrs. Miltenham had taken the trouble to come over about this matter in sheer affection for Edith, and desire to do her a good turn, and the offer was one that could not be treated with any hesitation even. The situa-

tion was explained to Mr. Kinseyle and his daughter together, and it never crossed the father's mind that there could be any feeling on Edith's part concerning the proposal beyond gratification and eagerness to go.

"It is hard upon you," Mrs. Miltenham had wound up by saying, "to lose her for a fortnight more than you expected, and a fortnight sooner; but it is such a pleasant opening for her, that I felt sure you would submit to the sacrifice."

"Indeed, I should have been shocked if you could have imagined my selfish desires could stand in Edith's way. I will not pay her so bad a compliment as to say I shall not miss her; but I would not consent to have her stop here on my account. I am ashamed, as it is, to have her with me as much as I do, with your pleasant house always open to her."

"You know you don't keep me with you at all, Papa dear; but I insist on spending some of my time in the paternal halls. I declare, Aunt Emma, Papa, in his boundless affection for me, is always struggling to turn me out of the house. Extremes meet, and if I were

perfectly intolerable, he could not be more pressing to have me leave him alone."

"And you do exactly as you choose, my dear, as usual, in all cases, of course," Mrs. Miltenham returned. "But that being the case, perhaps the shortest way will be to ask if you mean to honour Florence and me with your company to Oatfield, as I propose."

Edith was not by any means indifferent to the perversity of fate shown in the overthrow of the Richmond programme, but she was too keen-sighted and self-reliant a person to hesitate under the circumstances. Mrs. Miltenham's offer was one that could not be declined without a much more intelligible reason than any she had to give. If the pressure of her own inclination in the matter could have been quite unfettered by complicated motives, she would probably have obeyed the attraction of her psychic sympathies; but she was unwilling—and vaguely associating the idea of duty with her social engagements, would even have thought it wrong—to rebuff Mrs. Miltenham's desire to bring her forward in the world. She con-

fronted, in imagination, the unfortunate necessity of disappointing Mrs. Malcolm, but saw that what had to be done, had better be done with a good grace. She reviewed the situation in this spirit in the time it took her to cross the room and give Mrs. Miltenham a kiss, and simply said :

" I will forgive you, dear Aunt Emma, for making me out so headstrong, in consideration of your having been so sweet as to come over and arrange this yourself. I will very kindly honour you with my company, and am very grateful to you for wanting it. But it is agonizing to think that I have got three new dresses getting ready with Mme. Clarice, that cannot *possibly* be sent home by telegraph. They were designed for Deerbury Park, and now—but the dilemma is too frightful to be thought of."

" That's one reason why I came over myself, dear. I must understand exactly how you are situated."

Having thus taken a serious and practical turn at once, the conversation was soon afterwards adjourned to Edith's bedroom—where a select committee reviewed the

resources of the young lady's wardrobe. Mrs. Miltenham stayed for lunch, the conversation at this meal being occasionally tinged by the preoccupation of the morning.

"You had better telegraph, my dear. I will send on the message for you as we go back through Wexley. It will save a day."

"Ought Edith to telegraph herself?" said Mr. Kinseyle, puzzled. "I did not know Lady Margreave had mentioned her personally."

"My *dear* papa, I am not going to telegraph to Lady Margreave, but to Mme. Clarice! How could we be talking of anyone else at such a moment as this?"

"We have decided that Edith's things must be sent on straight to Westmoreland, and as soon as possible," Mrs. Miltenham explained. "She is very fairly presentable as she is, but she had better order up her reserves."

Mr. Kinseyle apologized for his mistake, and declared that it was a great comfort

Edith had Mrs. Miltenham's judgment to go by in such matters.

Mrs. Miltenham's carriage had been ordered after lunch, and they were all out on the lawn waiting for it, the visitors ready dressed for their departure, when Mrs. Malcolm drove up.

Edith would have preferred to have received her alone, but there was no help for it; and Mr. Kinseyle, having gone up to meet her, brought her round the house to the group in the garden.

Edith received her with warmth, presented her to Mrs. Miltenham, and introduced her cousin Florence; but Mrs. Malcolm's quick perceptions divined something wrong. She asked no questions, and made no reference immediately to the previous evening, but began on commonplace topics with Mr. Kinseyle. The newly-made arrangements were none the less disclosed prematurely.

"Well then, my dear," said Mrs. Miltenham, as her carriage was seen emerging from the stable-yard, "this is Wednesday. We shall see you at Deerbury Park on Friday by the 3.15 train. Come with your

maid to the Milten Wick Station, and I'll have a carriage to meet you. Somebody's sure to be with it, to take care of you, and you'll be quite safe. There, good-bye," kissing her; "Mr. Kinseyle will see us to the carriage. Don't both of you come. You'll be prepared for a long campaign, and I'm sure you'll enjoy it."

"I'm sure I shall, aunt," going with them to the edge of the lawn.

She sent lively messages to the other members of the Miltenham family—especially recommended that her uncle should be encouraged to bear up cheerfully in the hope of seeing her on Friday, and waved airy adieus with both hands as the carriage drove away.

"And now, dear Marian," coming back to the lawn, and linking her arm in Mrs. Malcolm's, "come with me to the arbour, and I'll tell you all about it."

"It tells itself, dear, unfortunately," said Mrs. Malcolm. "You are going away."

"I am going away, and our lovely project is not to be—for the present, at any rate. I wish things had fallen out differently, but I

have been obliged to consent to accompany Mrs. Miltenham immediately on a visit. I would much rather have come to you, but if you will have me later on—after my Deerbury Park visit, instead of before—that can still be arranged."

"Certainly, I will make you welcome then, if you cannot come sooner. It seems a pity, as things began so well; but we must trust to the future. It is only your own welfare I am concerned about, and doing HER will."

"Shall I ever climb to your heights, I wonder? But you are independent—you have no other wishes but your own to consult. I *must* defer to my seniors, and live the life marked out for me. But I have not yet told you exactly how it has happened." And then she went on to give Mrs. Malcolm all details, and mentioned the name of the people to whom she was going.

"The Margreaves! You are going to Lady Margreave's!' cried Mrs. Malcolm, with more excited surprise in her tone than she often showed.

"Yes; do you know them?"

"Certainly I know them. I was staying there quite recently. It was almost from there that I came here."

"What a funny coincidence."

"More so than you can realize as yet. It must mean something. But I see—that must be left for your intuitions to discover, my dear."

"What do you mean, Marian? Don't tantalize me in this frightful way. What extraordinary complications are implied in the fact that I should be invited to Lady Margreave's?"

Mrs. Malcolm pondered awhile as she sat by Edith's side in the little arbour, but remained perfectly grave, and would not be beguiled into treating the coincidence as a mere subject of curiosity.

"My dear Edith," she urged earnestly, "I do not love mysteries for their own sake, but one must respect other people's confidences. I can't speak quite frankly as to why I was startled when I heard of your going to Oatfield without betraying other people's secrets. Besides, you will be much more likely to be impressed correctly,

if there is anything for you to do in the matter, if you are not embarrassed beforehand by knowing too much in the ordinary way. I was put out and disappointed, I confess, when I first understood that you were not coming immediately to Richmond; but now I see it may be ordered for the best as it is. Will not that satisfy you?"

"It has evidently got to satisfy me, or I must go unsatisfied. But I shall be on thorns the whole time to know what it is that is expected of me. And what a nest of secrets you are, Marian. There is all Mr. Marston's stock for you to take care of, to begin with."

"Poor Sidney Marston! I have known him a long while, and that is how I come to know his affairs. He has had great trials to go through—or rather, he has been mixed up in great trouble for which he has been in no way responsible, but it has mostly fallen on him. There is no reason whatever why this should impair your confidence in him."

"There; I will not plague you about it

any more. Indeed, I have no petty curiosity about what does not concern me, and I was only playing at teasing you to tell your secrets. You great, calm, strong Marian, I know you would be invulnerable to my teasing, any way. However, I do not believe I shall have any impressions of any sort at Oatfield, with no Mr. Marston at hand to wind up my psychic faculties. You'll see you will be disappointed in me. Do you know on what exalted occupation—worthy of the wonderful creature Mr. Marston made me out—I have been spending the whole morning? I have been going over my dresses with Mrs. Miltenham, and devising orders for Mme. Clarice—thinking of nothing in heaven or earth but the composition of my costumes."

"It had to be done, I suppose, though I don't mean to deny that I think you were better employed yesterday."

"I am quite sure of it. And, do believe me, Marian, whatever distractions may be forced upon me by circumstances, I shall always look upon my inner life, that can only be shared with you, and any others like you,

if there are any, as far the highest and best."

Mrs. Malcolm made no comment beyond gently pressing Edith's hand, which she was holding on her lap. She was too wise and sympathetic to argue that the highest and best might still be apt to come off second-best, treated on those terms, and merely said:

"I shall always feel that way, too, about you, dear, however brilliant the worldly side of your life may be."

They had a long afternoon together, talking over various interests of everyday life, and a good deal of Mrs. Malcolm's own married life, which had been mostly spent in India, amidst a round of social amusements that had deeply wearied her, with a husband who had been kind without being sympathetic—a colourless life, with no specific griefs, but leaving a sense of disappointment behind. The moral of it all, she thought, was that the routine of worldly existence could not but be a disappointment for any person with lofty aspirations. The lesson was of no good at second-hand; but as she read it for herself,

it meant that the true purpose of life lay in a future beyond the conditions of earthly hopes and disappointments, though there was too much to be done for others in this world for any clear-sighted person to sink into a mere forlorn apathy. Towards the latter part of the time their conversation got thus on to a higher level than it traversed at first. Edith's readily kindled enthusiasm for spiritual ideas drew her fully into sympathy with this view, and they talked together for a long while of the beautiful presence they were both familiar with; of the purposes in regard to them that SHE might have in view, and of the mysterious link that must unite them—Edith and Mrs. Malcolm—by reason of their similar relationship to the Spirit of their visions. That the Spirit in both cases was identical, Mrs. Malcolm no longer doubted.

When at last they separated, and Mrs. Malcolm bade Edith good-bye for an indefinite period—for the next day she would have to spend in preparations, and on the Friday she would be going—Edith was more acutely sensible of distress than she had felt at first.

"It is a real misery for me to part with you, Marian, and I am quite out of conceit with my new programme, now that talking with you has made me feel all it costs me. Good-bye. I shall not really be living till I meet you again—only playing a part. May it be sooner than seems possible. I shall do everything I can to bring that about, and I shall write to you *constantly*, and look forward to your letters as my best events."

"I shall be a faithful correspondent, dear, as long as ever you are, you may depend upon it." And then the carriage was suffered to drive away.

CHAPTER X.

IMPRESSIONS BEHIND THE SCENES.

Miss Kinseyle was a good correspondent while at Oatlands, as she had promised to be. She sent Mrs. Malcolm a bright and lively account of her journey and arrival at the Margreave mansion, and one incident of the otherwise uneventful trip had an especial interest for her friend as bearing on her own peculiar gifts.

"I have had a new sort of experience, too, I must tell you," she wrote; "one that seems very stupid and meaningless, but in your superior wisdom you may be able to explain it, and if not you must draw upon the boundless stores of Mr. Marston's occult knowledge. We had to stop at Halford on our way here to get our proper train, and waited in the refreshment-room imbibing tea. As we went up to a table in one corner I saw an old

woman sitting there, and was just wondering why Aunt Emma was making for that table, when there were others vacant, when, having looked round the room for a moment, I turned round again to follow Aunt Emma, when, lo and behold !—or rather lo without beholding — my old woman was there no longer. I could not make out in the least how she had got away so suddenly, and asked Aunt Emma what had become of the old woman. She asked what old woman; and appeared to think I was crazy when I would have it that an old woman had been sitting at the table a moment before. Neither she nor Florence had seen any old woman at all. Then suddenly, a few minutes afterwards, there was my old woman again standing a little behind Aunt Emma's chair, and I somehow felt, though she looked quite life-like, that it was not a flesh and blood old woman at all. I asked Florence, who was sitting beside me, if she saw anybody, and she looked at me as if she was wanting the address of the nearest lunatic asylum. So then I asked Aunt Emma if she knew anybody like so and so—minutely describing the

old woman that I was looking at all the while —a dear old soul with a kind, sweet expression, a bit of black velvet across her forehead under white hair, and so on. Aunt Emma fairly started, and said I was exactly describing her old nurse, who only died a year ago. The dear old thing seemed to smile upon her, and then melted away—disappeared somehow, I don't know how. I told them I had just seen her, and, as they know I am not quite canny, they were rather alarmed and uncomfortable about it, and wished I would not go on in that strange way. But I could not feel that the apparition boded any harm, though they were both horrified at me when I said I should like to see her again."

Edith's next letter came a day or two afterwards, when Mrs. Malcolm had already returned to her own house at Richmond, whither she had requested Miss Kinseyle to address her correspondence. She was thoroughly enjoying the pleasant life at Oatfield, where a house-full of people were engaged from morning to night in helping one another to chase the glowing hours, not

only with flying feet in the evenings, but by every device known to civilized ingenuity in connection with that kind of hunt.

"It seems ridiculous to say I have not had time to write," she said, "when I have nothing whatever to do but amuse myself; but in truth there are so many people helping me to do that, that I am borne along in a roaring current of gaiety, and have had to display the firmness of a heroine in order to secure a couple of hours to myself to-day before it is time to dress for dinner. And to get this leisure I have had to make Florence read my part for me in the 'Happy Pair,' on pretence that I will not rehearse again with Colonel Danby till he knows his words. For I have to break the news to you that your frivolous friend, whom you destined for training, during this period, of so much more exalted a character, has been found out by her present admirers as possessing genius of a surpassing order in a new and hitherto unsuspected line. I am to eclipse Ellen Terry and Mrs. Kendal, and all the rest of them, as an actress, if I fling myself with sufficient enthusiasm into my new vocation.

And I am to dazzle creation to begin with by appearing in the 'Happy Pair' at some theatricals in preparation here, acting with a certain Colonel Danby now staying here, who has been the discoverer of my undeveloped capacities. Now, I have no intention of going stage-mad, and *know* that all this is nonsense, and that I am merely having some fun for the moment; but to hear Colonel Danby and the rest of them, Count Garciola included, you would think I was the eighth wonder of the world. It makes me wonder whether I am really a delusion and a snare in all my aspects, and I look back upon what Mr. Marston said to me in the Countess's Study, thinking was he too, perhaps, mistaken in me and caught by some shallow characteristics which make me reflect the ideas of the people about me like a looking-glass. Write and tell me, dear Marian, that I am wrong in that supposition, at least; for though you will be sighing over me, I *know*, I *feel*—lost as I am in this ocean of frivolity—I do not want to turn out a delusion and a snare for you. Really—though it seems absurd for me to have the vanity to say it,

when I snatch an hour's leisure to do so in the midst of days spent altogether in the most useless and unimproving amusement—however I spend my outer life, I must always be leading an inner life too, that such people as are around me now cannot sympathize with, so I say nothing about it to any of them. It is my inner life which unites me with you, and I would not have that tie broken for all the world.

"However, I must tell you about outer things here, and that is why I mentioned the theatricals. No more of them, except for one thing that I must faithfully report. You know, of course, having been here yourself so lately, that there is a veritable 'Happy Pair' at Oatfield, besides the make-believe pair of which I am part. They are to act in another piece on the eventful evening, in the course of which they have not got to make love to each other by any means, but to fight like cat and dog. They were rehearsing yesterday afternoon before dinner, and some of us were looking on, and I was sitting near them to prompt Terra Fildare if she wanted it. There was somebody else as prompter in general

but she had insisted on having me as a prompter all to herself, and I was holding her book and attentively following her great speech, wherein she reviles the wicked gipsy in the most slashing manner, when all of a sudden I got a feeling I have never had before. It seems perfectly ridiculous to say so, but I can only describe it as a feeling of *horror!* There was nothing whatever to cause it. The room was half full of people; it was daylight still; we were all in the midst of laughing and talking, and above all I saw nothing—nothing, I mean, of *our sort* that other people do not see—to explain the feeling. Then again, you know, it does not horrify or frighten me in the least when I really do see apparitions. Well, I felt my flesh creep all over, and a trembling set in just as I can imagine I might feel if I were suddenly to see a murder committed; and *then*, for the first time, it flashed upon me what I had not understood before, about Terra Fildare and Count Garciola.

"Do you remember when Mr. Ferrars tried to mesmerise me at Kinseyle Court, and I told you something about a man and a

woman and an atmosphere of anger or quarrelling around them ? I had been vaguely puzzled about them from the first time we met, with a sort of sense of having seen them before ; and though I could not identify it, I came to the conclusion that I might have seen them, without being introduced, somewhere in London last year, when I was with the Miltenhams. But all at once it came over me like a flash yesterday that where I saw them before was in that queer sort of half-and-half vision at Kinseyle Court. I tell you, dear Marian, I *recognised* them. Don't tell me I am dreaming—but I know you will not do that. You will understand me, and be able to give some wise explanation of my strange feeling. It did not altogether pass off for a long time. What does it mean ? If I foresaw, in some clairvoyant way I do not understand, their theatrical quarrel, it makes out my impression to have been very ridiculous, because there is no real quarrel in that at all. They are devoted to one another really, and though Terra Fildare is reserved and haughty about it before people, I know she unbends tremendously at

other times to make up. And why should I get so absurdly frightened and overcome about a ridiculous make-believe emotion in a drawing-room play? Explain, explain, my sorceress and oracle! Rede me the riddle."

Mrs. Malcolm was deeply perplexed by this slight and shadowy incident. Starting with the assumption that there was some especial significance in the circumstances that had taken Edith into the presence of Terra and her new lover just at this juncture, she had carefully refrained from saying a word to Edith which might have set her imagination to work in regard to those two persons. But she (Mrs. Malcolm) had been on the look-out for some sign of an occult character through the clairvoyante which might give the clue to the mystery. Here, quite spontaneously, *a* sign, such as it was, seemed to have come; but what was to be made of it?

"I am utterly helpless," she wrote, "in regard to your strange experience about Miss Fildare and Count Garciola, but I am very far from treating it as unimportant or meaningless. It is bitterly tantalizing to be so built round by circumstances of the world

and society that our best nature is only to be developed at stray moments that can be caught at in passing, when the serious business of worldliness, which is of such little moment in the long run, may happen to allow. If you could only be put into a proper trance, and *asked* what is the meaning of the impression you had, we should know all about it, and if there is any important warning lurking in the sign sent to you, we might all be guided by it. I would do anything to have you with me for half an hour only, with Mr. Marston to put you off—since he has the right influence which suits you—but I can only fret against the fate that does not permit this. Are you surprised that I take the thing so seriously? If people of the world would only realize sometimes how frivolous are the things they treat so serious, and how serious some of the trifles they put aside with contempt! Perhaps Terra Fildare is in face of some danger, of which the threatrical quarrel is a mere symbol, and we are half warned of it, without, unless we can learn more, being able to give her any warning of the smallest value. Dear Edith, don't

think of me as sighing over your worldliness in a gloomy and Puritanical way, because you are enjoying your life and your youth, and the very natural admiration of the people round you; but all I entreat is, do not forget that you have faculties and senses that may render important the least of your fancies and impressions as they cross the current of your amusements, which may obscure but cannot quench your higher intuitions. If you notice any other strange and apparently causeless feelings about Miss Fildare or her betrothed, do not treat the least of them as insignificant. Tell me about them, I implore you. More may hang on this than you imagine, for I may tell you now that, owing to my own feelings, I had been *expecting* you to have some abnormal impressions of that kind, though I could not in the least foresee what they would be."

Edith was set on the *qui vive* for impressions concerning the betrothed couple by the receipt of this letter; but the days went on without bringing her fresh warning. She tried to make friends with Terra Fildare; but the two girls, though unconscious of any

reasons why they should not coalesce, did not, as a matter of fact, grow closely sympathetic. And they were kept apart, to some extent, by circumstances, as Terra was pre-occupied by her love affairs, while Edith, being game on the wing, so to speak —not yet brought down by any man's gun— was more pursued by general admiration. Two young men staying in the house—a captain of Hussars and a political private secretary — both engaged with fishing as the serious occupation of life, made fierce love to her in their leisure hours, and the Colonel Danby to whom reference had been made in her letter coached her in the histrionic art. The Colonel was a handsome widower, between forty and fifty, rich and well connected, tall, slightly built, a mirror of fashion as regards his dress, with bright grey eyes, a moustache dappled with grey, dark brown hair that only showed the effects of time by a gradual disappearance from the crown of the head, while above his temples it still waved with moderate luxuriance. With a faintly lackadaisical manner, he was, nevertheless, a man of taste and intelligence

and always expressed himself with an easy finish of language that corresponded to his somewhat dandified toilet.

Coaching a young lady, recommended by good looks and a bright gaiety of disposition, in a sentimental comedietta, is a seductive occupation.

Colonel Danby declared that the natural gifts Miss Kinseyle possessed were so undeniable, that it really was worth while to take trouble—and he was an acknowledged professor on the amateur stage.

"You only want drilling in details," he explained, after they had gone through the most critical scene towards the end of the piece twice one afternoon, and he was suggesting a third repetition of certain "business." "No two young actresses can be trained alike. Some, if they are badly off for brains or hearts, must be taught to simulate the emotions they ought to feel as they act. They are the pupils who always tell you they will do what you want all right on the night—and they never do!"

"But they get off so much drilling in that

way—clever girls! From this moment I resolve to trust to the inspirations of the night."

"Do, by all means. That is a safe course for you, because the brains and the heart will give you the right inspiration. But you have fallen headlong into my snare. I am never attempting to teach you how to display emotion. I leave that to your own imagination. I am teaching you the mechanical business, the drudgery of your art. That's a matter of knowledge, and not of inspiration, and so I can help you. Feeling may give you the right expression when you say your best bits; but for want of knowledge you may turn your back to the audience when the features pass through their most delicate crises."

"And for the penalty of having fallen into your snare am I to lacerate my heart over your cruelty a third time this afternoon?"

"Never mind giving rein to the imagination now. I do not *ask* you to wear out your feeling for the part, but to get into the habit of standing in the right places at the

right time, making the right gestures, and so on. Then on the night your performance is ready to be illuminated by the poetry of feeling turned fully on. In the dramatic art as in all others there is a *technique* which has nothing to do with its poetry, but without which the poetry will never be transmitted to the spectator."

"Once more into the breach, then; once more let us toil at our pleasure."

"And if one young lady, through this little experience, should realize that to get pleasure worth having one must toil, the afternoon will not certainly be thrown away."

"Are we all so frivolous as that would imply?"

"Not taught in the same school that men go through, the school of life, that shows exertion and enjoyment everywhere hand-in-hand. The boy learns the lesson at football and cricket, the man in the hunting-field and in his profession, or in political life, perhaps; and every man worth having acts on the principle by instinct. A girl floats into the world without always realizing the secret that unlocks its best treasure."

"But if they are lazy, and other people are good-natured, it may be so nice for them to be saved all trouble."

"Saved all trouble, all hard exertion, all rough contests beyond their strength—yes, by all means. That is according to the fitness of things. But though the men who shield them and take trouble for them may enjoy their task most keenly, the women themselves, who take no trouble, will enjoy life least. The rough and violent trouble of this life is for men to take; but, believe me, women in their way may be the counterparts of those keen sportsmen of the sterner sex, who get the best out of life in all directions."

"I never supposed you were so desperately energetic a person."

"Because I am cool in my movements, and behave quietly and dress like a gentleman. One may be a keen sportsman in costume even; and if a man wants to make himself as presentable as he can he must take pains, though the pains taken may not be paraded. Let us come back to our play. The enjoyment other people will take in seeing you act will be somewhat greater if you act well than

if you act badly. But the difference in the enjoyment *you* will derive from it, according to whether you take trouble beforehand and act well, or let everything slide and act as badly as your natural gifts will allow you, will be immense."

"Your wisdom is overwhelming, but I am so sure to enjoy myself *when the play is over*, that I can't feel terrified by your warning. Nevertheless, you have vanquished me in argument, and I am your prisoner. Command me, and I recommence my sobs; standing with the right foot foremost and the handkerchief in both hands, is it not——"

"What?" cried Terra Fildare, coming into the drawing-room where the rehearsals were going on, "you poor, dear, over-driven slave, are you still in the hands of the overseer? I thought you were liberated an hour ago."

"To quote my maid, I am 'that stupid' that I have got to go over the last scene again. I forgot to tell you that, Colonel Danby. It was such lovely criticism—it was so straightforward. 'Is it much trouble learning to act, miss?' my maid asked me

last night. 'Frightful trouble for me, Simcox,' I told her. 'That's the worst of learning anything, miss,' she answered; 'and if one is that stupid about it, I don't think it's worth while.' "

"For a mimic with your talents, Miss Kinseyle, I should say Simcox must be a perfect treasure."

"But I want you to try that duet with me," said Terra. "Is there any distant future when you will get out of Colonel Danby's clutches?"

"Certainly not," said the gentleman named, "if Colonel Danby is permitted to decide. The 'Happy Pair' is merely a maiden sweepstakes, and I hope I shall see Miss Kinseyle win a Derby yet in some London theatricals worthy of her powers."

"But, limiting eternity by the dressing-bell, Terra, even then I will not go on for ever. I'll join you in the gallery in three half seconds, if you'll get the piano open."

"But please observe," said Colonel Danby, "that if you go round that side of the table you will have to bury your sobs in the wrong sofa cushion, and then the whole

effect will be spoiled. That's right; if you'll solemnly promise to keep the table on your right hand always, I will not torment you any more to-day."

"Don't mind my nonsense," said Edith. "I'm not a bit tired, really; and I am cultivating quite a taste for taking pains. But I must go now to Miss Fildare, for Sir James is sure to insist on that duet this evening, and she wants to get it up, I know."

The "Happy Pair" came first on the night of the performance, and Edith achieved a most triumphant *début*. The arrangements of the night were complete enough to give an air of reality even to the shower of bouquets with which the *débutante* was greeted, as she passed before the curtain in response to an enthusiastic call; and Colonel Danby gathered them up with graceful promptitude, placing the finest—which had been thrown by Sir James Margreave—in Edith's hands, while he bore the rest on her behalf.

"I am sure the flowers ought to be half yours," she said, when they got behind again. "I am entirely the product of your careful coaching."

"Not half mine," said the gallant Colonel. "This much of the bouquet"—drawing his finger round almost the whole of it, as he transferred the flowers he held himself to his left arm—"is due to your natural talents, and so much"—picking out a single rosebud from the edge—"is due to my teaching. May I keep my share?"

Edith smiled pleasantly at the compliment and the courteous grace of its delivery.

"With my grateful thanks—most certainly!"

"I dare say it will last longer than your share," he added, as he put it in his buttonhole.

Some of the anxious performers who were to appear in the next piece were standing near them at the time, but, absorbed in their own affairs, paid no attention, and the two sat down on a sofa in the roomy wings, created for the occasion by a skilful adaptation of a conservatory to this purpose.

"But now," said the Colonel, getting up almost immediately, "I must prescribe for you. You will admit that I have not pressed you to take champagne till now. I do not

approve of it to act upon, but after the nervous excitement of your triumph, it will be a sedative and not a stimulant."

He left her to go in search of the wine; and while she remained lying back in the corner of the sofa, a little tired, but thoroughly enjoying the pleasant flavour of the applause still ringing in her ears, one of the actors, ready dressed for the next piece, passed close in front of her. He was dressed as a gipsy, and so completely disguised that she did not immediately recognise beneath the black and red velvet and leather trimmings the true wearer—Count Garciola. Writing the following day to Mrs. Malcolm, and describing her impression, she said, after quickly and slightly sketching the events of the evening so far:

"And now I come to the important part of my story, because it has to do with something different from frivolous nonsense and passing amusements. I was resting, on a sofa behind the scenes after the play was over—left to myself for a few moments as it happened—when one of the actors came by ready dressed for his part, quite a disguise, a gipsy's dress, and I did not recognise him

at once. But as I looked up, with my thoughts a hundred miles at the time from anything psychic, I saw him with some other sense besides eyesight, and it is most difficult to describe the thing to you just as it occurred. For an instant I thought his dress was smoking as if it was half on fire. He seemed to move along in the middle of a kind of pillar of cloud—nothing of a regular shape, but lumpy and massive round the upper part of him. But this moved with him, you understand, and was not left behind like smoke. It was dark in colour, with a lurid reddish glow, but irregular and patchy—more dark in some places, and more red in others. I gazed in wonder, but he was not thinking of me, and took no notice. He passed in front of my sofa, and round by the end I was leaning on, and for a few moments he stood quite near me—within reach if I had put out my hand—for some one else came by behind me, and spoke to him in passing. As he stood in this way, the cloud round him wafted up against me, and then it gave me the strangest impressions. First of all a horrid thrill of feeling, something like what

I wrote to you about before, that made me suddenly turn almost faint, and *then*—it was just as though, when the cloud touched me, I suddenly saw *in it*, as in a kind of infinity that stretched all round me, an endless quivering mass of *tableaux vivants*, all mixed up together in the wildest confusion, but all of the same kind; all some sort of scene of violence in which the man in the middle of the cloud was engaged. For the moment I seemed to have his whole life whirling before me, and things it would take hours to tell seemed flashed upon me with such violence that my brain was all thrilling in a way I can't describe. It gave me the feeling, as it were, inside my head, that you have, don't you know, in a fast train when it suddenly dashes over an iron bridge, and the whirring uproar is distracting while it lasts. But I do not mean that I could now set to work and write down his biography. I could not do anything of the kind. But I have got the impression that I *have known*, though I have forgotten, everything, even down to details. All I can say, now, is that it is a horrible story. There are many women

mixed up in it, one in particular, whose image flashed as it were out of a dozen corners at once, and, since you commanded me, dear Marian, so earnestly to tell you all my impressions, I will say that this woman seems to be his wife. I don't mean to say that I recognise Terra's features in the image—one hasn't time to question an impression of that sort before it is gone—but the idea that this woman was, or was to be, his wife—for I suppose I must look on all these dreadful pictures as prophetic—was borne in on me as if by a series of violent sledge-hammer blows, if you understand what I mean, on the rafters of the bridge, heard through the deafening din as I dashed through. Of course you will understand there was no noise really; it was the racking thrill in my head that I am wanting to indicate to you. For one instant I can remember I seemed to see the woman I am speaking of with a dagger in her hand, and he grasping her wrist and throwing her back on the ground. And then I can remember instantaneous flashes of her seen in tears and despair, or in fury, and half the pictures I saw all the while seemed swimming

in blood. A few moments longer, I must have screamed or fainted; but suddenly all the sights around me seemed to shrink together again, and then I saw that the Count had passed on and was walking away —for the man in the gipsy dress, you will understand, was Count Garciola. It has given me such a feeling of horror for him that I can't bear the sight of him, and found myself manœuvring this morning to avoid the risk of possibly having to shake hands when I first met him at breakfast.

"I am fairly longing for a talk over the whole thing with you, and for a healthy refreshing bath of your good influence, dear Marian, after all this. I wonder if I could manage a day or two with you before Deerbury Park, after this visit is over. I should so much like it.

"And Colonel Danby, when he came back with some champagne he had been to fetch for me, thought my prostrate nervousness was all due to the excitement of the play. It was so ridiculous. I couldn't explain to him exactly what had happened, but I told him after a while that, though I had nearly

fainted, it was not the play at all, but merely something in the nature of a ghost that I had seen—that I often saw such things, and that sometimes they made me uncomfortable. It made me laugh, the way he summed up my case, and put everything down to hallucinations conjured up by my highly-strung artistic temperament, and recommended riding, and lawn-tennis played earnestly, as the best preservatives from those sort of attacks in future."

Mrs. Malcolm telegraphed to Sidney Marston within ten minutes of reading this letter, and begged him to come over and consult with her that day if possible. The afternoon found him at her service in the drawing-room of her little Richmond villa, overlooking a sloping garden running down to the river. Mrs. Malcolm had no children, and lived by herself—when not visiting friends—in this quiet and graceful retreat, with a middle-aged man and his wife to look after her house, garden, and pony-carriage, and a couple of maids. She would sometimes have her brother to stay with her for a time—sometimes one of many feminine

cousins—but just now she was by herself. Marston was soon put in possession of all the facts of the case. As to the relations between Terra Fildare and Ferrars, he was acquainted with these already; and now he was given Edith's letter to read, and asked for advice in the emergency.

"Is there any way of combating the frightful menace that seems hanging over that misguided girl, or do you take an impression like that to be fatally prophetic?"

"I should be inclined," he said, "always to take a prophetic vision as a menace rather than as a fatality, constantly as we find such things verified by events. It is one of the greatest mysteries how the future can be foreseen, when any future event is the product of a multiplicity of circumstances and independent acts by an indefinite number of people. But, of course, future events are constantly being foreseen by clairvoyants, down to their smallest details, though the world at large, in its ignorance, prefers a lazy disbelief in the facts to the effort of attempting to account for them. On the other hand, the prophetic vision may never do more than

reveal the tendency of events as they stand at any given moment, and by the exercise of energy sufficient to control them they may be guided into a new channel."

After a little more vague metaphysical speculations on the subject, Marston threw out a new idea.

"But is it just possible that the vision or impression caught by Miss Kinseyle from this man's aura may not be prophetic at all, but strictly retrospective?"

"How do you mean?"

"Suppose the wife is not Miss Fildare in the future, but some other wife in the past?"

"Ah, that is an idea; but I never heard he had been married before. If he had been a widower he surely must have told Terra, and Lady Margreave would know, and I think she would have mentioned it to me."

"But suppose there might be no widowerhood in the matter? It is merely a guess; but suppose Count Garciola, who is clearly a reprobate, and is a wanderer about the world, has left a deserted wife somewhere in Spain or elsewhere?"

Mrs. Malcolm gave vent to a low cry of apprehension and wonder.

"One has heard," Marston went on, "of such eccentricities as bigamy. The Count is likely to be a man of strong passions, and Miss Fildare, by all accounts, is a splendid prize."

"Poor infatuated girl!"

"It may be wrong to dwell on such a possibility without more evidence, but one could only get that—or stand a chance of getting it—through Miss Kinseyle's higher faculties properly awakened. If she comes to you, as she seems to think just possible, while the vision she has just had is still recent, it might be partially recovered in trance, and then examined more fully."

"I do wish she would come. If I can induce her; of course, I shall try."

"Do you want," Marston asked after a pause, "to recover Miss Fildare for George?"

"Why, the thought has never crossed my mind, because I have never supposed it possible. And there would be a long interval between even the realization of your terrible suspicion and the restoration of Terra to

George, which, indeed, is not the brightest dream I could have imagined, though I suppose it is useless to wish for anything better for him. His feelings are quite fixed —more's the pity."

She evidently spoke with more in her mind than she uttered, and Marston, without directly asking any question, waited silently, as though expecting further explanation.

"I had dreamed my dream on that subject," Mrs. Malcolm went on. "I hoped that George would have been drawn into the current of a new sympathy, and might have come to see how infinitely sweeter and nobler a companion for him Edith Kinseyle would have been. But I saw almost at once after they met that it was not to be—that he was too steadfast."

Marston still remained silent, and his features were set very rigidly as he gazed out across the garden, and between the trees which shaded it, to the gleam of the silver water beyond. A steam-launch puffed past the little opening of river visible as Mrs. Malcolm spoke, and emitted a discordant cry from its whistle.

"Do the boats annoy you much?" Marston said after a little while.

"The boats?" answered Mrs. Malcolm vaguely; "I hardly notice them. Yes," she went on after a little while, "that would have been a beautiful plan. It would have given George every prospect of happiness, and it would have linked Edith with myself, and perhaps with higher influences through me; but it is evidently not to be. To recover Terra might not render George really happy in the long run, but it is the only arrangement that will not involve him in certain unhappiness. How hard it is for the bits of colour in life's kaleidoscope to be rightly grouped! And if they are only a little wrong, how the picture is spoiled!"

"Indeed, that is so."

In the earnest depth of his utterance, the flavour of personal experience was but too perceptible.

"Who should know it better than yourself, Sidney?"

Mrs. Malcolm and her brother had known Marston from childhood, and the use of the

Christian name was natural to her when they were alone.

"Of course, my kaleidoscope has been fatally broken; but that need not be talked of."

"Well, I need hardly say I grieve with you; but, in one way, I look on you as like myself in reference to life. We neither of us live for it, but for something beyond. Of course, life is no good to you; but then, for whom that truly realizes the future can it be of any good? It can only be a matter of more or less patient waiting and performance of duty."

"We won't insult you by pushing the comparison too far. But the spirit in which you and I wait is very different, I fancy. It is one thing to wait, and merely feel dull; and another thing to wait, enduring torture all the while."

"You are morbid. No blameless man like yourself should feel the shadow of another's sin like that."

"Another's sin! I fear I am too cynical to feel that much; but another's shame

may dye one's own existence in every fibre."

Mrs. Malcolm only sighed, as over a problem for which she knew there was no solution.

CHAPTER XI.

AN INSTRUCTIVE TRANCE.

Mrs. Malcolm had fretted with so keen a sense of her own helplessness in the matter against the circumstances which had threatened to keep Miss Kinseyle away from her at this juncture, that she had trusted but little to the hope Edith had expressed of visiting her for a few days before she should go to Deerbury Park. It was with as much surprise as pleasure, therefore, that she found this proposal suddenly take a definite shape. Edith had not recurred to it again in her letters, and only at the last moment, about a week after the night of the theatricals, wrote to say that she would come to Richmond for a few days if Mrs. Malcolm would telegraph that she could receive her, and would meet her, or have her met, by such and such a train in London. The

answer had flashed back without a moment's loss of time, and George Ferrars—then in London wearing out a period of leave he had taken from his appointment at the Hague—was commissioned to meet the young lady at Euston Square and bring her on to Richmond. They arrived in comfortable time for dinner, to which feast Marston had also been summoned. Mrs. Malcolm and Edith had a little time to themselves in Edith's room beforehand.

"It is quite enchanting to be with you again, Marian," the girl declared. "And what a cosy nest you have here, with an exquisite view and sheltered privacy. What a pleasant room!"

"It is very good of you to have come, dear. Your feelers will have told you how much I wished it."

"It is very sweet of you to have wanted me; but for my part, I have had an undercurrent of longing to be here all the while I have been at Oatfield—charming as the visit has been. And that grew stronger, instead of waning with time. Only I was afraid Aunt Emma might raise insuperable ob-

jections. I diplomatised at last with exquisite skill — infected with Sir James's genius—and carried my point by surprise at a happy moment."

"In the great world, but not yet hopelessly and exclusively of it," Mrs. Malcolm said, with an affectionate caress.

"Not yet!—as if you had *almost* given me up for lost."

"You can't but be fought for by contending forces, my dear, and one or the other will conquer in the long run. Do you remember the vision I had of you at Compton Wood, as you balanced yourself on the fender?"

"My own private tight-rope! I had quite forgotten."

"However, I don't see the least change in you. You are as—as natural and—well, I won't pay you compliments, I dare say you have had a surfeit of them—as much yourself as ever—your best self."

"And nowhere so much as with you—my real self—with nothing reserved and locked up in my inner nature, as has, of course, been always the case up there. And now I

find you looking so well I have nothing more to ask after, for your brother has told me already that Mr. Marston is just as usual."

"He is coming here this evening."

"Capital! Then are you going to set to work upon me at once?"

"Are not the moments precious?"

"Ah! if life had fewer complications!" Edith sighed, acknowledging all that the question implied. "But tell me, now, have you been desperately disappointed in me? Because you expected some psychic justification for my visit to Oatfield, and I do not see that I have done more than form an extreme dislike for Count Garciola, and acquaint you with that mighty fact."

"My dear, I do not see how you could have done more, all by yourself. You have given us a clue. But now I must tell you some things to guard you against otherwise accidentally giving needless pain by talking of people at Oatfield. My poor brother George was in love with Terra Fildare, and she made the election you know of."

"Goodness! Did she know?"

"Certainly; and for a long while. That is all I need say. You will know now where the ice is thin."

They had a long gossip, and the little dinner party was so intimate as to put hardly any restraint on its continuance when they went downstairs. Edith met Mr. Marston with the frankest cordiality, and his manner was always so subdued and self-effacing, that his own gravity, and his silent observation of her as she talked, were in no way remarkable, nor suggestive of any abnormal emotions claiming especial restraint.

Mrs. Malcolm had given much thought to the problem how far to tell her brother what Edith had told her about her impressions of Count Garciola; but, unwilling on all grounds to shut George out from any mesmeric evenings they might have while Edith should be with her, she had decided finally that it was best to tell him all she had said, only suppressing the conjectures that had been built on the narrative by Mr. Marston. But their talk during dinner avoided the critical topic, and only touching lightly, while the servants were with them,

on the incidents of their last meeting at Kinseyle Court, went off into the depths of mystic science generally, in connection with which Marston was drawn to talk, getting on to the vexed question of prophetic foresight in its various aspects, and the metaphysical theories which might be taken to reconcile the possibility of this with the sense each human being possessed, of power over his own acts. And then, after a while, he wound up hastily some remarks he was making, and apologised for talking up in the clouds about such comfortless abstractions.

"It seemed to *me*," said Edith, "that the conversation was just beginning to be really interesting. Please don't talk down to my level, Mr. Marston; I would much rather try and listen up to yours."

"Sidney is troubled from time to time, you know, Miss Kinseyle," said Ferrars, "with spasms of a modesty that is most exasperating. In another man it would merely be bidding for applause, but in him it is a mental affliction to be sympathised with. We are sorry for you, old man; but now you can go ahead again."

"It isn't a question of levels, in that sense," Marston said, with knitted brows and face a little bent down over his plate. "I think Miss Kinseyle knows pretty well where I think her natural level to be."

"But by that theory I have fallen sadly away from my proper place in the world. Would that be for my sins in some former condition of existence?"

"I don't see the signs of the falling away."

"But, look here, Mr. Marston, I am going to have this out with you once for all. I like to be thought well of, you know. I do not object to that at all; but I should almost better still like to be able to think well of myself. You may mean something that is very nice and pleasant for me, only I don't understand it in the least."

"What I mean is a conjecture—in some respects at all events—as to the form in which I put it; but I think it involves a great truth. Of course, in the case of each of us, this organism that we are working with, the body with all its thinking machinery, and so forth, is something dif-

ferent from *ourselves.* That, we are all agreed about, here, of course? No one would deny that, but the rankest materialist. But it is such a long idea to work out in conversation; it seems hardly——"

"He's having a relapse. Can't you administer something, Miss Kinseyle?"

"Go on, Mr. Marston, please. When I'm tired, I'll tell you to stop; and till I tell you you'll go on. Is that agreed?"

Veiled by the mock stateliness of her words and manner, a subtle compliment to his power of interesting her was embodied in this injunction, and made him look up with a pleasant smile. He went on addressing himself specially to her, and yielding more fully than before to the stimulating influence —the bright fascination—of her peculiar beauty.

"Well; what I come to next, working on from the plain fact that the body is an organism animated by the soul, is this: the body may be looked upon as a sort of instrument played upon by the soul—of course I use the word 'soul' in its poetical and not its technical occult sense."

"What is the technical occult sense?" said Edith.

"An intermediate something between the body and the true spirit; but if you will let me put that aside for the moment, it will be better."

Edith nodded, and he went on:

"Well, if we grant that as a hypothesis, we come to what is clearly then a possibility —that, no matter how great a musician, so to speak, the soul may be, it cannot get more music out of the body than the quality of the instrument enables it to yield."

"I see. You mean, that we all feel possessed of grander ideas than we can express, of a higher nature than we can live up to?"

"Not exactly that; because anything we feel or think as definitely as that, is a tune played upon the instrument and within its capacity. The soul's thoughts on a higher level than the best capacities of the bodily brain, will not be susceptible of manifestation through that brain; in other words, WE, in our ordinary waking state, can never be conscious of our own soul's highest thoughts—

though, certainly, impulses of feeling may reach the incarnate consciousness which are in a manner reflections of the higher state of consciousness; but that is a later complication of the idea."

"But if we are cut off from the best part of ourselves in that way, and from its thoughts, how are we to know anything about them, or know that we ever have such thoughts?"

"I think we may know, in the sense of being able to feel, by indirect methods quite sure, about the real state of the case. Firstly, we have the great method of mesmeric trance. It is constantly observed that clairvoyants of humble education and no great intelligence will talk, in the mesmeric state, up to a far higher level than they apparently belong to; and, in the same way, I think, every clairvoyante will, in the mesmeric state, in some way, transcend his or her natural or ordinary states."

"Even me," said Edith lightly, with the intonation that implied she was ranking herself low down on the scale.

"Even you," replied Marston, with a very

different intonation that gave the phrase the opposite meaning. "However fine the natural brain may be, as an instrument, the soul can think and perceive on a higher level, and, under the peculiar conditions of the mesmeric trance, reveal or record its perceptions by the lips of the sensitive. But there is another way of getting at the idea that the complete soul is a greater Being than the soul as it speaks through the body in ordinary waking life; and that is the general review of what may be called the spiritual and psychological necessities of the case, if you think of the way in which the soul *must* really grow or evolve as time goes on."

Marston paused every now and then as he spoke; but no one interrupted, and he could not misunderstand the general desire that he should develope his theory more fully.

"You see, it is nonsense, really," he said, "to think of the soul, incarnate in the body, as having taken its rise there. It is far too great a manifestation of the exalted potencies in Nature to be grown in that casual fashion. If it lives after the body, as we all feel quite sure it does, it certainly lived before also.

In other words, its real habitat or home is on the spiritual plane or planes of nature. Its manifestation in the body is, so to speak, a descent into that state of existence. Not necessarily an unimportant process, or an accidental collapse of its higher attributes; not a fall, but a descent with a purpose: a descent in search of fresh experience, of fresh energy—as typified by the classical fable. Now, I should be disposed to regard that descent as the growth by the soul through its contact with matter—of the body, it developes in each case—which we are often too much in the habit of regarding as *the person*, complete as we see it. But it does not in the least degree follow that we should necessarily suppose that the whole soul—if I may use that expression—subsides into the body each time it attaches itself to a body, and partially transfers its consciousness to that body. It is a difficult idea to realize, because each person feels to be a complete entity in himself. But still it is very comprehensible that the centre of consciousness, which is impressed with that feeling, might, when transferred to another plane of nature, wake

up to the use of a host of new faculties, and thus find its consciousness immensely expanded, without being any the less conscious of identity with itself as formerly functioning in the body."

"It's *perfectly* intelligible," Edith declared. "Don't you think so, Marian?"

Mrs. Malcolm indicated assent.

"But now tell me," Edith asked, "how this bears on what we began by talking about — when we were speaking of our various levels?"

"I suppose," said Mrs. Malcolm, as Marston hesitated a little before framing his answer, "that he means your spiritual portion—your Higher Self, may be on a very high level."

"The 'Higher Self' is a very good expression," said Marston; "as bringing what I mean to a focus. I think, after the little observation we have had of you, even in the mesmeric state, that we may recognise your Higher Self as being undeniably on a very exalted level."

"Then why should it have such an inferior body?"

She put the question with perfect simplicity, following out the train of thought Marston had suggested, but the turn of the phrase naturally raised a laugh, and Ferrars protested :

"Miss Kinseyle, I protest, as an admiring friend of your lower self, which is quite good enough 'for the likes of me,' against the rudeness with which you speak of it from the heights of your Higher Self. I wonder what sort of a body *would* content you ?"

Marston did not venture on turning the opening afforded to the service of a compliment, and merely said, still keeping to the serious and philosophical vein :

"Relatively to the Higher Self, of course, any physical organism must necessarily be imperfect. There are questions that may be more easily asked than answered about these mysteries; but I can imagine that a very highly developed entity or soul may sometimes descend into incarnation—or grow a body — whichever way we like to put it, under the dictate of some specific and limited necessity. You may, for instance, have already gained, and have passed into the permanent

essence of your being, much that I am now only labouring to acquire. The organism you have now developed may not have been required to seek experience in that direction. But remember this is little more than guess-work."

"At any rate, Mr. Marston," said Edith, "it is a beautiful, beautiful theory, even if the least satisfactory part of it is the last part—required to make me out a more wonderful person than I seem. Oh, goodness! what a contrast it is to be talking about such things after our frivolities at Oatfield?"

This led to some questions about the theatricals; but Edith fenced these, and declared that after talking about her highest, she could not drop suddenly down to her lowest self.

"Let me keep, at any rate, on the intermediate level in which I can listen to Mr. Marston. And I do not remember, Mr. Marston," she added, with the resumption of her mock queenliness, "that I ever gave you leave to stop; so you will please continue."

"I had finished; and I think it was time after such a lecture. With your permission, my next performance will be to get you to talk—in the way you talked at Kinseyle Court."

"I'm quite ready—whenever you choose," said Edith.

They had all dined lightly, but still it was decided they should wait a little while before attempting any mesmerism, so the ladies went first into the drawing-room, while Ferrars and his friend had a cigar. They were well aware that it would be no compliment to Mrs. Malcolm to refrain, as she was known by both to look with a calm but emphatic scornfulness upon the affectations which in some ladies' houses condemned gentlemen guests to privations in this respect. A few words on this subject led Ferrars to add:

"Yes; Marian has no littlenesses. There are very few women like her."

"She is strong and grand: such a splendid friend for Miss Kinseyle to lean upon."

"You trust Miss Kinseyle's psychic facul-

ties, don't you?" Ferrars asked, after a little pause.

"I'm sure they are of a very fine order. But we have got to be sure we read their observations aright."

"Marian has told me of some impressions she has had while staying with the Margreaves. What do you make of all that?"

"I don't think we have ground to feel sure yet that we can read those suspicions aright. They seem to foreshadow trouble. Whether we can enable Miss Kinseyle to present them to us in a more defined way, so that they may possibly serve as warnings for the person chiefly concerned, remains to be seen."

"The worst of all this is that such warnings can hardly ever reach the person chiefly concerned, and would not be likely to secure much attention if they did; especially if they seemed to come in any way through myself, they could only be misinterpreted."

Marston did not press any contrary view of the matter on his friend. They talked on, round about the subject for awhile.

Ferrars was not, so far, inclined to regard

the statements Miss Kinseyle had made as having any practical bearing on his own great disappointment; and his interest in the proceedings was not really very keen when they eventually settled down, in the drawing-room, to the undertaking Mrs. Malcolm and Marston had in view.

Miss Kinseyle lay back in comfort in the corner of a sofa, Marston sat beside her, and the lights were a little subdued and so arranged that none should shine directly on her face.

"It gives me such a pleasant, comfortable feeling—drowsy, but not in the least faint," Edith said, as he took her hands to hold for a little while before attempting to bring on the trance. "Don't hurry me off too soon!"

"We will be as deliberate as you please. Only let us make a bargain that you will not be too obstinate in refusing to come back to us after you have been long enough away."

"Whatever does my poor little obstinacy in the matter signify, when you can pull me back, *nolens volens*, whenever you choose—

just as if I was a butterfly at the end of a string."

"I certainly would not be instrumental in sending you off for a flight unless I felt sure that I could bring you back."

"When I am further advanced, perhaps, I shall develope a will of my own, and come and go as I choose. Just fancy, you all waiting patient and helpless till to-morrow morning while I should be amusing myself in another world, and forgetting all about you. Oh, by-the-bye, you will not forget to make me remember this time, will you?"

"Everything of importance. I do not suppose you will be able yet to remember everything, but I will try to impress you to remember the best things. I am not in a hurry," he added, as he began gently stroking her forehead. "You shall only go off gradually."

"It is such a strong influence. Good-bye, Marian. I'll remember to give her your love. Will you remind me if I should forget," she said with a smile, looking up at Marston.

He nodded without speaking, and then, as he drew down both hands slowly close to her face, her eyes closed, and she remained quite still, giving a gentle little sigh of contentment. Marston went on silently, making passes over her face and head, and presently she laughed, and her face broke into a smile, though with the eyes still shut.

"Tell me what amuses you," Marston said.

"Is she gone off, then?" said Ferrars *sotto voce* to her sister.

The laugh had not suggested the idea, but her answer to Marston confirmed it.

"The little man in green made me laugh; he looks so funny, all changing colours as he bows to me. Now he's blue."

"Ask him if he can give you any information about your recent visions."

"He says he can try to find out anything I want to know. But—what?——" Then she laughed again. "I can't."

"Can't do what," asked Marston.

"Slip about in the way he does. He's here, there, and everywhere at once."

"Ask him if he knows your Spirit Queen."

"He says he will find out anybody I want him to find out."

"Well, say you will give him a trial. Ask him to find out Count Garciola."

Edith gave a little shudder, and her expression darkened. Then in a few moments it changed again, and she moved her head slightly on her pillow and murmured:

"Yes; that will be better."

"What will be better?"

"He will show me the way to where the Spirit Queen is—— Oh, it was you."

"What was it he did?"

"It was he took me there before, he says, though I did not see him then. I remember there was some one with me as I went."

"That will be very nice presently, tell him; but you must insist on getting him first to tell you what you want to know about Count Garciola."

"He says I know all about it if I will only remember. Yes; so I do; that's true, but what a disagreeable subject. What—were you with me then too? Why, you go about everywhere." Again she smiled. "He

says, Why not. It's easy to go about. The hard thing is to keep still."

Marston patiently resumed his efforts to keep her attention fixed upon the questions he wished answered.

"But ask your new friend to remind you what it was you saw about that woman Count Garciola was treating badly."

"What woman?—oh, I remember, his wife. She tried to kill him. Horrible people, all of them. It was on account of the other woman, but he drove her away, and she is in great distress now."

"Now!" said Ferrars, in a whisper to his sister, looking at her in bewilderment; "what does it mean?"

"Hush!" Mrs. Malcolm whispered back. "Don't speak; listen, but control your *feelings* even, for the present, or you may disturb her."

"Are you talking," asked Marston, "of something that is going to happen in the future, or of something that has happened already?"

Edith looked restless and perplexed.

"I see it all before me as if it was happening now," she said.

"Where is it happening?"

"Where—I don't know. What—where's he gone?"

"Has your new friend gone away?"

"Yes."

"Wish him to come back."

"Oh, he'll be back directly, I am sure. He's gone to find out something. There! there he is like a flash again. How funny!"

"What is funny?"

"I don't know. He seemed to be so full of the idea, he splashed it over me."

"What idea?"

"Seville—the woman he deserted is in Seville."

"You mean his wife by the woman he deserted."

"His wife that wanted to kill him. Yes. But it makes me feel *so* uncomfortable. Let me go away."

Marston looked round at his companions. Both looked pale and excited.

"We mustn't force her," Marston said,

holding her hand, and resting his other hand on her forehead. "Have you had enough?"

"Some further detail, for Heaven's sake," said Ferrars.

"Directly," Marston said to the clairvoyante in an earnest soothing voice. "Only one more question, and then we will be off elsewhere. Ask your friend to tell you some name by means of which we can find the woman in Seville."

"I don't think he wants to go again."

"Remember it is to do good that we want to know this. Try and bear the discomfort a little longer for Marian's sake. She wants to know so badly. And tell your friend you wish him to find out the name the woman bears. Is she known as Countess Garciola?"

"No," Edith said presently in a laboured voice. "He's gone; he'll be back soon. I'm bearing it for Marian's sake; but it makes me feel giddy and afraid to stand still and alone like this. What *nasty* things!"

"Don't look at them; order them to be gone. You are mistress, remember, and they

must remember it too. The country is pretty where you are, isn't it?"

"Ah! there he is again, Bernaldez! That's the name of the woman, though it's false. It's over the shop quite plain. I see it in a square, with a fountain near. *Don't* hold me any longer."

"There, now you can go on, and your friend will show you the way. Off you go!"

"Phew—what a relief! That's delightful."

"Tell me something of what you see as you go along. You must not forget us at this end of the line altogether, you know."

"I can see the line all right; and bright mountains all about, cheerful and pleasant. He draws me along like a feather."

"Hasn't he got a name, your new friend?"

"A name? what is his name? Any name will do for him, he says; I can call him Zephyr if I like."

"Very well. Now you will remember Zephyr when you come back, won't you, and what he looks like?"

"There he is changing colours and shapes again for fun; but I'll remember. But where are we? this is not the same place as before.

But oh—h! there SHE is again; and what does anything matter!"

"Now look at her earnestly, and remember her appearance above all things, and anything she says to you. Think as she speaks to you that you will treasure up her words."

"Yes, yes—I shall never forget her. My Queen, it is heaven to be with you. I'll never be faithless to her. No, never, never! how could I be?"

These disjointed exclamations were murmured slowly, with little intervals between each, in a tone of rapt adoration.

Her words gradually subsided into an only half-articulate utterance, though she spoke with no apparent sense of effort, and the confusion of what she said seemed merely to reflect the vagueness of the blissful emotion she experienced. For a time Marston remained silent.

"She cannot come to harm," he said to Mrs. Malcolm in a low aside, "in such care as that. Such a bath of spiritual glory must be a blessing to her. Do you see or feel anything?"

"I feel *her* influence strongly; but I see

nothing. I suppose I am too much excited about the other matter."

"Don't think of that just yet, or it may disturb her."

Edith remained silent now and very still, her face, as it were, glowing with the emotion working through her innermost nature. At last Marston said, speaking gently, as he bent down by her side, but distinctly:

"Is she the same as the Countess?"

"Yes," whispered Edith softly after a short pause. "She is the same as the Countess; but I belong to her too. You know how it is," she says. "I am to trust to your intuition to explain it; and I may trust you entirely to lead me right."

She moved her hand, as it lay on her lap, towards Marston as she spoke. He made no reply, though he took the hand; but bent down his head, turning a little away from her, as though struggling with an emotion that he could hardly master.

"Tell her to remember that," whispered Mrs. Malcolm behind him; but he shook his head.

"No, no; I must use no psychic influence

in that way; it must be as she chooses. She will always command my whole soul's loyalty and devotion to be spent to its last throb in her service."

The last words were in too low a whisper to be heard distinctly by the others, and were breathed rather to Edith herself than uttered aloud.

"How you are dragging at the thread," said Edith restlessly.

Marston sat up erect in his chair, and passed his hand once or twice over her head and face.

"Rest quietly with your Higher Self, till she in her wisdom sends you back. Give me a sign when it is time for you to return, and trust me to take care of the thread."

END OF VOL. I.

BILLING & SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.

170

UNITED.

A Novel.

BY

A. P. SINNETT,

AUTHOR OF

"KARMA," "ESOTERIC BUDDHISM," "THE OCCULT WORLD,"

ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

GEORGE REDWAY,

YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1886.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

UNITED.

CHAPTER I.

FACTS RECOGNISED.

Edith lay quite quietly for some five or ten minutes longer; and occasionally Marston spoke to her, asking some insignificant question, whether she was comfortable, contented, or happy, to keep touch with her entranced faculties. Then at last she murmured sadly, "Oh, I don't want to! No, not yet," and so on, which Marston took to be the sign he awaited, though the form of the language had the opposite meaning.

"But you must come back, you know, all the same. You won't be cross with me if I pull gently at the thread now, will you?"

"Yes I shall be," she replied emphatically;

but, as before, with protests and petulant reproaches, she nevertheless came to herself in a minute or two—sinking for a few moments into total unconsciousness, and suddenly waking out of this—broad-awake, without a trace of drowsiness—sitting up, her bright eyes sparkling, and her senses alive this time to the situation, before she asked any questions.

"I remember her this time," she said. "Stop, don't say a word any of you. I've seen my Queen," she said earnestly to Marston, "and I can describe her to you; at least, I remember her vividly. What a wonderful face it is—so beautiful, so sweet, and yet so exalted in expression."

Edith's own look, as she spoke in her eagerness and enthusiasm, seemed so closely to correspond to her own words, that Marston answered, "I can well believe it," though she herself was far too excited to think of any double significance in what he said.

"Did you see her distinctly?" Mrs. Malcolm asked. "There was no veil or anything to hide her from you?"

Edith declared at first—no; that there had

been nothing of the kind in the way; but, coming down to details, found herself less able than she had expected to give an exact description. She could not identify her own attitude while with the Spirit. Had she embraced her; had she knelt in adoration; had she been touched or embraced by the Spirit?—she could hardly say. She had the sense of having nestled up against her, certainly; but she could not say whether she had been standing up or sitting down. Above all, she was quite unable to say how she herself had looked when on the spiritual plane. Had she been dressed as she then was, or in vague white drapery, like that she associated with her mental picture of her Spirit Queen? She could not say. She did not remember to have seen herself once during her flight.

"But I remember my guide and companion, Zephyr," she said, even his name, which she remembered to have asked him. Had she asked him for that of her own motion, or had she done so at Mr. Marston's instigation? She thought she had done it at her own impulse. She did not remember

being guided to do anything by Mr. Marston.

"And yet I know something was said about you," she said, turning to him with a look of inquiry. "What was it now?" she pondered and tried to recall the lost idea. "I believe something nice was said about you; but I cannot recollect exactly."

Then, after they had been talking in this way for some time, she noticed that Mrs. Malcolm and Mr. Ferrars both looked agitated.

"What is the matter? Have I said anything—I don't remember—that affects you?"

Both persons addressed felt that Edith was, in a measure, in Mr. Marston's hands, and did not like to refer to the earlier part of her trance without his permission. Both looked at him, and neither replied.

"I see no reason for reserve as regards Miss Kinseyle," he said.

Ferrars was too eager to discuss the matter to be kept back any longer.

"Then, for heaven's sake!" he answered impetuously, "let us talk freely. What does

it mean? Is it conceivable that this astounding story is really true?"

"My dear George," said Mrs. Malcolm, "it would be madness to disregard it! We must sound it to the bottom."

"But what on earth is the matter?" asked Edith.

Marston gave her an account of what she had said.

"Your wonderful gifts," he explained, "were employed on another matter before you saw the Spirit Queen. We asked you to elucidate what you had seen at Oatfield, about Count Garciola, and you did so with the most splendid perfection. You have told us——" then he went on to sum up the story.

"And I told you all that, with her name and everything. How extraordinary!"

"The precision of the details was extraordinary. You hardly realize as yet the exquisite quality of your own higher senses."

"But what is to be done?" interrupted Ferrars. "It is quite frightful to think of the precipice that—that Terra is approaching, if this be really so. How much time is

there to make use of? Do you know when they are to be married?" he asked of Edith.

"Not till her father comes from India. At first it had been arranged for earlier than that; but quite lately there came a telegram from him saying he would come home at once for the wedding, and declaring that it must not take place till he got back."

"That is a respite for her, at any rate. It must be postponed for another three weeks or more. Marian," he said, after moving up and down the room for a while, and crushing the others into silence by the vehemence of his agitation, "there is no middle course to take, between two, that I can see. One is to suppose that all we have heard is mere hallucination, that we must all forget and never think of again; and the other is—for me to go to Seville."

"I never supposed for a moment, George," said Mrs. Malcolm calmly, "that you would do anything else."

"Enough; I will go to-morrow. I was longing to ask further questions, but——"

"Why didn't you?" said Edith. "Could I have told more if I had been asked?" she inquired, turning to Marston.

"My dear George," said Mrs. Malcolm, "Sidney did as much as was possible, I am sure. I admired the firmness with which he held Edith to the point till the essential information was obtained, though it was torture for him to resist her entreaties, I am sure."

Edith looked from Mrs. Malcolm to Marston with a grateful but still inquiring smile.

"Was I so very rebellious? Why did you not make me remember that part, as a warning to behave better another time?"

"Perhaps your memory would not have carried too much, and it was better for you to remember the pleasantest of your visions, was it not? It was so important to get a clue to the whereabouts of the woman, that I ventured to be obstinate in insisting on that, even though it seemed distressing to you for the time. But I should not like to have put more than a little strain upon your inclinations. The soul of a sensitive is too mar-

vellously delicate an instrument to be handled except with the most tender respect."

"Of course — of course," said Ferrars. "Pray don't think I am complaining. With what has been said I ought to be able to find the woman, if such a woman really exists."

He went on to discuss with Mrs. Malcolm the various circumstances under which it might be supposed that Count Garciola could have originally married a woman now living in a shop under another name.

Meanwhile Edith lay back in her corner, and Marston still sat in the chair near, neither speaking, but still under the influence of the peculiar relationship that had subsisted between them during the trance. Eventually, when there was a pause in the conversation of the other two, Edith said:

"Now mesmerize me again, as you did before, to make me feel strong."

The demand for a further service at his hands was the sweetest form in which she could have clothed her thanks for the delicate care he had taken of her during the

trance. The grave earnestness of his manner, however, was mixed with no elation. He merely said:

"Very gladly; though I trust you don't feel weak."

"I dare say you know I don't; but the influence is pleasant."

He resumed the long sweeping passes, standing over her, that had been employed satisfactorily on the former occasion; and she lay with half-closed eyes, enjoying the effect on her delicate nervous system.

"It's like drinking champagne, Marian, without any sense of doing wrong, and without any fear of getting tipsy; only a hundred times better than that coarse sort of stimulant."

Marston went on and on.

"Aren't you getting tired?" she said at last.

"Physically, no; not in the least. But I don't suppose I can do you any more real good for the moment. What you feel is a transfer of vital energy; and you have probably had as much as I can throw off for the moment."

She did not quite understand what he meant at the time; but presently, after he had been sitting down again for awhile, Mrs. Malcolm noticed that he looked tired.

"Why, Sidney," she said, "you have worn yourself out. You look quite faint. Let me get you some wine."

"No, thanks; that will right itself very soon. I would not take wine now on any account."

"But, goodness!" said Edith, springing up; "you *are* looking quite faint. Why did you let me keep you going on? How stupid of me! I forgot."

Marston was faint, and almost giddy; but it was a luxurious weakness under the circumstances.

"If you will be so very kind as to accept my stock of energy without regretting that you have done so, that will give me great pleasure," he said; "and for myself, I shall come perfectly right with a little rest. There is nothing whatever the matter with me. If you will not mind, I will go and lie down for half an hour on the sofa in the dining-room. I would much rather get strength

back that way than by drinking wine, thanks."

Edith was beginning, "I am so sorry——" but she saw the finer courtesy of taking the opposite view of the matter, almost before the words had crossed her lips. "No; I will not be sorry—only much obliged; and I feel as strong as a horse."

Marston looked his appreciation of the impulse that made her say this, and went out of the room across the hall to the dining-room. Mrs. Malcolm went with him, left him comfortably established on the sofa, and returned to the others.

"It must have been the last part of the mesmerism that exhausted him so, I suppose?" Edith asked.

"No doubt. I know that when a sensitive takes up mesmeric influence, the mesmerist feels the strain. No doubt Mr. Marston might make passes for an hour before some people, and merely feel the muscles of his arm tired; but you are such a psychic that I suppose you draw off your mesmerist's vital energy in streams, so to speak—sop it like a sponge."

"I see now that is why I enjoyed it so much. But it was too bad of me. I ought to have guessed——"

"There's no harm done, dear, I'm sure. Sidney Marston would cut himself in pieces for—for such a sensitive as you are;" she watched Edith closely though unobtrusively as she spoke; "he is such a true-hearted enthusiast."

Edith said nothing in reply that afforded Mrs. Malcolm any information.

Ferrars' disturbance of mind oppressed them for the rest of the evening, and Edith eventually went out for a walk in the garden. Mrs. Malcolm brought her a cloak; but the night was not cold, and in the fresh air she could work off some of her superfluous activity. "I am so absurdly buoyant," she said, "I should like to play and sing; but it would jar too much on Mr. Ferrars just now. I shall calm down presently."

Then eventually the time came for the gentlemen to go back to town. When Mrs. Malcolm went to call Marston she found him asleep. She went back and debated with her brother whether he should be waked or

left to sleep on, and ultimately sent to the nearest hotel if he overstayed the last train. Ferrars determined to wait himself for the last train, and stir up Marston in time for that. Then for awhile Mrs. Malcolm joined Edith in the garden, and then saw her off to bed. When she came down she looked into the dining-room and saw Marston awake. She went in and shut the door.

"Sidney, I am glad to have a few words with you before you go. Are you feeling better now?"

"Yes; of course there is nothing the matter with me. I was exhausted for the moment, but this little sleep has refreshed me."

"Good! Then you have all your wits about you to face a serious problem."

"Go on."

"You love her, it appears."

"She has not seen that?"

"Not that I know of; but of course I did, during the trance. It is so, is it not?"

"I love her to that extent that, knowing the situation perfectly hopeless, I ache with a desire to lie down at her feet and die. I

love her as a man loves who has held out against everything of that sort till the tension of his nature becomes something more than he dreams of, and then it gives way after all. Oh, Marian! what have you spoken of it for? It was better resolutely ignored."

"What nonsense! How can you go on like that? She is not an ordinary being. She is half a spirit divine. It is frightful to think of her being engulfed in mere worldly life, and such a marriage as she may be guided to by her relations. I do not say the course before you is easy, but I say you must face the problem and not merely drift. Why did you not let her remember what the Spirit told her, it might have saved her?"

"I should have felt it like debasing psychic power to the service of my selfish love. To drag her by a mesmeric influence to take a step in ordinary life she would shrink from with horror if she were left to ordinary reflection, would be shameful criminality for me — as shameful in another way as the criminality for which I innocently suffer."

"It is noble of you to feel that way. I understood and approved all the while that I felt impatient. But it seems to me that for her sake it is right to wish that your influence over her should be maintained and developed as far as possible. I had plotted something different from that in my own mind, as you know. By-the-bye, now I remember, I spoke to you of that the other day. I did not know how you were feeling."

"Of course not, and the fact that you never conjectured it ensued most naturally from the other facts of the case, and would have been instructive to me, if I had needed such instruction."

Mrs. Malcolm was silent for a while, deeply thinking. At last she said—

"I don't think I would keep up any mystery about yourself, Sidney. Tell her all the facts at once. It is better she should know them now, than come to know about them later; perhaps it would be a greater shock then."

"Is that said from reasoning or from intuition?"

"From reasoning, I suppose. I am too

much agitated to have any intuitions just now."

"So I should have supposed, and reasoning with you is on a lower plane. If my only purpose were to play my hand so as to make the most of the infinitely remote chance of inducing Miss Kinseyle to sacrifice herself to me, then the course you suggest might be the wisest. But I am clear of one thing at any rate—that I will do nothing to try to provoke such a sacrifice. . . . Do I love her? Well, I am *not* sorry you spoke of this. Even to say how I love her, to you only, is some relief. The feeling has taken possession of me in a way which makes existence a kind of frenzy. I think of nothing else. But with it all I can be cool and collected with her, just because there is no issue for the emotion on this plane of existence at all. It is all in the realm of imagination. It is so out of the question that I can ever *tell* her I love her, that I am not perplexed or confused when I am with her."

"But why not tell her all about yourself, and then let things take their course? If

she comes to love you in return, truly she will not let anything stand in her way."

Marston reflected in his turn.

"I don't know—honestly I don't know whether I fear to put an end to our present relations on my own account most, or on hers. But at any rate there would be risk of destroying my usefulness to her. It might somehow jar her feeling about me; it would perturb my confidence in dealing with her, and that might upset my psychic control over her, which is so wonderfully perfect for the moment. That, as it stands, must be for her good, for it enables her to strengthen her spiritual affinities; it has been vouched for to-night by the wisdom that speaks through her lips in trance. We must guard it as long as possible, for her sake."

"My plan might best perpetuate it. I should like the honesty and boldness of that."

"Seek for an intuition on the subject, and tell me that. It would weigh more with me than the argument; and you will not tell it me unless it is a real one—nor mistake any-

thing else for one. But my own instinct warns me not to tell her yet, at any rate."

"You would not wish me to tell her?"

"No, certainly not. I couldn't bear it."

"You must be guided by some future impulse then. You will come each day, I suppose, while she is here?"

"If you will let me."

"Then come to-morrow to lunch; and now you had better be going, if you want to get back to town."

"Is it so late?"

Then they went into the drawing-room and rejoined Ferrars, who was glad to be moving in any way. He and Marston set off for the station.

When Mrs. Malcolm at length went upstairs, she found Edith in a dressing-gown leaning on the banisters at the top.

"My dear child, why haven't you gone to bed?"

"Because I am not sleepy—no more than I am at eleven o'clock in the morning. I am in the middle of writing letters, but I heard the gentlemen go, so I came out to

waylay you for a little chat. I can go on with my letters later."

"It's getting on for twelve," said Mrs. Malcolm, as in a gentle protest, but coming into her room none the less. "The magnetism has gone to your head."

"Yes; but I'm not nervously sleepless—only not tired. And I'm curious about something, though I think I once told you I would not be curious. I am curious to know more about Mr. Marston."

"But, my dearest girl——"

"I know you mustn't say all you know, and I do not want you to; but if there is anything you can say, I should like you to tell me."

Mrs. Malcolm pondered.

"What I can tell is hardly worth telling—what is worth telling I can't tell."

"You see—I suppose it's because he has been mesmerising me—I've got all sorts of queer fancies about him dancing through my head. I could drive them away, I dare say, if I *obstinately* refused to pay attention to them, but——"

"I never thought of that," said Mrs. Malcolm. "Nor did he, I dare say. It

would hardly be like telling you, perhaps, if you can see for yourself. But—oh, Edith! you will put me in a great embarrassment perhaps if you say anything. Suppose you wait till to-morrow, and tell Mr. Marston himself what you read about him clairvoyantly, and let him confirm or explain."

"Very well. If he is coming to-morrow I can do that, if you like. At the same time, I do not want to seem inquisitive. I don't see anything clearly enough to matter. I am only impressed with the idea that he is mixed up with some horrid tragedies—or rather surrounded—walled in, if you understand, by such things, without being properly mixed up in them himself."

"My dear Edith, your vaguest fancies go so dangerously near the mark that I must not talk of them."

"All right; I am sure that I might trust him to play the finest, noblest part, as far as I am concerned, and I am not a bit alarmed about his tragedies, you understand. It won't make me timid about him when I am mesmerised. You need not be afraid of that."

"I am not, dear, because I know the truth

is so. Sidney Marston is a trustworthy guide for your wandering spirit. But, by-the-bye, there is something I can tell you, though he did not——" She reflected for a few moments. "Yes, I can't see why not. It was something your guardian spirit, *our* guardian, said to you while you were in trance. I wanted Mr. Marston to impress you to remember it, but he would not."

"Why, what was it?"

"That you could trust him entirely to lead you right. You repeated that with your own lips as something *she* had just said to you."

"And why wouldn't he let me remember. Ah, but I can see—at least I can feel. It was very nice of him not to use his will to make me remember that. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, but it is just as well you should know it was said."

"I don't think after all I will worry him to tell me anything about his private affairs that it may be disagreeable for him to talk about. He can tell me or let it alone, as he likes, and, meanwhile, I can think of him

not as a personality, but as my guide to the spirit-world. It's a comfort to be able to put one man, at any rate, on so lofty a pedestal."

"You talk as if you were forty, and had sounded the wickedness of the world."

"There are people who have been forty, and you can learn a good deal from them," said Edith gravely, and without giving the phrase any intentionally comic flavour.

But somehow it emphasised her own youth in Mrs. Malcolm's eyes, and made her to that extent seem — as one so freshly emerging from childhood—out of harmony with the tremendous passion of feeling on her account which had been manifested so shortly before by the mature man she respected in the room below. Women may often *sympathize* truly enough with men in their love-troubles, but these can hardly fail to seem in their eyes a kind of craze or ignoble infatuation when looked back upon, so to speak, from the altogether female point of view.

Mrs. Malcolm was truly attached to Edith; but coolly observing her, and amused for a moment by the sedate and at the same time

childish sagacity of her last remark, she thought of the declaration Marston had made about longing to die at her feet in view of the hopelessness of his love, and she shook her head sadly at the complications of the whole position, wondering at the nature of the magic spell itself, even more than at the thoughtless insouciance with which in this instance it was wielded.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW PHASE.

The two or three days that followed passed quietly over the Richmond household without bringing any startling incidents to disturb the even tenor of Edith's psychic development. Marston came each day at lunch-time, and stayed with them till the evening was spent. None of them cared to go out much beyond the narrow precincts of the garden. They read and talked, and Edith sang to them. They were sometimes all three together, and sometimes either Mrs. Malcolm or Edith would be detained by letters or private occupations, and the remaining two would be left in confidential intercourse. But Marston put off the subject of his own life-history from time to time as a disagreeable topic. He wished Edith to know the sad mystery, he said, but to keep its un-

wholesome shadow as long as possible from interfering with the beautiful experiences she was passing through, and in the development of which he was fortunate enough to be able to be of service to her.

"When you have to leave us," he said one afternoon, "then I shall no longer feel that I am entitled to let you remain under any sense of being kept out of a secret concerning me. Not that it matters to you, in one way. There is nothing in my personal life which renders me unworthy of the privilege of showing you how to use your wings. My final triumph as your teacher will be that you will want me no more; and then——"

"What then?" she asked, for he had seemed to try and put a conclusion to the sentence without being able.

"Nothing will matter then. Othello's occupation will be gone."

"If you think I am likely to learn in a few days all you can teach me—well, you either overrate me very much, or underrate yourself."

"It is not necessary for me to teach you all I know, in one sense, for my knowledge,

such as it is, has been gained by a good deal of laborious study and thought that you need not take the trouble to go over. For reasons I cannot fathom—probably through your own great merits in former lives—you stand very near the fountain-head of all knowledge; very near that exalted spiritual life which is more than knowledge, in our physical sense of the term. Students who have taken great pains to acquire knowledge are sometimes apt to value its results by reference to the trouble they have spent to gain it. But how can I illustrate it? If you want a view over the country, and build a tower stone by stone, at last you may stand on the top and get the view. But if some one else can float up in a balloon, without an effort, whenever he chooses, he gets the required view all the same. I have been building a tower, and you are possessed of a balloon; and with that you can go ten times higher than I can with my tower, such as it is. Why should you plague yourself with the humble task of bricklaying?"

"You can always invent beautifully complimentary similes; but with that remarkable

sagacity you applaud in me I am enabled to discern the fact that, whenever any new question opens itself, I am very ignorant, and you are very full of information. I object to that state of things, and want to have it equalized more."

"Long may you remain of that mind. But let us recognise facts all the same. Just as true as the fact that I have read and thought for many more years than you have yet spent on the process, is the other fact I spoke of: that you stand close to the boundless ocean of—something more than knowledge—of higher spiritual consciousness, which is walled off from humbler mortals by impenetrable barriers. So far the light assistance of mesmeric influence on your own fine physical organism is required to float off your consciousness into the superior realms. If that were not wanted—if you could at will ascend into free communion with that Spirit Queen whom I declare to be simply your own higher self, and then be fully conscious of all that had passed in your waking physical brain—you would be already a more wonderful creature than you are, by a great way.

Such persons may exist in the world, but they are examples of a very abnormal growth indeed. In your case I do not anticipate the development of that state of things. But, as our efforts continue, you are able to remember what you see in trance more and more clearly. The better that memory becomes—the more your impulses and thoughts and emotions in your waking state become saturated with the influence of your higher self—the more you will be spiritualized and guarded from the possibility of any ignoble contagion of lower worldly affinities during life. That kind of saturation of the lower nature by the influences of the higher is the final sum and perfection of knowledge — immeasurably superior to a capacity for quoting learned writers, and arguing out even these doctrines of spiritual science theoretically. So you see I am proving you to be as great as I say—am I not ?"

"I don't know. So much of my life is spent in talk so unlike this — in society so far inferior to Marian's and yours—that I sometimes feel a kind of impostor

when you speak of me as you have just been doing."

"That is just the struggle of the dual existence—the spiritual and physical. It is a terrible struggle, even for those who, like yourself, are best armed for it."

"But I think I am very badly armed. You merely see me here, in this delightful retreat, with the most beautiful influences all around. It seems all plain sailing here. To love spiritual culture and my glorious experience best, that is a matter of course. But, however much the best I love them, I go away into a worldly, frivolous life, and am obliged to spend all my time—except a few hasty moments to be snatched now and then in the future for Richmond—in the midst of *such* different things and people. That is not being armed—that is being overwhelmed by my enemy; while you and Marian—you are the people who are armed by circumstance. You can live the life you choose, and be always in contact with higher ideas."

"Marian *is*, I think, in a great measure—— But as for me—well, never mind

about me for the present. Let us keep on talking of a pleasanter subject—yourself. It is just because you are likely to be subject to so many temptations and distractions that I am wishing for you so earnestly that you may become, in some degree, independent of my help in the exercise of your psychic powers, and——"

"There!" cried Edith, suddenly interrupting. "What was that? Didn't you see? Why, good gracious!——"

She had had some light wool-work in her hands, and they were sitting on the lawn sloping down to the river, though screened by bushes, so as to be in privacy as regards the passing boats. Part of the lawn gave directly on the water, and the bushes only screened the corner. With one of her long ivory knitting-needles Edith was pointing to the end bush, and leaning forward.

"What do you mean? I can see nothing, I regret to say."

"Why, Zephyr! I saw him flash through the laurel-bush—all green this time—and look at me with his merry goggle eyes as he stood for a moment on the grass. I saw him

as plain as I've ever seen him in a vision, and I declare I *heard him laugh!*"

"Splendid! and then he vanished?"

"Yes; where on earth has he gone? Zephyr!" called the girl, with bright impetuosity, springing up and going to feel with her hands in the laurel-bush. "Come and show yourself directly. This is something altogether new," she said to Marston. "If he can do that, why did he not do it before?"

"It's you who didn't do it before," Marston said, laughing with the contagion of her own high spirits. "I dare say Zephyr has shown himself before, but this is the first time you have been able to see him. Even now, for example, he has only shown himself to you and not to me; or, in other words, it was only you who were able to see him."

"Oh, Mr. Marston, come in and put me in a trance, and then I shall be sure to see him, and will make him tell me all about it."

Marston agreed, and they went up to the house.

"What makes him take such funny shapes and look such a comic little elf? How

wonderfully, by-the-bye, the realities of psychic things are unlike the sentimental fancies people have about them, if they know nothing of them. Zephyr is a spirit—in a way at any rate, as you explained—and a most amiable, delightful spirit; but he does not at all correspond to the romantic pattern."

"Zephyr, I take it, is an elemental, to use the language of the old writers on occultism —a nature spirit infused with the will of some higher power. Not an organized psychic being like one of us; but a potency of nature on a higher plane of her manifestations. The shape in which he appears to you is no doubt altogether the product of your own imaginings, really."

"But he takes all sorts of shapes."

"Because you have no rigidly formed conception in your own mind of the shape that an elemental, doing the particular work he is employed upon, ought to assume."

Mrs. Malcolm was called down and acquainted with what had occurred; and Edith threw herself on the sofa to be mesmerized, with as much matter-of-course

familiarity now with the whole process as if she had been rushing to the piano to try a new song.

"How *ridiculous* it is," she said, as Marston sat down beside her, and she gave him her hands to hold as naturally as she might have stretched them out to be helped from a carriage, "to think that the vast majority of people argue about the possibility of mesmeric trances and clairvoyance, and so on, when it's just as much a matter of course to us as breakfast and dinner."

"For the most part, you see, the people who know don't argue; it's not worth their while. They don't like to expose themselves to insult from foolish unbelievers. It does not matter to them whether the majority of the world come up to their level or not. They have their own knowledge, and they work with it."

"That does not seem right and generous though; it seems selfish."

"That is according to each man's duty. It is the business of some people to combat unbelief, and put up with the abuse they get for their pains—not a very serious *corvée*

either for that matter. But there are other people who need not do any such rough work — people like yourself, for instance. Let you ask your Higher Self whether you are bound to go talking about her to every common-place materialist you meet, and I strongly suspect you will be told to keep your own counsel."

"But my arms are tingling up to the elbow."

"And I am forgetting my business, keeping you gossiping here. Now I am only"—going through the usual ceremonies and passes as he spoke—"on guard over your wanderings, and ready within call if wanted."

A few injunctions to sleep, and a few moments spent with his hands over her closed eyes, produced the usual effect.

It was to cross-question Zephyr that Edith had had herself launched into the mesmeric state; but she sank into a very profound torpor —at first faintly answered Marston's questions enough to show her consciousness not altogether out of his reach, but indicated a wish to be left alone as much as possible.

"Never mind Zephyr just now," she said,

when Marston reminded her of what she had wanted to enquire about. "Wait a little while; I may have something to say."

This was a new phase of her clairvoyance. Marston and Mrs. Malcolm exchanged looks of interest, both recognising the attitude now taken up as an advance, in its relative independence, on those of her previous trances.

"There is something you ought to know about me," she said presently, speaking slowly and calmly, "and that is that I am not qualified to remain long in earthly life. No one about me seems to be aware of it yet; but my lungs are very weak, and must give way rather quickly when they once begin to show disease."

"What ought to be done to save you?"

She looked troubled, and remained silent for a time. Then she said:

"I must not answer that question."

Marston and Mrs. Malcolm looked at each other, anxious and a little bewildered.

"What's wrong about the question?" Marston said aside; and then to Edith:

"Do you mean that your early death is really inevitable?"

Still she did not seem to like the form of the question; but answered:

"No."

"Then can you indicate any course of action we might take to prolong your life?"

"Your mesmeric influence would do that."

"Then I may use it for that purpose, may I not?"

"Yes, if you choose; but you will find it very difficult. There will be great obstacles in the way, and if you use it that way it will be at great cost to yourself."

"I may say to you now, and speaking this way—*not* for you to remember in your physical life—that of course it does not matter what the cost is to me if I can do you service."

"I can see you would be ready to give your life for me if you thought that best; but perhaps it might not be. There are things I must not say. You must do what you think right; but, if it is best, you can make me live."

Mrs. Malcolm here put in a few words:

"Surely you can ask her now whether it

would be best that your life should be united with hers."

Marston pondered over the idea for a little while, Edith remaining in a state of complete quiescence. Then he put the question:

"Ought I, for your sake, to strive that you may be willing to unite your life with mine?"

The answer came slowly and in a low voice, but in the same impassive tone in which the other utterances had been given.

"There is a union of sympathy between us which need not be long interrupted; but, in earth-life, such union as you are thinking of would not be best. Strive to prolong our present relationship — that is best for us both."

"My soul's queen!" murmured Marston, deeply affected; "all shall be as you direct."

"Tell me, when I return to you, about Zephyr," she went on. "Your influence is clearing my vision, and I shall be able to see my Guardian's messenger more plainly in future, and gather tidings of her, from him, without being entranced. But, remember, it

will be at your cost that my higher faculties will be strengthened—whether you are near me or away. I shall live on your life. But if my lower consciousness is too soon aware of this, there will be risk that all sacrifices may be useless."

The utterances she was giving forth this time were of so spontaneous a character that Marston's usual habit of continually plying her with questions seemed no longer applicable, and he sat waiting for what she should say next. After a long pause, she said:

"Tell Marian that George will find the woman he is in search of, but he will want more money than he has with him. She should send this to him, and he should be sure to take the woman to the girl's father before he reaches England."

Then, after a further pause:

"You need not entrance me again. I must learn to get what I ought to know through Zephyr, in my lower consciousness."

"I will obey your directions exactly."

"Do not think of them as commands from my Higher Self. You will be tempted to seek guidance from me in trance—and you

are not forbidden, only warned that it may not be best. You should rely on your own judgment in the crisis that will arrive, and you will have power to unite what remains of my life with your own if you choose. It is right that you should know this, lest what I have told you should cripple your freedom of action. You may recall me now, after a little while, and, in my earthly consciousness, I shall remember nothing of what I have now been saying. I have been speaking to you this time as I could never speak before. You could only get, from these lips hitherto, confused reflections of myself. The real 'I' has now been speaking to you, for the body has become a more docile instrument, but for that reason it had better now be worked in a new way. It will be exhausted as it has not been before by the strain it has gone through. Lay your hand upon the heart, and let it revive by degrees."

Marston did as directed, and they sat watching Edith's motionless form in silence for some time.

"This is a terrible secret to be burdened with," Mrs. Malcolm said.

"We must consult about it later," Marston answered.

"Meanwhile you will tell her all she should know. Oh! Sidney——"

Mrs. Malcolm's last exclamation was uttered in a low tone, but as in response to a sudden perception of something wonderful.

"What do you see?"

Mrs. Malcolm had been sitting, as usual during Edith's magnetic trances, near the foot of her sofa, behind Marston, whose chair, placed near her head, enabled him to lean over her sideways to perform the magnetic passes. Leaning forward now, she —Mrs. Malcolm—was looking up in the air above Edith's form, and impulsively she stretched out both her hands.

"Did you see nothing? The Guardian Spirit herself was visible to me for a time—my Guardian, just as I have always seen her: the faint veil over her head, and the luminous white drapery. She seemed to float away towards the window and disappear."

"I saw nothing," said Marston, "except some undefinable change on Edith's face."

The girl now moved slightly, and sighed.

"Don't you *feel* anything? It seems to me that I am enveloped in that peculiar sensation of rapture or exaltation which the sight of my Guardian always brings with it——"

"She is coming to herself," Marston said.

Edith opened her eyes, but did not imme diately spring up into a sitting posture, as she had generally done.

"Is it over?" she said, as Marston withdrew his hand from her side. "What has been happening? I don't remember anything. I might just as well have been asleep in the ordinary way, except that I feel tired."

"Not disagreeably tired—not any sense of pain?"

"Pain! no. Nothing of that sort—merely limp. What has been going on? Have I missed fire this time, somehow?"

"About as far from that as two ideas can be apart," Marston answered. "You have been rather more wonderful than usual—and you feel the strain. We will tell you about it directly."

"But it is stupid not to remember things. I thought I was getting on better than that. I feel all cloudy and confused. What was it we were intending to do in particular?"

"Wait a little, till you recover more fully. You will have plenty to think about directly."

"You must make me strong again," she said in a few minutes, "if you will promise not to kill yourself; otherwise, I won't let you."

"How are you to help it, if I choose?" said Marston, with a smile, as he began the long passes.

"By imposing my sovereign commands upon you. That is the understood bargain between us. I surrender myself to your will entirely on the simple condition that you always make me do exactly what I choose; and now I choose to be made strong again at your expense—only I must not use you up entirely all at once. I might want you again, you know, another time."

This way of putting the case was far sweeter to Marston, of course, than any explicit consideration for his interests; and

Edith had got into the habit of clothing her most sympathetic and grateful impulses towards him in the guise of the most commanding language. She rapidly brightened under the influence to which she was now subject, and presently sat up.

"That will do. I feel all right again. Now I will graciously permit you to sit down and tell me all about it."

"The great and important fact," said Marston, subsiding again into his chair, "is that you are now going to be clairvoyante without going into trances at all. Your humble servant's services are not wanted any more!"

"You don't mean that you are to stop mesmerising me?"

"On the contrary; your orders are quite clear on that head. My magnetic influence upon you is distinctly approved of, and I am instructed to do all I can to keep it in operation, though warned there will be difficulties in the way of doing this."

"When I have to go away, of course. But if you are not to entrance me I do not understand——"

Without hinting a word as to the revelations concerning herself that were to be kept secret from her, Marston explained at great length the immense practical advantage that was promised in the establishment of her faculties in a state that would enable her without the aid of any external magnetism to keep up relations with the higher plane of her own consciousness. She was also told about the message she had given to Mrs. Malcolm. This turned the conversation upon Ferrars' affairs. There had not yet been time for his sister to hear from him since his departure. He had sent word that he should travel without delay to Seville, and that was the place to which letters were to be sent after him.

"What an extraordinary thing that I should talk about his money," said Edith.

"It is a pity, my dear," replied Mrs. Malcolm, "that while you were talking about it you did not give me more precise information as to the amount George would want. I can't think what I ought to send him. He is sure to have gone provided sufficiently for all travelling needs. It must be some un-

looked for emergency that he will be called upon to meet."

"There will be an opportunity," Marston said to Edith, "of exercising your new rights over Zephyr. You might make up your mind when next you see him to make him find out for you what the money is wanted for, and how much Mrs. Malcolm ought to send."

"What an idea—that I have an omniscient sprite at my beck and call! But the worst of it is he is *not* at my beck and call. I do not know in the least how to summon him."

"Never mind that. Keep on your mind what you want to know from him when you do see him, and then the opportunity will not be wasted when it comes."

Eventually Edith went away to her own room for a time, declaring she must absolutely write a few lines to her aunt before it was too late for that day, and Mrs. Malcolm and Marston were left together.

"How do you read it all?" she asked.

"I think it is impossible to read it all at present. The whole statement seems to

point to some future crisis when perhaps the warnings given now may be of use. I do not in the least see what is to be done for the present—except that you should clearly keep her with you as long as you can."

"She will certainly have to leave me in a few days. She merely came for that time, and will have overstayed it by a day or two before she goes, in any case."

"Where can the doubt be about my doing what I can to save her life?"

"It would be a miserable view of the matter for us; but for her! She may be ripe for something better than life."

"That is a poetical view of the question; but there my own dull, philosophical way of looking at these things comes into play. Life is always another word for opportunity. I can easily imagine that Edith might be *happier*—much happier—if she were to float off into a purely spiritual existence; but I take it that there are infinite gradations of exaltation in that existence, and how is a human soul fitted for the higher gradations? Evidently, it seems to me, by the upward

struggling of *this* life. This is the school—the other existence the sphere in which each soul profits by what it has learned."

"But in the next life Edith, for example, will be — by your own theory — her own Higher Self, a far higher being than she is now, as we see her on this plane."

"But that Higher Self is merely the sum total of all she has gone through, learned, and suffered for in all former stages of her existence up to this. She would not be now an incarnate being at all if she had not more still to gain from the lessons of life. If her experience of this is now suddenly arrested, some effort which her Higher Self was making by means of this incarnation will be defeated, it seems to me. But I'm hardly clear enough in my mind to think the question fully out. For the moment it seems to me as if a somewhat considerable cheque had been drawn on my vital forces."

He had dropped down into the easy chair Mrs. Malcolm had quitted when Edith left the room. Mrs. Malcolm was far too appreciative of the whole situation to offer commonplace condolences on his exhaustion.

"You must learn," she said, "to *menager* your strength, for her sake. It would not do for you to break down prematurely."

"No; that must be avoided. I shall watch my feelings. But this sort of lassitude passes away, or rather, the lost vitality is somehow restored always, after a bit."

"I'll leave you quiet and go and write to George."

CHAPTER III.

A PAINFUL REVELATION.

The few remaining days of Edith's Richmond visit slipped away all too quickly, though the principal interest of its earlier days—her magnetic trances—had been suspended. The lost excitement connected with these was fully supplied by the newer development of her psychic faculties and the frequent appearance in their midst—though to her vision only—of the mysterious agency by means of which it had been promised that her relations with the higher plane of nature should be kept up. "Zephyr" paid no regard to dramatic effect in his visitations, and neither associated his coming with the solemnity of late hours nor the romantic flavour of invocations. He had flashed upon Edith's consciousness for the first time after her last trance on the evening of that same

day while they were all three at dinner, and Mrs. Malcolm's two maids present and engaged upon the prosaic duty of handing the vegetables and sauce. Edith's attention was suddenly caught while she was in the act of helping herself to potatoes and talking about Miss Barkley. The flow of her speech suddenly arrested, the bright half-startled, half-delighted look on her face, suggested to both the others what she saw in the corner of the dining-room towards which her gaze was directed. And they all understood one another so well that everything passed openly amongst them in effect, without the servants being in the least degree enlightened as to what they meant by the disjointed phrases uttered.

"Zephyr!" she said simply, with a glance at Marston.

"How much?" was his immediate reply, to remind her of the information specially wanted from him.

There was a picture hanging in the recess of the room at the corner towards which Edith was looking.

"Oh! I understand. He seemed to write

it with his finger across the Rembrandt—200."

"Well," said Mrs. Malcolm, "since it is a large amount that is wanted, I am glad it isn't a larger. I can manage that."

"But what I want to know," Edith began, and then stopped. She laughed directly afterwards, and added: "What a funny idea. That's a most interesting picture of yours, Marian—that Rembrandt."

"That is the old story, you know. Imaginative critics will often see more in a work of art than the artist means to put there."

"I'll discuss the merits of the picture with you at leisure another time."

Afterwards she explained that she had stopped in saying what she had wanted to know, because Zephyr had obviously anticipated her thought before it was fully spoken. She had been desirous of learning how she could summon him when she wanted to ask him a question, and he had all in a moment conjured up a vision in which she had seen herself vehemently pulling a bell-handle, while she saw him at the same time asleep at a distance, and paying no attention. Then

in the next instant, by a change in the picture, she saw herself sitting dejectedly in a chair with her face in her hands, and the moment she assumed this attitude the sleeping Zephyr in the distance sprang up and flashed through space to her side.

"It was a roundabout way of implying evidently that I had no power to call him, but that he would be ready to come whenever I should really be in need of him."

"And not a very roundabout way either," suggested Marston, "considering the short time it took to evoke the pictures in your fancy. From our physical habits and experience, we get into the way of thinking that speech is the only respectable medium for the conveyance of ideas from one mind to another, but directly the faculties are set free from physical restraints, we always find other modes employed. I remember you made use of a very suggestive phrase in one of your trances when you said that Zephyr came back to you so full of the idea he had gone in search of that he 'splashed it over you.' I do not suppose that he stopped to make use of words then. The idea was suddenly communicated

to your mind by a process analogous to what in electric science is called induction. If people would only pay attention to them, the phenomena of physical science would be seen to teem with illustrations and analogies showing what goes on on the psychic plane."

Then, on another occasion, Edith became conscious of Zephyr's presence when she was alone in her own room at night. Some other symbolical pictures had been shown her, "But the great point gained," Marston argued, when they spoke of the incident, "is that you are used to the exercise of your own abnormal vision, so that it does not make you nervous when it takes you unprepared by yourself."

"Not in the least," Edith answered. "I look on Zephyr as an established friend and protector. But I do not want to see all kinds of other shapes and forms that I do not understand, and I am just a little apprehensive that I shall get to see too much after a time. I am constantly now having the feeling when I am alone that I am *not* alone altogether, and I seem to see misty figures near me out of the corners of my eyes."

Marston was able to give her some directions for use against annoyances of that kind, and Edith was greatly struck with the resources of his knowledge.

"It has been gathered," he explained, "partly from books, partly from association with other students of occult mysteries. There is a much greater abundance of knowledge on these subjects floating about in the world really than our highly self-satisfied century is generally aware of, and for my part circumstances have driven me to find my only interests in life in the exploration of these little trodden paths of research."

They were talking now on the last evening of Edith's visit. It was arranged that Mrs. Malcolm would go up to town in the morning, and see her with her maid into the train that would take her to Deerbury Park. She had been lamenting her impending descent into the lower world of mere amusement and dissipation, and the others were oppressed with the shadow of their coming loss. Mrs. Malcolm had been giving free expression to her regrets. For Marston, the aching sense of desolation with which he contemplated her

departure was too intense to be shaped into any such words as he could speak.

"I am sure," Edith said, in reply to his last remark, "that you must be greatly the gainer in leading a life of such inquiry as compared to a more commonplace existence."

"Well," Marston answered, "I think you may as well know all about it."

Mrs. Malcolm saw what was coming; looked from one to the other with something like a frightened glance, then got up hastily and left the room. Edith caught the expression, looked after her in wonder, and then with bewildered expectation at Marston. She was sitting in her old corner of the sofa in which her magnetic trances had taken place, Marston in an easy chair at a little distance.

"Why has Marian gone in that strange way?"

"I suppose she thinks, in the delicacy of her sympathy with me, that what I have to tell you would be made even more painful in the telling if a third person—even herself—were by. Perhaps she is right."

His face was set very rigidly, and he

pulled for a few moments nervously at his small moustache, that failed to conceal the working of his sensitive lips. He got very pale, and his dark eyes shone with more lustre than usual as he turned them on Edith for a little while before he spoke again, with a mute entreaty. Then he drew his hand across his forehead, and went on :

"My great secret is very easily told. I live under the weight of a great shame brought upon me by my father. Ah, it will shock you ; and yet my only excuse for having drifted into intimacy with you—for having dared to avail myself of the priceless privilege of having been of service to you—if I may think that I have been that—has been that, personally, I am as blameless in the matter through which I suffer as though I had never been struck down with this strange curse."

"You frighten me, somehow ; but I know that, whatever horrors you have been surrounded with, it can only be the deepest sympathy that is due to you. How can I have any other feeling but that of gratitude for all the help you have given me ?"

'You owe me nothing worth calling by that name. You are too exalted. But, before I go on, I would gladly hear you say—— But no!" he cried, checking himself impetuously; "there shall be no weakness of that sort. I have humbly sought to be of service to you. I shall always treasure the belief that, in some degree, I have been that; and I shall be repaid a thousand-fold if you decide, on reflection, that you do not regret having accepted a service at my hands. My father," he went on, speaking hurriedly now, and in a hard tone, "was a man of strong and ungovernable passions, restrained neither by religion of the ordinary kind nor by the views of life and the future which, for some philosophical thinkers, supply an almost sterner rule of conduct. With my mother, since dead, he was unhappy—no matter by whose fault. They separated, and he formed an attachment of a wildly vehement character for another woman. In her affections he was, as he believed—and as I believe also—treacherously supplanted by another man. I need not go into the details now. In the

end my father killed him. It was no duel: a sudden meeting—an attack; what the law decided to have been a murder. If the woman concerned had been his wife, probably the result would somehow have been different. But no extenuation was seen in an unholy passion. My father was condemned to death, and punished—as murderers are generally punished."

It was Edith's turn now to grow pale; and she lay back trembling, only giving vent to a low cry of distress.

"Our name," Marston went on, after a pause, "rang through the country. I took refuge in another. The family property—no fortune, but enough for all the wants that could survive for me—was restored to me, the eldest son. I had one brother, with whom I divided it, and he went to Australia. Mrs. Malcolm and George Ferrars are my only friends of the former time. I have known them both from children. Hers is a heart of gold. You know now why I am a recluse; why I cannot go about in the world like those on whom there is no horrible taint of infamy."

Edith did not speak, for she had put her

handkerchief to her face, and had no control of her lips for the moment.

"In the study," Marston went on in a low voice, "of human life, in those of its relations which have nothing to do with this ghastly plain of physical illusion, I have found a strange refuge, and—a sort of callous capacity to endure my lot. I should never have emerged from my usual habits, when Marian first sent for me to meet you, if I had not met you before. But accident had decreed that meeting; and, divining then something of what your nature was, I thought I might be of use to you, and I came. Then the situation grew to what it has been. How could I dash my horrible story in your face, to trouble the current of your psychic development? Concealment has been horrible; but I have not practised it, God knows, for any selfish end. And now I have the agony of telling all this on the last night I shall see you. Perhaps that makes it worse; but —how can there be worse or better in such a matter?"

Edith vaguely shook her head, keeping her face still covered.

"It is awful!" she said, in the awkward, strained tone that her emotion caused.

Marston sat gazing at her in silent misery for some time. Then he slowly got up from his chair and stood by it, with his hand on the back and one knee upon the seat:

"So I have told you what I had to tell, and now I had better go. You are too much aghast to think connectedly just now, I can well imagine; but what I was nearly saying, just before I told you, was this—that I should be glad to hear you say, if that really was the case, that you thought I had been of use to you. Nothing could be more dreadfully out of place than thanks. But if, looking back on the thing, you can feel that you do not regret having accepted some loyal and respectful service at my hands, on your upward course, it will be all the comfort I can expect in life to hear that that is the case. And now I bid you, most reverentially, good-bye."

In the intensity of his self-abasement he bowed, and was moving to the door without attempting any more intimate leave-taking. He had his hand on the lock, but she called almost angrily to him to wait. He obeyed

her literally, and paused as he stood by the door.

"You mustn't go like that," she said. "It *is* horrible—but you needn't talk as if you were guilty. Am I a wretch with no feeling, that I should not give you sympathy?"

"I am blameless, as I say," Marston replied, coming back as far as the chair he had formerly occupied, but no further; "but I am tainted. You may struggle against the feeling as you please, and try to persuade yourself it is wrong, but you will feel it none the less. Against that feeling on the part of most people I should rage furiously, therefore I live by myself. With you——" the depth of tenderness with which he said the words made him hesitate, but he covered up the signs of emotion with an allusion to their psychic relationship, "with you whom I have been so closely thrown with for a short time by reason of your psychic requirements, it would not be fury, but great wretchedness I should feel in observing the signs of it."

"Why don't you shrink from Marian?"

He could not immediately answer the pointed question. At last he said:

"I have no right to anticipate Marian's attitude of mind from anyone else."

"I could not speak to you before," said Edith, "because I was crying. But it was wrong of you to think I could let you go without shaking hands."

Marston made no impulsive movement towards her, and uttered no words in response. Perhaps the phrase she used, however kindly meant, could only intensify his pain. What was it after all to shake hands with her, when every fibre of his body was yearning to prostrate itself before her and worship her feet with kisses? And he could not even profess a wish for more than her pity and her friendly farewell.

"The strain is so agonizing," he said after a pause—the words bearing no necessary reference to anything but the story he had told—"that I think I had better go. I shall be very eager to know how the whole position presents itself to your mind to-morrow. You will tell Marian for me anything you can say in full sincerity. Don't even try to say anything appropriate now. Since you permit me, good-bye," coming up to her, and taking

her hand—which she gave him without rising, looking up at him as she did so, pale and tearful.

"I am so crushed and bewildered I do not know what to say. But you talk as if you expected me to turn away from you with horror. How can anything but the most intense sympathy be due to you?"

"Unreasonable impulses are too strong for argument in this extraordinary case. You will find no justification in what I have told you for any harsh words or attitude of mind towards me on your part. But my revelations have nevertheless hollowed out a gulf between us, and I shall remain for you on the further side of it, no matter how you try to convince yourself that this ought not to be so. The sense of bewilderment you speak of is the recognition of this. I can see the gulf plainly enough. For once my inner sight is keener than yours. It is so far well, at all events, that I did not tell you sooner. My intuition was right in that respect. If I had done so I should have failed in the little part I had to perform in helping you to realize and exercise your own higher faculties. Had you

known sooner, you would have been too much chilled and disquieted to have trusted yourself with any confidence to my guidance. And yet—if I have enjoyed the privilege of your intimate friendship for some few days by a kind of false pretence—the thought is maddening."

"Don't say that—there was no false pretence."

The conversation had been broken by pauses. Marston's remarks were not smoothly fluent, and he remained standing near her for a little while, offering nothing better than a gloomy shake of the head as a response to her vague deprecation of his self-reproach.

"Well," he said at last, "in the end it could only be the same, anyhow; and the end has come. May the shadow of my wretchedness pass away swiftly from your bright and beautiful life—good-bye!" This time he went without pausing, and without any second recall; and without seeking Mrs. Malcolm left the house. She heard the hall-door close—she had been on her knees in the dining-room—and returned to Edith, who remained sitting upright on the sofa.

"Has he gone—altogether?" Mrs. Malcolm asked.

"Yes. Oh, Marian, what an awful horror!"

Mrs. Malcolm looked at Edith with an anxious gaze of inquiry.

"But why should he have rushed away like that?" Mrs. Malcolm was embarrassed by wondering whether anything more had passed beyond the great confession of the facts. "I thought a little sympathy from you would have seemed easier to give with no third person by. That was why I left you."

"I have been simply stunned; I did not know what to say. He was going even without shaking hands; but I made him do that. Then he would go, all the same."

"Did you not think any good could have been done by talking further? I often think that, horrible as his position is, he is morbid about it, and makes it even worse than it need be. I have always found that open expression of sympathy is a sort of relief to him. Everyone must feel it; but some people are shy of putting thoughts like that into words."

"I had no thoughts to utter; I was crushed, flattened down by the ghastly surprise of the thing. I wonder did he think me quite unfeeling and cruel. He kept on accusing himself in such a wild way of having been with us on false pretences, as it were. I only felt bewildered, and I don't seem to have said anything to him to speak of."

"That was a pity. A few words from you would have gone so far."

By degrees Mrs. Malcolm realized the scene in all its details. She did not reproach Edith for having been unduly or unkindly frigid. She sat down by her and caressed her, and sympathized with her for the shock she had experienced; but explained how she herself never was conscious of any repulsion in regard to Marston, by reason of having known him so long and respected him so thoroughly. She spoke of his character, so wonderfully free from all ignoble traits, so self-effacing and modest; and of his intellectual attainments and mental powers as obliterating—for her who had known him intimately all her life—all consciousness of

that "taint of infamy" of which he had spoken.

"Sometimes I think it is a mere unwholesome fancy on his part to suppose people generally would regard him as so tainted if he went more about in the world; but it is impossible to say. Anyhow, it is very hard on him; and he is qualified for such a different sort of life than that on which he has been driven back. The richness and depth of his natural feelings might have made him live a very full life; but they have all turned to gall and bitterness, and he is so much the more wretched."

As a consequence of the talk they had, it ensued that early the following morning Marston received at his chambers a telegram from Mrs. Malcolm.

"Be at King's Cross at 12.30 to say good-bye. This is Edith's imperative desire."

Of course Marston was there, and they walked about together on the platform, and sat in the waiting-room; and at first nothing was said in regard to what had passed the evening before. He asked Edith a few

questions in a grave, subdued way about her journey, and the arrangements made for meeting her at the other end. Edith said she was not looking forward to her Deerbury Park visit with any great anticipation of pleasure—the break up of the wonderfully interesting time they had had together was so much to be regretted.

"There will be nobody at my aunt's to take me out of myself, and show me the way to the spirit world as you have done."

"But my small share in doing that was over, you know, in any case. Your tutor had been formally dismissed, and your coming of age as a clairvoyante in your own right fully recognised."

"My tutor had not been dismissed, and would not have been allowed to absent himself, had I been able to remain at Richmond."

Mrs. Malcolm had wandered off to the book-stall, and this left them practically alone for the moment.

"And he is not dismissed, as matters stand, even. That is why I wanted to see you again before I started. I want to know

if I may write to you and consult you about anything that may happen to me. If Zephyr comes to see me, I am sure to want to discuss his proceedings with some one who will understand all about it. Last night, you know, I was so much upset that I did not think to say this. You will answer any questions I send you, will you not?"

"Most assuredly, if you are so good as to wish it."

"That is right, because I think, on looking back, that I was so unfeeling with you last night—at all events, I showed so little feeling—that you would have been entitled to be offended with me."

"Well, it is very kind of you to say that, at any rate, though the idea is in rather ludicrous contrast with the real features of the case. How can I venture to put it more clearly? Can you easily imagine yourself 'offended' with the Spirit Queen you have seen in your visions?"

Edith smiled, understanding the force of the comparison, but demurely repudiated it.

"My Guardian is a divine being for me,

and very different from a creature of flesh and blood."

"Well, then, I look upon her and yourself as so closely identified in the way you understand, that you must let me regard you as sharing in the divinity. People who do not realize all that we know about, may only see in you what even then indeed they may be inclined to worship, for that matter. But for me, it is my privilege at least to worship in you all that we both know resides there. The result of which is that even if you had not been able to bear to have anything further to do with me, it would not have been resentment I should have felt, but only sorrow; and even that would have been submissive to your decision."

"That's all very nice and flattering to me, of course, but in my everyday flesh and bones I am not in the least entitled to worship. You do not at all realize the depths of commonplaceness there are in me really. You have seen the best side of me, and very little of the other, and you overrate me quite ridiculously; but that does not matter, if it does not give rise to any painful reaction

afterwards. I want to feel quite sure of your steady cool trustworthy friendship at all times. So now that I have apologized for being so stupid and disagreeable last night, I may rely on that, may I not?"

"You may indeed, since you graciously wish it, in spite of last night. Of course, if it pleases you to pretend to be apologetic, I can only submit to that caprice as I would to any other."

"I am not sure that is being sufficiently respectful. Marian," she added gaily, as they strolled up the platform, meeting Mrs. Malcolm, "Mr. Marston says I am horribly capricious. Do you think so badly of me?"

Mrs. Malcolm was glad to find the conversation on this footing, but was never apt at badinage, so she merely put the question off by promising to discuss Edith's numerous failings with Mr. Marston after she had gone.

"If you dare! That would be shocking. I shall get Zephyr to reveal all your treachery to me, so you must only say the sweetest things, or you will be found out."

"Will you want Zephyr to assure you that we are saying sweet things of you?"

"You dear Marian! You are as bad as Mr. Marston. Long may it last, and soon may my visit be repeated. I feel as if I were losing all my liberty. I wonder what will have happened when we three meet again."

Further talk of this kind, however, was interrupted by the necessity of choosing places for the travellers. Edith had her maid with her in her own compartment, and when they were once installed, nothing more could be said beyond the frivolities of the moment. Edith had quite recovered her spirits under the sense of having behaved nicely to Marston in compensation for what she had come to feel her want of consideration for him the previous evening, and took notice of the people around, whispering little jokes to her companions, and amused herself by alluding aloud to some of the secrets they shared, in veiled phrases that could bear no meaning to the public ear. Marston met her mood as the train moved off by a parting gesture reminding her of their mesmeric relations, and laughingly she called back to him from the windows to "take care of the thread."

CHAPTER IV.

PASSIONS IN CONFLICT.

TERRA FILDARE had not accepted without some impatience her father's announcement of his intention to come home for her wedding, and his authoritative desire that the proceedings should await his arrival. Count Garciola had resented the delay. He cared nothing about the *éclat* of the ceremony, he explained to Lady Margreave—nothing about whether Terra's father approved or disapproved. He cared for HER, he declared, with somewhat haughty indifference to all else beside.

"I make too great a tax on your hospitable patience if I stay here. I put too great a tax on myself if I go away."

Of course Lady Margreave endeavoured to relieve his anxiety on this head by polite assurances.

"Your courtesy does not alter the facts," he urged in his grave grand way of talking, his dark handsome face showing no gratification. "It is my love for Terra that makes me impatient truly, but nothing less than that would make me patient. Colonel Fildare's estimation of me as his son-in-law is a circumstance that does not interest me in itself."

"My dear Count, I know it is the lover and not the *grande seigneur* who is unreasonable, so I will not be cross. But it is nice to be on pleasant terms with one's wife's relations. And the Fildares, you know, are not used to think lightly of their family dignity, though it may not seem important in your eyes."

The fuller information, it should be explained, concerning Count Garciola that had been obtained by Sir James Margreave through the Spanish Embassy since the settlement of his engagement with Terra, had more than confirmed the current idea about him in London society, that he was a man of genuine rank at home. His official connection with the Embassy, though of a temporary

character, had from the first guaranteed him against all suspicion of being in any way a person of doubtful identity. His countship was undeniable, and, in truth, it appeared represented a great deal more than an empty title. He was rich and highly honoured, though his career had been stormy and irregular, and passed a great deal abroad. His present appointment was supposed to be a sort of experiment on his part to see how he might be able to put up with the burdens and restraint of an official station.

"There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth amongst the gilded matrons of Madrid," Sir James's friend at the Spanish Embassy had sent him word, "when the news you send me reaches their ears."

"I am glad you are even a greater man than I had supposed," said Terra, talking with him after Sir James had communicated to her these facts. "I am not fit for a humble station in life."

"You are fit to be an empress," he answered. "But how do you know what station I shall give you? Perhaps we shall travel for awhile. I have always been im-

pelled to seek fresh scenes. Why should I deny my impulse because I shall have the loveliest woman on earth with me wherever I choose to go?"

"So be it, Salvio; wherever we go I shall be the wife of my husband, and that station will content me."

She put her arm through his, and joined her hands together, and leaned up against his shoulder. The time had gone by when she found caresses repulsive. Her pride was merged now in her passion. She was proud of the man who had been great enough to conquer her. She would glory in talking with him of her subjugation—in explaining how no one, before he came, had raised in her heart any feeling but angry independence. She had been a stormy, untamed creature, unfit for the smooth docility of conventional love. She used to fancy, she told him, she had been created without some instinct that all other women possessed, so hateful was it to her to think of subduing her will, and meekly accepting the *rôle* of obedience. Evidently, in truth, she had been marked out as a noble quarry from the first, fit only to

be brought down by a royal hunter. And now, having been vanquished under conditions that satisfied her pride, she revelled in the double sense of superiority to the world at large and of slavery to the master who had been strong enough to make her his prey.

Garciola accepted her worship with deep satisfaction, and calm, faint smiles, that were all the more intense in their expression for the slightness of the muscular change they caused in his grave, immobile features. There was nothing affected in his grand, slow manner; it was perfectly natural, but suggestive, in spite of its languor, of powerful feeling beneath the surface—rather, perhaps, of feelings having to do with self and pride than with the ardour of a love that could go forth; but still revealing great force of passion, even if of the kind chiefly that claims rather than gives. He had indicated his wish early in the proceedings for a prompt settlement of the wedding. He would agree to anything desired by Sir James about money matters, and all arrangements of that kind could be put through at

the embassy; but he loftily insisted that there should be no delay.

"My dear Count," Sir James remonstrated; "we must give her father time to telegraph a message back. It wouldn't be mannerly to disregard him to that extent."

When the telegram came, emphatically insisting that the wedding should wait for Colonel Fildare's arrival, the Count had been, not furious — that word would imply a more demonstrative kind of emotion than that which possessed him—but darkly incensed.

"I am not used to be thwarted by other men's whims!" he said to Sir James. "Who cares whether Colonel Fildare hands Terra to me at the altar, or any other man? What do I care for forms and mummeries?"

Sir James saw that his feeling was too nearly allied to anger to be treated with anything but the most diplomatic courtesy. His own temper, tact, and good-breeding were taxed to the utmost to avert any breach, on the Count's part, of the outward forms of politeness; but the crisis passed over without the exhibition of any dis-

pleasure of a sufficiently violent kind to prevent the guest from staying on at Oatfield. In conversation with Terra he gave vent to his irritation more freely.

"Checks of this sort," he said, "are the obstacles in life to which I have never submitted. Your caprices, had you shown any, would have been difficulties it would have been inspiring to contend with. However obstinately they might have stood in the way of my wishes, I could have been patient with them. But, once you consent to put your hand in mine, and pledge me your faith, I can endure no interference from others. All opposition that presumes to speak to me as with authority is something I only burn to crush and trample upon."

"It will not be for long, Salvio," Terra pleaded; "and this delay once over, there will never be anyone whose authority over me will stand in your way again."

"I should like to carry you off and marry you my own way, with no stupid whims of relations to stand between the glorious simplicity of our union. It is just because the fuss of the world, and the endless cackling of

impertinent people round, has always made marriage seem odious to me, that I have stood apart from it till now. I hoped with you there need have been no such exasperating worry."

Terra was frightened at his wrath, but in no mood to combat it.

"Try and think of the strange fact that you have conquered me so completely," she said. "It is so surprising to me that I am constantly wondering at my own change of nature. I suppose, without knowing it, I was really craving for a master who *could* rule me, all the while I seemed only resenting with indignation the idea of being ruled. It was the idea of being ruled by anyone not strong enough to do it by his own natural force that disgusted me really, I dare say."

"You are splendid, my own beautiful leopardess! I can see how fierce you would have been with others; and, if it were not for that, I should hardly have taken pleasure in your love as I do. But you do not tell me how you would like to be swept off as by a whirlwind, and married in London as soon

as the express train should arrive. Money and influence would arrange all that, even here, in your law-loving England."

"Oh, Salvio, don't think of anything so wild! It would be such a dreadful insult to the Margreaves; such a scandal!"

There had not been the tone of a settled purpose in his desperate proposal; but it chimed in with his temper of mind to dally with the idea, and play with Terra's double dismay at the course of action suggested, and at the thought of resisting his will, should he choose to force it upon her.

"I am not sure that I could enter on my married life so satisfactorily in any other way. That would be a better marriage vow, on your part, of loyalty to me, than any you could read out of a book, or repeat at a priest's dictation."

"I know you're joking and only tormenting me for the fun of the thing. Oh Salvio! I suspect you will be an awful tyrant. Why do I love the prospect of giving myself into your hands chained hand and foot?"

"Because the fire of my love has kindled your own," he answered in a deep, glowing

voice; and he went on with ardour, giving words to his genuine passion, while Terra listened with half-shut eyes and inflated nostrils, her proud and beautiful head leaning against his shoulder. There was no more said at the time about the elopement idea, and their love-making floated back into its old groove.

Two of the three weeks they had to wait before Colonel Fildare could reach England passed in this way without any fresh incident breaking the surface of the pleasant life around. The Count said nothing even to Terra of an indisposition to fall in with the peaceable settlement of the wedding that everyone assumed would take place very soon after the Colonel's arrival. Lady Margreave began even to talk of the guests she would like to have in the house towards a certain period that might become important —say the week after that in which the Colonel was expected. The Count caught some remarks of hers on this subject one afternoon, and fixed his large liquid gaze upon her without making any comment. But on the first opportunity he had of speak-

ing to Terra alone he referred to what had been said.

"My splendid love," he said in his usual grave and passion-thrilled manner, "listen to me. Lady Margreave talks of having guests here for our wedding. She may spare herself that trouble, but I would not tell her this till I had explained to you."

"What do you mean, Salvio?"

"This. I have put up with your father's fancy that my happiness should wait till he should be able to have the amusement of being present at our wedding."

Seeing her troubled look, as though she would have protested had she dared at this way of describing her father's anxiety about her, he answered the look, interrupting his explanation.

"Let us put it that way because in any other it would be less endurable. Shall we assume that your father is coming home uncertain whether he will give his consent, to see whether he likes me for a son-in-law? That would be a position too difficult to bear, and then we should really have to take our

fate into our own hands, and leave all our friends to fret as they pleased."

"You know, Salvio, that nothing can keep me back from you. I am of age, and no authority could prevent me from coming to you when you should call me to be your wife. It is because our position is so strong that we can afford to be forbearing."

"I know; that is all well, and for the reason of what you say I have been patient —strangely patient for me. I have not called upon you to prove your love by coming away with me and trusting me altogether to arrange for our marriage, because I know what the strain would be for you. It would be an agony for you, even though the after reflection that you *had* trusted me—when all should be well—would perhaps have been a compensation. So I have put the idea aside, though I considered it more seriously than you may have imagined."

Terra listened with excitement and heightened colour, but made no attempt to interrupt him, though his slow deliberate speech would have made this easy. He went on—

"I will do nothing to offend your con-

science, even in the sight of your friends who count love for nothing in the relations of men and women, and govern their conduct by rule. But all the same I will not submit, like a clerk waiting his employer's pleasure, to know when it may satisfy your father to permit me to make you my wife. In a few days from now I shall leave Oatfield, and our marriage will not take place here. I shall go to London and make all arrangements for it to take place *there*, in a manner that will not discredit your connexions, nor, what is more important, your own merits and beauty. Within considerable limits you shall fix the time when it is to be, and to the entertainment which I will arrange in London your father shall be free to bring you at the appointed time. On those terms he can be present at our wedding. If he refuses——"

Here he made a long pause and gazed fixedly at Terra.

"What do you mean, if he refuses? Why do you look at me like that?"

There was a touch of her old fierceness of manner in the question; but the fact that it was evoked by the apprehension he had pur-

posely planted in her mind only made it pleasant in his ears. He smiled slightly, drawing her to him and putting one arm round her in the calm consciousness of possession.

"Then the queen of the fête will have to be brought to me by some other befitting protector. Lady Margreave would be more than welcome to me in that character. If she should not be anxious to assume it, I will engage among the great ladies of your London society to find one ready to undertake the charge. All I require is your pledge that in one way or another, when the time arrives, you will come. Yours is the only consent I seek and implore; all others I will constrain or dispense with. Your honour and good name are fully guarded by this arrangement, which also has the merit, as compared with the simpler scheme which Lady Margreave is plotting, of guarding mine."

Terra did not willingly fall in with this strange programme, and pleaded to be spared all the scenes and trials it would give rise to; but her entreaties were of no avail, and her

own pride, working with her love, operated to make her helpless, for she dared not put the matter to a simple issue and decline to be married at all on those terms. She felt that she would be too obstinate to retreat from any position once taken up, and therefore that it would be wisest not to take up a position she did not from the first seriously mean to hold. She was too haughty by natural disposition to cry under the circumstances, and so pledged by many declarations to the principle of merging her own will in that of her chosen master that she was driven to admit that rebellion, even in this case, would be illogical. The conversation ended without any explicit promise of compliance on her part; but the Count did not press her for this, and assumed that his wishes would prevail as a matter of course in the absence of any explicit consent on his part to abandon them.

With Lady Margreave, in the first instance, and afterwards with Sir James, he had conversation of a very different kind.

"The man's pride and arrogance are positively a disease," the generally gentle-natured baronet declared to his wife, when

she told him what the Count had explained to her as the plan he had mapped out.

"Poor Terra!" sighed Lady Margreave, "I am getting frightened to think of the future before her."

Sir James then had a long consultation with the Count, the tone of which was a little strained towards the close. He employed every argument available to show the inconvenience of the proposed arrangement. As Miss Fildare's father was on the point of arriving in England, it was needless for him to do more than discuss the Count's proposals as a friend of both parties. He claimed no authority in the matter; but he represented that Colonel Fildare would certainly not consent to any course of action that put himself and his daughter in a somewhat undignified position—that the Count was practically insisting on a marriage which, if celebrated, would be needlessly surrounded by the atmosphere of a family quarrel, and so forth. If he would only exercise a little forbearance, he could take over his bride under circumstances of general satisfaction with so distinguished an alliance, all of which Sir James

might as well have represented to one of the suits of armour beside the fire-place in his own hall. The Count showed no inclination now to lose his temper; but he was quite immoveable from the position he had taken up. It was Sir James himself whose temper ran the worst risk, this time, of being lost, for his irritation with the Count was really very profound. The resolute Spaniard had inquired towards the close of the conversation if he understood Sir James to mean that Colonel Fildare would be sure to refuse compliance with the London marriage under the conditions proposed. Sir James was careful to guard himself from committing the Colonel in his absence, but gave Count Garciola to understand clearly that, in his own opinion, Colonel Fildare would be about as likely to consent as to become the Count's groom.

"And in the event of his refusal, which you are no doubt quite right in foreseeing, may I fall back on the other plan, which would be so very pleasing to me: that her ladyship, your wife, should escort Miss Fildare to London?"

"In reference to that part of the plan,"

Sir James said rather stiffly, "I need not speak in any ambiguous terms. I could certainly not give my own consent to an intervention on Lady Margreave's part between Miss Fildare and her father, which would be in the nature, in my opinion, of an insult to Colonel Fildare's very legitimate pride."

The Count bowed with gravity.

"In that case," he said, "I see that my views must be reconsidered. I have endeavoured to arrange everything in a way which would respect Miss Fildare's susceptibilities to the utmost; but I am quite resolved that the essential point shall be attained. I will, if you will permit me, confer with her once more, and will then, with profound gratitude for your prolonged hospitality, beg your consent to my departure."

Sir James's instinct of courtesy prevailed for the moment over his smothered displeasure. He assured the Count that their disagreement about the matter they had been talking of need not impair their pleasant relations as host and guest; but the Count only grew more and more grandiosely polite,

and persisted in his request that a carriage might be ordered to take him to the station for a late afternoon express.

Tears forced themselves to Terra's eyes this time, when a little later the Count was alone with her again. The prospect of his abrupt departure was shocking to her in the extreme, and perhaps even more painful than shocking. On his part, he was no longer chilly and formal, as during the interview just concluded, but almost excited, exhilarated by close contact with a crisis even more stimulating than that which he had organized in the first instance.

"The time for compromise and concession —for bending to whims and rules—has gone by, my glorious Terra," he explained with animation. "I do not regret that we are driven now to take our destiny into our own hands, and you will not be sorry for it in the end."

The plan he now unfolded required one desperate act of resolution on Terra's part; all the rest would be made easy for her. There need be nothing which the most fastidious critic of her conduct could call an

elopement; but she must place herself by her own act under the protection of a chaperone, who would be willing to see her safely through an immediate marriage. His peculiar position as a diplomatist, representing a foreign Government, would enable him to circumvent some difficulties which an English subject might have encountered. Money and influence would do the rest; and he undertook that they should be married with all due form in the course of a few days after her arrival in town.

She would have to do nothing more than put herself in the train, and be received, on her arrival in London, by a lady he would enlist in their service. This lady was a Mrs. Waterton, residing in a certain fashionable "Gate," by Hyde Park, whom Terra had no doubt met in society. He would see her directly he got to London; she would herself telegraph and write to Terra, and the young lady had only herself to promise him that she would come with or without the consent of the Margreaves. Of course that would not be given; but it was equally of course that they would not employ physical

force to control her actions. It was only the first wrench of breaking away from them that would cost her an effort; but in achieving this she would at the same time prove to herself and to him the strength of her character and the magnificent reality of her love.

The prospect was frightful to her; but, opposed to all her protestations and entreaties, he only brought forward one argument. The only other course open to her would really be more painful; that would be the course of leaving Oatfield under his protection. He was perfectly ready to carry her off, if she would prefer that; the plan he had devised was merely aimed at sparing her the effort it would be to her to accept this arrangement. He did not in so many words declare that if she refused his terms he would not marry her at all, but this was practically implied in the persistence with which he adhered to the position that beside the two methods of action thus laid before her there was no other that could be entertained.

In the course of the afternoon the Count duly departed, and left Terra with a heart

palpitating from the effects of a tearing process that she found even more agonizing than she expected. Lady Margreave, who spent the afternoon with her in the hope of soothing her agitation—manifestly none the less intense because it was pent up—learned nothing from her concerning the plans for the future which she and the Count had formed, beyond the broad fact that assuredly their engagement was in no way broken off.

"I must say, I do think it is the greatest possible pity that the Count could not make up his mind to be more like other people in this matter," Lady Margreave ventured to suggest, partly in sympathy with Terra and partly from a sense of personal annoyance in the matter.

"I cannot see that it is the Count's fault at all," Terra retorted. "I should not hesitate to blame him, if I did; but papa gave rise to all the trouble, really. It was wholly unnecessary for him to delay the wedding. It is not as if I were a child, and his consent after all more than a matter of sentiment. Then it is not as if there could be any question of doubt as to whether papa would

or would not wish to consent to such a marriage as this. But it is no use talking of it."

Lady Margreave agreed in her own heart to that last view, at all events, and mentally scolded herself for the want of tact she had been guilty of in giving way to a remark, even flavoured with criticism, on the Count in conversation with his devoted bride-elect.

CHAPTER V.

A DESPERATE VENTURE.

Telegrams and letters arrived at Oatfield for Terra in great profusion during the next few days; but she volunteered no confidences concerning their contents. She was more than usually affectionate in her manner towards her aunt; evidently suffering a great deal, but steadfast in her reserve concerning the understanding between herself and the Count which had been established.

Sir James and Lady Margreave agreed in being very sorry for themselves in reference to the disagreeable entanglement in which they were thus involved; but rejoiced in thinking it would be over in a few days, when Colonel Fildare should get home and relieve them of all responsibility in respect to the restive lovers. They did not at first contemplate the possibility of a

further aggravation of the crisis within the short time that remained before the Colonel's return.

The situation was more fully developed the day the Indian mail reached Brindisi. In the morning Lady Margreave received a brief telegram, announcing the traveller's safe arrival on European soil and promising his speedy presence. The message was brief but cheery: just the few words to be expected from a homeward-bound Anglo-Indian in good spirits. But a few hours later Sir James received another telegram, also from the Colonel, begging for a telegraphic reply, to be sent to him to the care of the station-master at Turin, stating whether his injunctions as to the delay of the marriage had been respected, and also whether anything special had occurred in connection with that event.

This message was received about twelve o'clock. Sir James showed it to his wife; but they both agreed that it was not of a kind that could be advantageously shown to Terra. They were profoundly puzzled by it, but could only reply to the effect that the

Colonel's behests had been obeyed, though they had given rise to annoyances too complicated for explanation by wire.

Sir James gave this message, duly enclosed and directed to the nearest telegraphic station, to a servant, mentioning by name one of the men about the stables, who was to be instructed to get ready a dogcart and take it without delay. The order, having been given with this precision, led to the explanation, brought back from the stables, that the particular Henry in question had driven out Miss Fildare in the victoria shortly before.

The resources of the Oatfield establishment were still equal to the emergency. Another man was sent for, and Sir James was not even disturbed by a passing sense of surprise that Terra should have gone out for a morning drive.

It was not till an hour later that Lady Margreave came into the library, where he was sitting, with an open letter in her hand, and her usual dignified composure completely thrown into confusion.

"She's gone off to London, by herself!"

"Good heavens!"

The subject was discussed more fully; but the news which Lady Margreave exploded in the few words set down, and her husband's exclamation, summed up all there was to tell or to say on the matter. The letter Lady Margreave had received had been brought back by the servant who had driven Miss Fildare to the station—the further and more important of the two stations made use of by residents at Oatfield—from which two expresses went to London in the course of the day: one about noon, and the other between five and six in the evening.

Terra wrote briefly, with earnest affection, and imploring Lady Margreave not to think of her unkindly. Her marriage would take place within a few days; meanwhile, she was going on a visit to Mrs. Waterton, of whom Lady Margreave knew, at all events, enough to know that she would be recognised as a decorous chaperone. Everything could be made to seem quite matter-of-course if Lady Margreave pleased. She had slipped away quietly, to avoid painful scenes of parting, and would write again from London.

The situation was calculated to take one's breath away, Sir James recognised, after it had been contemplated in all its bearings, but what was to be done? Nobody was breaking the law—no force could be invoked to prevent Miss Fildare from transferring herself to Durham Gate. It was all most monstrous, and Terra was frightfully to blame, and she might come terribly to grief in the desperate game she was playing—but how could she be stopped? And yet, if nothing were done to stop her, and if Colonel Fildare, as his telegram seemed to imply, was coming home with some clearly defined anxiety in his mind that the marriage should be delayed, what would he say when he learned the alarming news? And the telegram sent to Turin now constituted a most inadequate reply to the inquiry it dealt with. Further despatches had to be prepared for consignment to the care of the station-master at that place, and eventually it became evident that Sir James must himself go to town to meet Colonel Fildare, and spare him what might be the dangerous delay of a needless journey to Oatfield. The whole transaction was terribly troublesome and exasperat-

ing. It would be obvious to the servants that something was seriously wrong; but still it was clear that Sir James had to go. Happily, the large party that had been staying at Oatfield a few weeks previously had dwindled down now to one or two intimates, and the circumstances under which the expected wedding had been dislocated would not, at any rate, be at once proclaimed in private confidences all over the country.

Terra went through many stages of varied distress during the long hours of her lonely journey to town. At intervals she was appalled at the conceivable consequences of the tremendous step she was taking, and impelled to stop and go back at all hazards to Oatfield. Then she would go over the arguments by which she had originally brought herself, or been brought, to take the resolution she was now carrying out, and put all her trust in her lover, feeling that to do anything else would be madness under the circumstances, for it would mean the wreck of her happiness and the utter annihilation of her future life. She might be running some unknown dangers, but should the shadow of

probably unreal perils terrify her to the extent of driving her to choose certain misery instead ?

It was a trial, a frightful trial, her lover had imposed on her. But she was no ordinary, conventional girl ; he was not to be judged by the tame standards of English decorum ; their mutual love was fire of an extraordinary order, that naturally burned in a somewhat unusual way.

The smallest things frightened her most, however ; the too intense glances of a fellow-passenger, left alone with her for a portion of the journey ; his proffer of a newspaper, that she could only decline with frigidity—though fuming with indignation in her heart at the thought that she was in so helpless a position that a stranger could presume to address her. Then there was a little delay at one part of the journey—signals against the train, that really meant no harm, but kept them at a standstill in a cutting, waiting and whistling for ten minutes, during which all the passengers were putting their heads out of the windows and making inquiries, and during which the people in Terra's compartment—

then three or four in number—exchanged remarks about the delay, wondering if there was an accident ahead, and whether it might not be better in that case to stop at Bedford, instead of going on to London that night. One gentleman present had known of a train, under such circumstances, only discharging its passengers in London eight hours after they had been due. Terra, silent in her corner, and a prey to her own reflections, was chilled to the marrow by the prospect thus suggested to her.

Even the ten minutes, however, were caught up in the end, and the train came in, with perfect exactitude, between six and seven. In apprehension, then, as to whether the promised arrangements for her reception would have worked properly, Terra went through a new series of mental agonies. The ghastliness of her fate if she should find no one to meet her, forced her to dwell in imagination on the course she would then have to take; how she would have to drive in a cab to Mrs. Waterton's; how perhaps the "trials" imposed upon her by her lover would *not* really be found to be confined to the horror

of the railway journey, and how perhaps she should only find him waiting for her with some new programme claiming her renewed submission. The strain on her nervous system, well under command as this always was in her case, was very great, and the actual circumstances of her reception a relief to her of proportionate intensity.

Certainly her lover was present on the platform, but not alone. From the miserable helplessness of her journey she was suddenly plunged in the midst of a reception almost royally respectful and reassuring. Mrs. Waterton, a small brunette of animated manner, was present, accompanied by another lady, and attended by a footman from her carriage, waiting to take charge of Terra's *impedimenta*. Count Garciola was himself accompanied by two other gentlemen, both of his own nationality, dressed with extreme precision and finish. The Count received her at the railway carriage-door, the rest of the group collecting at a few paces. His greeting was faultless—the few words spoken a well-spring of passion and delight, but his manner appropriate to the reception of a

princess. As Terra stepped on to the pavement, the two other gentlemen bowed to her, hat in hand, as though she were a queen; and while the footman engaged himself in the but too easy task of collecting her property—for she had but one hand-bag with her—Mrs. Waterton came forward with effusion.

"My *dear* Miss Fildare, it is so sweet of you to come to me. You cannot realize how enchanted I am."

The passengers getting out of the carriage behind Terra wondered what illustrious personage was embodied in the very handsome, certainly, but angry-looking, solitary girl with whom they had been travelling.

"You know Miss Fildare?" said the Count to Mrs. Waterton meanwhile, with stately solemnity, "so I need not present her to you by name. I merely introduce her as a lady who is not only entitled to our utmost consideration on all grounds, but who claims our enthusiasm as a heroine, by her splendid courage—not to speak of my personal devotion."

Mrs. Waterton's carriage was close by—

a large landau. Thither Terra was conducted by the Count on one side and Mrs. Waterton on the other, the rest of the suite behind—so far unnoticed. Mrs. Waterton followed her into the carriage, taking a seat herself with her back to the horses. The other lady then got in, and was pointedly presented *to* Terra—instead of the presentation being put the other way, as the lady's seniority and title might have suggested—as the Marchesa Tortoza.

The Marchesa said a few words, with a gracious bow, in Spanish. Terra, during the last few weeks, had been studying the language, but was not yet sufficiently familiar with it to catch the meaning of what was said. Mrs. Waterton interpreted :

"The Marchesa says she is delighted to be the first Spanish lady introduced to the future Countess Garciola."

The Count meanwhile approached the carriage-door.

"My friends ——," he said, mentioning by name and title the gentlemen with him, "wish to know if they may have the honour of being presented to you, if only for a

moment; of course I will take another opportunity of making them known to you more fully."

Terra was beginning to feel this adulation, welcome as it was after the fears and misery of her journey, an almost too overwhelming reaction. She could hardly command her voice to speak. The Marchesa slipped on to the front seat of the carriage, so as to let her change her place to the corner nearest the door. Terra bowed silently in reply to the Count's inquiry, and he presented the two young men, each of whom kissed her extended hand with easy continental grace. She recalled the Count to her side by a look.

"You will say all that is nice for me, please. I am not quite equal—just now——"

"Of course. You must be tired; and Mrs. Waterton, I know, will take all care of you. I shall come to inquire after you this evening, after dinner; but you must receive me or remain alone, just as you prefer. In any case, I shall see you to-morrow."

He pressed her hand in acknowledgment of their brief parting, and bowed to Mrs. Waterton with a grateful smile.

"Au revoir, dear lady, with a thousand thanks."

Then the carriage door was closed, and they drove off.

"You came just as you are, dear, didn't you?" Mrs. Waterton asked. "You haven't any things you want looked after?"

"I brought nothing," Terra said. "That was the last arrangement."

"Of course it was! So sweet of you to have acted upon it. I should have been frightfully disappointed if you had done otherwise. It would have wasted all my careful preparations; only I felt bound to ask, for fear you should have had anything with you. You might have forgotten it in the excitement, and then we, your faithful servants, might have been taken to task afterwards. What fun it all is!"

"It was such a relief to find you," Terra began; and then her lips quivered, and she was unable for the moment to go on.

"Have a good cry, dear," said Mrs. Waterton cheerfully; "I am sure you must want it. Nothing makes one want to cry

more than excitement; and now we are by ourselves, why shouldn't you?"

The straightforward simplicity of these counsels, however, made Terra laugh; and though she wiped her swimming eyes without disguise, the nervous agitation passed away. She was fully mistress of herself again when they got to Durham Gate, and was then at once conducted to her own room —the best guest-chamber in the house—where Mrs. Waterton, bright and animated, and intensely enjoying the originality of the whole situation, explained all her arrangements, introduced Terra to the stock of immediate necessaries that had been got ready for her use, and refreshed her with tea and the influence of her own gay spirit. She had offered to leave her alone to lie down for a while, but Terra declared she had been alone enough all the afternoon in the train, and if Mrs. Waterton could stay and talk to her, would greatly prefer her company.

"If I can! My dear child, I've got to do exactly as you bid me. We have all sworn oaths of allegiance to you of the most appalling sort. I'm sure the Count will ask you

to-morrow whether you have any complaints to make, and if you have, our lives will not be worth an hour's purchase. But I'm quite a willing devotee. It is the greatest imaginable fun—all the excitement of an elopement, and at the same time nobody can take us into custody. I do not know what people will say, but I am daring by nature, and like to make life a little more piquant than usual. I'm half Spanish, you know, and my good man has mines and estates in Castille and a house of our own in Cordova. I shall look to you to patronise me handsomely when we meet in Madrid, in return for my present services. What a joke it is for Don Garciola to marry after all! You're a wonderful witch!"

After a while a dressmaker in attendance was admitted to an audience, with the view of hastily adapting a costume that had been provisionally got ready for the evening, and then the ladies had yet some further talk. It was very interesting to Terra to hear some account of her lover and his surroundings from the lips of a third person. There were many details about which he had not been

communicative, and she reluctant to question him too closely; but Mrs. Waterton threw floods of light on all the mysteries over which Terra had speculated in every sentence she uttered. The Count had come early into his great inheritance of name and fortune, had been very much his own master from boyhood, had been always a great scapegrace, and not on the best terms with his family, when his father's early and unexpected death, closely followed by that of his elder brother, had invested him with title and estates. He was away somewhere when his father died, Mrs. Waterton believed, but turned up mysteriously soon afterwards Then he developed a great mania for travelling, and never would settle down at home or get married. It was impossible that he could, as a roving bachelor, ever have spent a tithe of his income. He could not but be immensely rich, but, above all things, he was never willing to do anything like anybody else. This queer arrangement about the plan of his marriage was entirely in keeping with his natural manners and customs. If Terra had shrunk from the part imposed upon

her, he would probably have either vanished off the scene altogether, or have done something more violent still. But now that he had got his way, he would simply treat her like all the queens of Europe rolled into one.

Already, as Terra listened to Mrs. Waterton's lively narrative, her life so far, even as passed latterly under the stately shelter of the Margreaves' hospitality, seemed to fade away into an insignificant background, and, with her enthusiasm for the Count inflamed to the utmost by all she heard, she looked back, when left to herself at last to dress for dinner, with terror on the recollection of the doubts by which her own mind had been assailed during the previous few days as to whether she would or would not take the step required from her.

Any danger passed may often seem more alarming in the retrospect than while it is actually confronted, and, when the retrospect shows that it was not fully appreciated at the time, it may seem especially frightful. Terra remembered how her lover had told her that if she would perform the single act of heroism

allotted to her, the rest would be made easy for her; and in the recognition of the completeness with which this part of the promise was being fulfilled she found abundant justification for the entire trust she now reposed in the Count, and for great contrition at the thought of the doubts which had troubled her during her journey.

The hastily adapted costume of black and gold which had been provided for her adornment did no discredit to her glowing beauty. At dinner they were only four, the three ladies—for the Marchesa was staying in the house—and "my good man," as Mrs. Waterton called him—an unobtrusive, middle-aged man, who spoke very little in a quiet voice and took everything as a matter of course. He disappeared after dinner, when the ladies went up to the drawing-room. Very shortly afterwards, for they had not dined till late, Count Garciola joined them. He showed his satisfaction at finding Terra ready to receive him, and not taking refuge in seclusion, by the proud light in his handsome though immobile features, but was at first even more courtly and grandiose in his manner than

usual—in continuation, as it were, of the effect he had prepared at the railway station. Then, in a little while, Mrs. Waterton bore off the Marchesa to her boudoir, opening out of the back drawing-room, with easy badinage declaring that engaged people might be adorable separately, but intolerable together; and left the lovers to each other.

The Count praised Terra for keeping up her courage instead of giving way and shutting herself up.

"You would have been fully excusable this time if you had been upset, but it is all the more splendid of you to have been ready for me this evening."

"The hard part is over for me now, you know. You said the rest should be easy, and I am beginning to see how wise I was to trust you entirely."

Many little points connected with their eccentric programme had been discussed in the notes that had passed between them since the Count left Oatfield, and these were now talked over. Terra was more than ever intoxicated with the delight of being controlled and directed by an authority she

could accept, not only without offence to her *amour propre*, but with a sense of exaltation in obedience. Her lover was at last thoroughly content, and very ardent in his devotion. They spent a glorious evening, and when the Count took his departure, Mrs. Waterton saw Terra to her room and waited on her with a zealous attention that she already began to appreciate as too fitly paying tribute to the dawning glories of her future station, to be in the least degree embarrassing or irksome.

The next day and the day after were spent in preparations for the wedding. Handsome presents of jewellery arrived at intervals, and betrayed the Count's personal intervention in the whole business, but the direction of Terra's miscellaneous shopping was in Mrs. Waterton's hands. She was rather startled at first by the daring disregard of cost which her chaperone urged upon her, but readily persuaded that she would best please the Count by achieving brilliant results rather than by keeping down expenditure. Her lover spent each afternoon in her company, dined at Durham Gate the first evening,

and entertained Mrs. Waterton and herself the second at a club where lady guests were permissible.

On the morning of the third day, with but two more to elapse before the date fixed for the final ceremony, Terra was in her room interviewing a dressmaker, with Mrs. Waterton's maid, and one who had been taken on for her own special service, in attendance, when Mrs. Waterton came in looking rather startled.

"There is some one downstairs in the drawing-room who wants to see you," she said, with a strange intonation in her voice.

"Who is it?"

Mrs. Waterton held a gentleman's card in her hand. She looked up at Terra for a few moments in silence, flicking the card backwards and forwards against her left forefinger.

"Can you guess?"

Terra saw that a situation of importance had arisen, but did not realize what it meant. She held out her hand for the card. Mrs. Waterton, after a moment's hesitation, gave it to her, and she read the name—"Colonel Fildare."

"My father!"

She changed colour a little as she stood with the card in her hand; but an emergency which merely threatened to put her on her mettle was not one of the kind, like the reaction of feeling at the railway station, calculated to overthrow her self-command.

"What would you like to do?" said Mrs. Waterton. "I did not say more than that I would tell you he was here."

"Of course I will go down and see him. I shall be ready in a few minutes."

"Very well," said Mrs. Waterton; "if you want me, ring and send for me."

Before the servants and the dressmaker they could not well discuss the niceties of the crisis. Nothing more was said, and as soon as her dress had been re-arranged Terra went down.

CHAPTER VI.

PATATRAS!

Colonel Fildare was a very well-built, soldierly old man, of middle height and compact figure, bald as to the top of the head, with the hair left to him grey and the full moustache almost white. He was standing on the hearthrug as his daughter came into the room, in a buttoned frock-coat and light gloves—a good-looking old soldier, with much force of character depicted in nose and chin, showing no trace of unusual excitement, though his dark eyes, gleaming below shaggy white eyebrows, always gave his face, in repose, an expression of intensity. Terra and he were well-matched in their dignity and strength. He greeted her without any theatrical display of emotion, either of joy at the sight of her or anger at the peculiar circumstances under which they met. He held

out his hands, into which she put hers, and he kissed her on the cheek.

"Well, Terra my dear, I am glad to see you again."

"I'm glad to see you, papa." After a pause that was only momentary she added, instantly falling in with the attitude of coolness and composure of which he set the example, "I hope you have been having a pleasant journey."

"Well, yes; most of it was pleasant. The last part has been anxious, it is true, but there has been nothing the matter with the trains or the boats."

"I am sorry you have been anxious, but I hope that feeling is over now."

"Well, yes; the worst of it is over. I was afraid of being too late."

Terra seated herself in an easy-chair. The Colonel remained standing.

"Too late for what, papa?" she inquired calmly.

"Too late to—to introduce you to some one you ought to know. And I'm not in a hurry to do that now, for I am afraid it will give you pain."

The answer conveyed nothing to her mind, but was so unlike what she had expected that she opened her eyes widely and looked full in her father's face, with a combative expression, but still a sense of bewilderment, as nothing yet showed her the particular form of attack she was called upon to encounter.

"I do not understand."

"Just so. I don't want to startle you, though you are so courageous. I want you to realize first that I am not come here to fume and make a disturbance, though you have been arranging to carry matters with rather a high hand."

"It was impossible to explain. I have always relied upon your full approval in the end. You could not see at the time how peculiarly unfortunate it was that you insisted on delay. I was sure you would not have done so had you really understood all the circumstances."

"Marriage lasts a long time. It is seldom so unwise as young people may think to be rather deliberate about it in the beginning."

There was a strange tone of reserved

strength about her father's manner that puzzled Terra. He did not seem angry, but he was clearly out of sympathy with her marriage programme, and yet as free from excitement as if he held the command of the situation.

"I am glad to be able to explain all to you, papa. It will take a little time, but I will begin, if you like. You see, as I was old enough to act for myself, I was obliged to decide for myself; I could not think of myself as a child waiting for orders."

"No, my dear, certainly not. You are of age, and your own mistress. That is what frightened me under the circumstances. I thought you might be taking a step of importance without knowing all the reasons *pro* and *con*, and be sorry afterwards."

Terra sighed, as over the weaknesses of human nature exemplified in her father's attitude of mind.

"I do not think I shall be sorry afterwards; but what I cannot at present make out is why you are not delighted with my engagement. When I find my happiness in a marriage of an extraordinarily brilliant

character, one might have expected my friends, and you especially, to be well pleased. Have you imagined that Count Garciola is—how shall I put it?—an adventurer, and not what he seems?"

Terra asked the question in a tone of reserved strength herself this time, and with a comfortable consciousness of the evidence at her command to be had by ringing the bell.

"I never entertained the smallest shadow of a doubt on that subject," said the Colonel, to her surprise.

"Then am I simply crazy, that I can't make out what—why you object, if you do object?"

"Pardon me, my daughter; I have not come here to object. You have reminded me that you are of age, and I should never profess any authority I had no right to enforce. I do not even come to reproach you for having a little upset the Margreaves. You are your own mistress."

Terra did not form into words the inquiry, "Then why have you come?" feeling that it would be rude, and a poor return for her father's submission to the somewhat aggres-

sive declaration of rights on which she had practically entered; but she looked the inquiry in silence, though not without a gleam of affection in her expectant gaze.

"I am come, my daughter," said the Colonel, taking two paces forward, and standing beside her chair, lightly resting one hand upon her shoulder, "to give you a piece of information on which you will be free to act exactly as you choose. But, to begin with, get rid of the idea, if it is in your mind, that I want to tyrannize or constrain you. I couldn't, you know, if I wished to."

"What *do* you mean, papa? Do speak plainly."

"I will; but I never had such a painful duty to discharge in my life. I am making all this delay lest the shock of what I have to say should do you harm. I am what's called breaking something to you."

Terra was gradually feeling unnerved; but she could not escape as yet from the impression that all these strange manœuvres—unexpected as they were—represented some sort of policy directed against her marriage which it was her business to confront and

disarm. She did not attempt to speak, and merely waited for the disclosure.

"There is an obstacle in the way of your marriage with the Count that has no more to do with my fancies on the subject than with the Governor-General of India."

Terra was paling, certainly, but there was a dark, fierce look in her face.

"Terra, my poor girl, you can no more marry Count Garciola than you can marry Sir James Margreave."

"Why?"

"For the same reason. Some one else has been beforehand with you."

Terra leaned back in her chair, and the full meaning of what had just been said came over her soul as with a sensation of physical agony that made her, without consciousness of the action, put up both hands to her bosom. Her father remained standing beside her, looking down on her face as a surgeon might watch a patient, to see if he were giving way under the effects of an operation.

She grew quite pale, and the room swam before her eyes for a moment; but her will

instinctively asserted itself against the inclination to faint, and she recovered self-command enough to say slowly, after a few moments of heavy breathing:

"My father, if you say this without knowing it is true——"

"I should deserve, then," said the Colonel, going on with the sentence she seemed to find it difficult to finish, "that you never spoke to me or looked in my face again."

"And yet it is *impossible*. You are the victim of some frightful deception. You believe it true; but it cannot be!"

"I said unless I *knew* it to be true you would have the right to refuse ever to see me again."

"If it is true, you must pray God with me that I may die."

"May God strengthen you, my child," said the Colonel solemnly, "to bear this trial!"

"Let me think," Terra said, in a low voice.

Her father drew a chair near hers, and sat down.

Presently Terra spoke again.

"What you have said has nearly killed me; and even if you should be wrong, I shall hardly be the same again. But I know you are saying what you think true—that you are not playing any part. Papa, I unsay one thing I was trying to say just now—what you said for me. Even if you are wrong, I shall be able to forgive the mistake. But do not think I believe it. You must tell me all you know, and then I will see the Count. There shall be no misunderstanding."

The Colonel bowed gravely.

"If you are strong enough, that will perhaps be best; but you are setting yourself a hard task. The facts are these. The Count married when he was a young man, in Seville, before he became the important personage he grew to be afterwards, when his father and elder brother died. The woman was far below him in station, though, of course, very handsome. They lived together for a time on terms that rapidly grew intolerable. In a fit of passion she attempted his life. When he cast her off,

this fact against her—for there were witnesses who but just frustrated her attempt to stab him as he slept—kept her quiet. That is fifteen years ago. He has spent his time since then chiefly abroad; she, with another man of her own class, who has passed as her husband. I have testimony with me that proves all this; I have papers, and I have—the woman!"

Terra shrank at the last word, but uttered no cry. She said calmly, as her father ceased speaking:

"I will hear what the Count has to say. How did you learn all this?"

"I cannot tell you."

Terra looked up in sudden surprise.

"Build no hopes on that," said the Colonel. "There are other secrets mixed up with this. I am bound, in honour, not to reveal them. They do not affect the authenticity of what I have told you. See the Count. Tell him what I have told you—and that I declare myself in a position to prove what I have said."

Mrs. Waterton was sent for at last, and was not a little bewildered by the state in

which she found her guest—looking as though she had gone through a three weeks' illness in the last half hour.

Terra did not pretend that nothing had happened, but begged her to ask no questions for the moment, but to send for Count Garciola: to send an urgent message that would bring him without a moment's loss of time.

"I will wait here till he comes," Terra said, without moving from her chair.

Mrs. Waterton did not dispute the directions given her, but looked with some embarrassment at Colonel Fildare.

"Am I to tell the Count," she asked, "that Colonel Fildare is here?"

"Colonel Fildare," replied the person in question, "will not be here when the Count arrives, so you need say nothing on that head. My daughter wishes to see the Count alone, and I respect her wish. I have to offer you my profound apologies for my intrusion and strange behaviour. That will explain itself later. But it may be that my daughter will want to send for me again after she has seen the Count. May I rely

on your great kindness for the despatch of a messenger to me in that case?"

"Yes; certainly."

"Then I will wait till I hear from you at a place conveniently within call—Bailey's Hotel."

Mrs. Waterton went away to write a note and give her orders to a footman, to seek for the Count, in a hansom, wherever he might be, if not at his own hotel.

Terra begged her father to leave her, and he went. Mrs. Waterton came back to her immediately afterwards, with the double purpose of offering moral support to Miss Fildare after the interview she had evidently found trying, and of ascertaining what line of attack the Colonel had developed, apparently with such remarkable effect. Terra, however, was in a frame of mind very unlike that in which, on the evening of her arrival, she had found relief and pleasure in talking with her hostess. She remained immovable in the chair in which she had received the terrible blow just dealt her, in a condition of lassitude that seemed out of keeping with her usual energetic character. She

made no pretence of disguising the severity of her wound; but she told Mrs. Waterton that she could explain nothing till she had seen the Count. She acknowledged herself to be almost distracted; but conversation would not only be no relief—it would be impossible.

"You shall know all later—or it will not matter; but I *can't* explain."

The effort to speak at all was evidently a strain on her nerves, too great to be borne, almost. In turn, Mrs. Waterton left her to herself.

So, when the Count arrived, which he did after a brief delay, the servant having found him at home, Mrs. Waterton met him in the hall, and beckoned him into her morning-room. He asked what was the matter, with some appearance of anxiety mingled with displeasure.

"Colonel Fildare has been here, and has had an interview with his daughter. She seems strangely overcome; but I do not know what has passed between them."

"Where is he?" asked the Count, with

the displeasure of his tone asserting itself in the ascendant.

"He has gone; but Miss Fildare will say nothing till she has seen you."

The Count said he would go to her at once, inquired where he should find her, and went upstairs.

The white, tearless, but distracted face she turned towards him, as he came in, was startling in its expression, and indicative of some feeling that a mere stormy interview with a despotically-minded father opposed to her wishes could hardly have accounted for in the case of a girl with her unusual strength of character.

"What in heaven's name is the matter?" he began.

"Salvio, I do not believe it!" she answered, with wild fervour. "This is a horrible nightmare! But come and tell me what I have heard is false."

He came up and drew a low chair close to her, and put his arm round her, and kissed her as he took her hand and held it in his own. She did not resist, but did not

respond. She looked in his eyes with a gaze of inquiring terror.

"Now, what is it that you do not believe, but that affects you in this extraordinary manner?"

"They say," said Terra, in a low choking voice, "that you are married already."

The Count gave no melodramatic start, and did not draw away from her altogether, though he drew back a little, nevertheless—still holding her hand. He paused, gazing at her intently for a little interval, during which she looked back still into his eyes in search of the truth, with knitted brow and lips apart.

"You did right not to believe," he said at last.

"But, Salvio, don't torture me! I don't believe, but tell me it is a horrible, baseless story—this cruel falsehood! Who has imposed it on my father?"

"My poor Terra, you have suffered. This story is, as you say, a baseless and a cruel falsehood, so far as it implies that there is any existing bar to our union. I do not know, I cannot guess, the first word of this

mystery—how it has come up in this way to trouble our peace; but take comfort at once, and know that we can afford both to disregard it utterly."

"Tell me more, Salvio! tell me everything there is to tell. I have been driven nearly mad. My father talks of proofs, and certainty. But it would be so much easier to die than to believe."

The Count's look darkened, and his voice deepened. As usual, he was deliberate in speaking.

"It is hard on you," he said at last, "that you should be tortured in this way; but it is hard also on me that I should have to defend myself against nameless and unsupported maligners. I do not know what you have heard; but I will not let pride stand in the way of trying to restore your peace of mind. It is true that many years ago, when a very young and impulsive man, under strange conditions that do not matter now, I married. This horrible episode in my early life—horrible for many reasons—is completely passed now, and I have desired to treat it as though it had never taken

place, as, indeed, it has never been known, as I thought, to more than a very few persons. Why should you have been called upon to listen to its details, when it is passed, repented of, and done with? The woman is dead."

The manner in which he thus explained the case brought forcibly back to her the manner in which Colonel Fildare had wound up *his* narrative of the same episode: "I have proofs; and I have the woman." If the Count had happened to word his denial of the charge brought against him in some different form, she might not have been stung by the suspicion that now assailed her, and would probably have flung herself sobbing into his arms. As it was, the dry, tearless agony at the heart continued; she remained silent for a while, with the same wild expression as before upon her features.

"The awful horror of such a story as this is that it may be denied—it may be all false—and yet it stands there still before the mind, making the whole of life one fearful spectre."

The Count let go her hand and leaned

back in his chair, moving it as he did so an inch or two away. He said, as it were, with a touch of sternness or loftiness in his tone:

"I begin to fear you have not been wise enough to treat this story really with unbelief, as you told me at first."

"Salvio!" she cried out wildly, "have pity on the terrible position I am in. Help me to see that it is all a cruel falsehood; but how can I help being in this state of agony? My father says he has brought the woman with him here to London."

The Count was startled now in earnest, and sprang up in his excitement with a half articulate cry of anger. He advanced a step or two and stood upon the hearthrug.

"Who has dared to plot this against me?" he exclaimed.

Indignation at the idea of so elaborate an attack would just as easily have explained his words and action as the apprehension of a serious menace under the other hypothesis.

"What am I to do?—what am I to think?" Terra moaned.

"I have said that the woman is dead," the Count repeated after an interval, in which

he stood with his clenched hand on the mantelpiece, looking straight before him with knitted brows. He turned towards Terra again as he spoke, and faced her wild stare resolutely.

"Whoever has been brought here—if anyone has really been brought—must therefore be an impostor, bought by some enemy of mine to play this part. I will fathom the mystery. *Your father*, you tell me, has made himself the ally of this plot. I will see him. But Terra——"

There was a kind of warning or menace in the tone with which he pronounced her name, and he paused as if hardly knowing how to frame the thought in his mind into words.

"Well!"

"My love for you seems destined to force me into humiliation. I must know at least that whatever experience of that kind I go through, is compensated for, at all events, by your perfect faith and trust."

"Have I failed in faith and trust?" she cried vehemently. "What would you have me do? Am I not to ask you for the truth

in face of such a dreadful story as I have heard to-day."

"You have questioned me, and I have answered you; and now if you trust me you will refuse to listen to another word on this subject from anyone but myself. Is it not clear that if *I* can see my way to treat this story with contempt, and carry out our marriage in spite of the worst that anyone can say—of the most alarming appearances that can be constructed to annoy and obstruct me—you may be bold also to follow my example? That is what I want you to do, my Terra. I will fight the calumnies that may be brought to bear against me. I will shield you from all knowledge of them, if you will only let yourself be shielded. I will make your life a dream of bliss if you will only be true to your love for me, and listen to no one who would set you against me. Does not every act of my life show how I am devoted to you? But, Terra, there can be no half-hearted devotion on either side in such a love as ours. You should be to me as I would be to you—faithful, even if this false pretender, whoever it may be, really

were the curse of my boyhood come to life again."

He approached her again as he was speaking, and sat again in the chair near her, and would have taken her hand again, but that she had put both up to her face and leaned back with her eyes covered. And yet the wildness and excitement she had displayed at the beginning of the interview were subdued rather than inflamed by the new feeling that was coming over her — a feeling of benumbed hopelessness; a miserable dawning consciousness that all the bright prospects of the future on which her spirits had floated so buoyantly of late were fading away—that the beginning of the end was come—that, somehow, everything in which she had believed and trusted was crumbling beneath her. "If this thing were true!" He could face that as a kind of supposition which required her still to be faithful to him, though marriage in such a case would be a mockery. And this was the union which, in its prospect, had so flattered her pride.

"You can talk about humiliations," she

said, "and yet think I ought to bear such humiliation as that."

He sat upright in his chair, his expression dark and reserved.

"Not even to win back your love, that a few words from your father seem to have driven out of your heart, will I stoop to *prove* myself free to marry you, as I have told you I am. I may prove that to others, if you are strong enough to marry me without wanting such proof."

"Oh, Salvio!" she moaned in a low voice, with her hands still to her face, but turning from him as she spoke and leaning her head sideways on the back of the chair, "that I have loved as I *have* loved; I would have married *you* if I had had to die the same year for doing so."

She was addressing the ideal in her own heart rather than the living man at her side. He answered her:

"Terra, there need be no thought of dying, but only of living in perfect happiness with me, if you are not mad. I tell you, you only have to face a spectre that will shrink to nothing if you confront it. Why cannot you

be strong to do that, if you love me as you say? You cannot doubt my love for you."

He tried to embrace and draw her to him, but she shrank away and put aside his arms. The act was, as it were, a fatal and decisive turning-point.

"Then you repulse me!" he said in a deep tone that was almost fierce.

She turned round and looked at him across the new and strange barrier she had thus planted between them.

"You tell me I must trust you blindly," she said, "and believe that this story is false, though you yourself talk in this strange way about it—as if it ought not to matter to me, even if it were true. It is not possible for me to feel such trust. Unless you proved to me now that it was false, I should believe that it was true."

He sat silent, with arms folded. There suddenly came upon Terra a sense of shame at the thought of sitting there discussing the position with him any longer, and through the intense misery which possessed her whole being she felt the sting of wounded pride. It nerved her for the practical exertion it was

needful now for her to make. To get away was the problem before her—to get away without breaking down. Not to break down meant not to think, and she stood up with all her life-dream in ruins around her and her consciousness centred on one idea—to go to her father at the hotel close by. She uttered no word of farewell, but went straight out of the room and upstairs to the room she was occupying. It was all strewn with the signs of the dressmaking preparations; but the women who had been in attendance on her when her father came had gone into another room, where their work had been chiefly carried on. She hurriedly put on her hat and mantle and went down, only listening for a moment on the upper landing to be sure that the stairs were clear. A footman who saw her as she reached the hall level hurried forward to open the door for her, looking wonderingly at her as she passed out. She merely shook her head as he asked if she wanted the carriage, and went out into the street. She knew her way to the hotel her father had mentioned, which was very near at hand. As she walked on, anger gathered

at her heart, filling her veins for the moment with the energy of passion. The Count's love for her had been of the kind that was merely a convertible term for his own desire. He had condemned her with cold, cruel resolution to the shame which an ultimate exposure of the dark truth in the background of his life would inevitably have brought upon her. Certainly, he had had the courage to face all risks himself; but these may have been in some way guarded against by the semblance of proof he might have had ready, to make it seem that he had justly imagined the woman dead. As for the state of the facts, it was borne in now on Terra's mind that things were as her father said, and she no longer thought of the accusation as one that was in any way in suspense.

She found her father at the hotel. He got a private room, and asked her no questions till they were secluded there. And it was not necessary for him to ask her questions to learn the broad results of the interview that had just taken place. Indeed, she spoke first when the door was closed—in a hard tone, but making no pretence of disguising the

abject humiliation into which she had been brought.

"I have come away. What do you mean to do with me, papa, since shame and misery will not kill me outright?"

Colonel Fildare's natural habit of mind, fortified by military training, prompted him to feel that in the fitness of things penalties of some sort ought to follow the frightful insubordination of which Terra had been guilty; but, at the same time, the crisis was still very recent and the culprit a beautiful young woman, not to mention her being his daughter. It was not in him to be effusive under the circumstances, but he had no inclination to be severe.

"I mean to take care of you, my dear, of course. We must consider our future plans at leisure. I have not put up here. I spent last night at Sir James Margreave's. He had very kindly come up to town to meet me."

It was an aggravation of Terra's wretchedness to find in this way that, with the best intentions on her father's part, he was a little puzzled what to do with her. It was not to

be assumed as a matter of course under the circumstances that she was free to go back to the Margreaves' house in Park Street—which indeed was not mounted just then to receive anyone, the servants being all in the north. She could not help seeing that already she must have given a great deal of trouble in bringing Sir James hurriedly to town. Colonel Fildare ruminated over the situation without confiding to her the various alternatives he was considering. Eventually he rang the bell and ordered lunch, and a brougham for three o'clock. He had to go back to Sir James Margreave's, he explained, during the afternoon, and it would be better for Terra to drive with him, rather than sit brooding by herself. He could not go immediately, however, for he expected a visitor with whom he had made an appointment. He would secure a room for Terra at the hotel where they were for that night. She was as well there as anywhere else, and the following day they had better go out of town for a bit, say to Bournemouth.

Terra was so bowed down and meek in her misery that he was touched and ready to

forget the trouble and anxiety he had lately been going through on her account, though every now and then surges of resentment assailed him as the further complications of the moment presented themselves. He was alive, however, to the uselessness of attempting any consolation just then. All he suggested in that direction was to the effect that it was a bad time for Terra to go through, but that she had at all events escaped results that might have been worse. He asked her very few questions, and after a while suggested that she could go and rest for a little in her room.

"The visitor I expect," he said, "has to do with your affair; but there is no need for you to be worried about that now."

Terra was willing enough to be alone, and went to her room accordingly, to lie down on the bed and hide her shame-stricken face in the pillows.

Some time elapsed, and then a knock came at her door, followed by her father's voice. He came in at her bidding, after she had got up from the bed and had taken refuge

instinctively in the darkest corner of the small room.

"Perhaps it will be best for you to see my visitor, Terra," the Colonel explained. "It is a lady whom you know."

"It will be dreadful for me to see anyone."

"The lady is Mrs. Malcolm, whom I understand you have met at the Margreaves'. It does not matter now how she comes to have helped me in this delicate matter, but she has helped me in an important way, by looking after a certain person I found a very awkward charge on my hands. Lady Margreave, you know, knows her very intimately. Let that suffice to explain how she comes to be mixed up in this affair. She thinks you must want a female friend at this crisis, and wishes to see you. I hope you will let her come."

Terra was not in a position to dispute such wishes just then, and in this way Mrs. Malcolm shortly replaced the Colonel, who, being thus relieved, arranged to go to Sir James Margreave's by himself, and enjoined the ladies to do justice by themselves to the lunch he had ordered.

No more perfect nurse than Mrs. Malcolm, for a patient in such mental trouble as that from which Terra was suffering, could anywhere have been found. Her grave, earnest sympathy was as soothing as any such external influence could be. Her natural unselfishness made her not only gentle and forbearing, but its subtle radiation exonerated her from all suspicion of holding back unfavourable criticism in the inner recesses of her heart. Terra had been disinclined to say a word about herself at first, or to talk of what had happened; but by slow degrees she was won to be a shade less reticent. She reproached herself bitterly and scornfully for the desperate steps she had taken in defiance of her friends' wishes, and the frightful trouble, annoyance, and inconvenience she had inflicted on everyone round her. This gave Mrs. Malcolm the opportunity of making all this seem light and unimportant. The great thing was that she had been saved. The people belonging to her, who loved her, would be so happy in thinking of that, that they would certainly not remember any personal trouble they had contributed to saving her.

And at last, by making little of everything connected with the matter, except the pain in Terra's own heart, she achieved her great triumph, and brought forth a flood of tears—the first the girl had shed through all the tearing excitement of the morning.

It was long after this event, and when Terra had spoken to her freely, though incoherently enough, of the horror through which she had passed, and of the utter desolation in which she was plunged, that Mrs. Malcolm advanced her benevolent plans another stage. The necessity of seeing about toilet necessaries and clothes led up to this.

Terra was naturally sick with disgust at the notion of having to concern herself with such matters again, considering the very different auspices under which she had been doing the same thing for the previous two days. And then Mrs. Malcolm asked why she should worry herself about such things at all. Let her go back that afternoon with her—Mrs. Malcolm—to Richmond, and stay there till she could get her own things from Oatfield. She was quite alone—her brother away—she had no other guest—and Terra

could be in total seclusion for a few days, till her father has devised some future plans. Of course it was settled on those lines, to Colonel Fildare's immense relief, when he came back in the afternoon. And Terra spent that evening, worn out with suffering, on the sofa, in the drawing-room overlooking the river, where Edith Kinseyle, a few weeks previously, had lain in trance and given the strange news that had provoked such momentous consequences.

CHAPTER VII.

ENGAGED.

Edith Kinseyle had written to Mrs. Malcolm pretty frequently during the interval that had thus elapsed, and her letters, having no character of special confidence, had been sent on to Marston, who had also received some on his own account from the same source. Again at Deerbury Park, Edith had been in the midst of social gaiety, but had not said very much on this subject in her letters, which had been chiefly concerned with the other side of her double life, and occasionally had been brightened by news of fragmentary experiences associated with the new phase of her clairvoyant gifts. She wrote from time to time of having been visited by the appearance she described as "Zephyr," and sometimes he had given her little bits of information, unimportant in themselves, but

none the less interesting under the circumstances, as to Marston's or Mrs. Malcolm's doings at the moment, which she then eagerly sought to verify. She complained to Marston, however, that she did not seem to be getting any further; that it was very interesting, and very wonderful to be in relation this way with a superhuman being, but after all, when the wonder and novelty wore off, she did not see in what way she was wiser or better for Zephyr's acquaintance, highly as she prized it. Marston had counselled her to demand of her spirit friend, when next he came, that he should procure her visions of the kind she used to have when in trance, but without allowing herself to pass into an unconscious state. In reply, she sent word:

"I got a visit again, last night, from my inattentive and neglectful Master Zephyr, and had my wits sufficiently about me, first of all to scold him roundly for not having been near me for a whole week, and, next, to make the demand you suggested. He took my scolding with the most disrespectful laughter, and as for my request to be enabled

to see the Spirit Queen, he suggested that I had better send first for Queen Victoria, and see if she would come at my bidding. I said he was very rude and unkind, and that I wanted him to help me to be greater and wiser than I was, and not merely to keep me amused. It was very strange, then, what happened. He seemed to recede away to a great distance, but yet to remain plainly visible to me, and then, somehow, to shoot down upon me a ray of something that seemed to pass over my inner senses with a pleasurable, though intoxicating sort of feeling. And then, for the moment, he vanished away altogether. Then immediately afterwards he was in the room again as before. 'Don't you see,' he said, 'it can't be managed at present. But I'll show you some pictures.' And then he began making dissolving views in the air before me—or somehow, in my own fancy, I seemed to see them in the air before me. I saw myself, first of all—looking like a fly in amber—inside a great block of glass or crystal, and *you* were in the picture too, on the outside of the glass prison, sweeping your hands against it. I did not seem to pay

any attention, but as the scene changed I saw myself flying away like a sort of butterfly out of a chrysalis, while you were lying pale and motionless amongst broken fragments of the glass, or ice, or whatever it was, far below. It did not seem to disturb me in the least to see you in this unhappy plight, though you looked as if you might be dead. Then Mr. Zephyr put the *dramatis personæ* of his show in quite another position, and I saw myself, as it were, coming down a mountain path, with cloud above, going onwards towards a glorious and beautiful sunlighted valley, while you were standing far behind me, higher up on the same path, separated from me by the cloud, looking very dignified and imposing, and holding what looked, at first, like a portrait of me, but what I saw then was a looking-glass which reflected me as I walked below (in spite of the cloud). This picture seemed to give me a most uncomfortable feeling, though I had not been in the least distressed by the other, in which you seemed to be dead! Whether Zephyr intended to imply by all this that I was a perfectly heartless and selfish person, or what, I don't know.

I suspect he meant something uncivil, for, as I tell you, he was not at all in a respectful mood."

Some time elapsed after this letter came before any further despatches were received from Deerbury Park, either at Richmond or the Temple. Then Mrs. Malcolm had a letter which came to her a few days after Terra Fildare's arrival on the scene. She did not send this letter on to Marston, but wrote to him, suggesting that he should come over and see her.

He went to Richmond in the course of the afternoon, and found Mrs. Malcolm alone in the drawing-room to receive him.

"You are not looking well," Mrs. Malcolm said directly after her greetings.

"I'm not feeling so especially; but there's nothing specially the matter."

"I have had a letter from Edith," she went on, "but I so much wanted to talk it over with you that I asked you to come down instead of sending it."

As she put the letter in his hands while speaking, he did not ask, as her manner might otherwise have suggested, whether there was

anything the matter, but read it without a word.

Edith had written :

"My dearest Marian,

"I've been in a whirl, and I haven't written to you for ever so long—a week or ten days. My excuses are manifold and all-sufficient. First of all, I can hardly get a moment to myself, in view of the claims made on my time by my future husband! There is the great news launched. I have been paired off by my destinies and my friends with Colonel Danby, of whom I have often spoken to you. Everyone congratulates me, and tells me that a brilliant and delightful future is in store for me. All these good wishes will count for nothing unless I have yours, so write to me *at once*, and say everything you can imagine that is sweet and exhilarating. But my affairs are much more complicated than they will seem to you so far. My friends have been making frightful discoveries about me. I have got nothing worth speaking of in the way of a left lung. There was a great London doctor

here, on a visit for a few days, who found me out. I do not feel in the least little bit unwell, but I am decided to be absolutely unsound; what you would call in a horse 'hopelessly screwed.' Naturally you will say, under these circumstances, Colonel Danby ought to be let off his bargain; but he actually made the bargain with his eyes open. The doctor says I most certainly ought to go to Algiers for the winter, before the weather should turn in the least cold; and it was this very remark that led to his proposal that he should take me. So the programme is that we are to be married from here about the end of September, and then fly to the south."

She went into some further detail, and discussed the possibility that she might somehow contrive to see Mrs. Malcolm before "the fatal event." She might have to come to town to do some shopping. And she asked Mrs. Malcolm to give news of her to Mr. Marston, for whom, for the moment, she had no news "of more worthy matters," nothing occult having happened to her since the night of the pictures.

Marston folded up the letter when he had finished it, and sat turning it in his fingers, without making any immediate comment. Mrs. Malcolm, in the corner of the sofa, went on with some knitting on which she was employed. With her, knitting was, in a measure, an act of consideration for the people with her at any time. It seemed to justify them for not speaking if they did not want to, though it always subsided into her lap, and was effaced by other interests, when conversation began.

"So," Marston said at last, "that was inevitable, I suppose. But it has happened soon—very soon."

"The discovery about her lungs is what we were warned about."

"We are so blind and helpless in this life," Marston dreamily said, after a further pause; "and those who feel blindest because they realize what might be known, are the few who know perhaps a little more than their fellows."

"What do you mean, more exactly?"

"I mean that it is so difficult to know what the whole situation means—what is for

the best. Should one wish that she might live—or, knowing what she really is, might there not be the truest wisdom in holding back that wish?"

"We could not contemplate her death without great wretchedness."

"Language is weak. If I say, What does one's self matter?—I am pretending to arrogate to myself an unselfishness superior to yours, which would be absurd. You would sorrow to lose her in a pure, unselfish way. For me——"

"You would sorrow more."

"I should sorrow more—well, yes, perhaps I should; but the sorrow then would hardly add an appreciable pain to what I must feel in any case. That is the normal condition of things. Fate has put me in contact with her just enough to make me love her, so that the thought of her blots out every other idea that life can suggest, but necessarily leaves me there. And that being so, it is a kind of painting on the lily in an inverted sort of way, to say that anything else can cause me sorrow. You love her with a perfectly beautiful and unselfish feeling. And I—well, I

may most honestly say I do not love her in a selfish way; but I cannot help loving her in a self-regarding way."

"According to what was said, you might have won her in spite of everything. I do not understand that, Sidney. What did it mean? These things are never said idly; but I do not see how this could have been averted by us, even if it had been right for us to avert it. Can there be any further complications pending? Will this marriage, do you think, be broken off?"

"I should not think so."

"But then——"

"You will see, if you think," said Marston. "The time has gone by during which I might, in the words spoken through her, have chained her life to mine——"

"How? You have had no opportunity. But, ah! do you mean——"

"I mean, of course, that, after all that went on here, and after the extraordinarily close mesmeric relation there was between us, made a thousand-fold stronger than it would have been otherwise by my intense love for her, I could have made *this*," holding

up the letter, "utterly impossible long ago, had I striven to do so. You will feel that no mighty invocation of magic would have been needed for me to have filled her with such an intense desire to come back here, that she would have come back before now; when everything else might have followed."

"I see. And you would bring no influences of that sort to bear upon her?"

"Assuredly not. Would it not have been base to do so?—no matter how I might have worshipped her,—if it had been conceivable that she could have made such a sacrifice."

"How little the world at large understands the ebb and flow of events."

"It has been hard, sometimes," Marston said, "*not* to long for her in the way that would have been an active force."

"Certainly I do not think you need blame your feeling for her as selfish."

"That's what I say; but it's complicated. I knew something of this sort must come; but it has come soon. I thought we might have had her as she was for a little longer; and now there is the dreadful complication about

her health—her life. What ought we to wish for—for her sake? And we are so blind."

"There is not much responsibility involved in wishing," Mrs. Malcolm said. "So, at all events, I wish she may recover and get strong. If that is possible, it is the plain law of life that we should keep people living with us as long as we can. Besides, in the chances of life, while she lives, we may always see something of her from time to time."

Marston still pondered on the ideas in his mind, and merely suggested, in reply to the last sentence:

"Unless we escape ourselves."

"Don't be morbid."

"How strong the influence of habit is even on your strong nature, Marian. Provided I do not make the mistake of trying a short cut, by which I should probably lose my way, how can anything be less morbid, how can anything be more rational and cheerful, than for a man who cannot see his way to being happy in this life, to look forward eagerly to the next, and speak of such

eagerness openly and frankly? If we were honest in our professed beliefs, should not we say sometimes to one another, as we meet: 'I'm very sorry to see you. I hoped, for your sake, you were dead!'"

"That seems intellectually true; but one's instinct against it may be born of a higher intuition."

Their talk wandered off for awhile into problems of this nature, and then came back to practicalities in regard to Miss Fildare, whose final adventures Mrs. Malcolm recounted; though she had told Marston before, by letter, of her break off with the Count, and her arrival in Richmond. Of course, both Mrs. Malcolm and, through her, Marston had been apprised by Ferrars, during his operations on the Continent, of the various circumstances connected with his enterprise—of the difficulties he had found in his way, to begin with, overcome in the end by money and resolution; of his journey to Brindisi, the only place at which he could be sure of intercepting Colonel Fildare; and finally of his return to the Hague, leaving the woman he had brought from Spain in

the Colonel's care. Mrs. Malcolm had been instructed to meet the Colonel on his arrival, and provide for the accommodation of the important witness. Knowing the very headstrong character of his daughter, and over-estimating, as events turned out, the danger that she might simply refuse to listen to an extravagant story, unsupported by adequate proof, the Colonel had conceived it all-important to keep the heroine from Seville within easy reach.

Terra herself did not come down while Marston remained with Mrs. Malcolm.

"I might as well merely have sent you the letter, after all, perhaps," she said at last, when he was going. "There seems nothing for us to do in the matter. I was wrong, perhaps, to give you the trouble of coming for nothing."

"Your perfect sympathy made you wish to be present when I got this news; and in sending for me you did a kindness, as you always do."

"I wanted your advice, however. I should like to see her again, of course, if she comes to London, as she says. But whether

to press her to come here again or not, supposing she is able, I could not determine."

Marston thought for awhile, and then:

"I think it would be very desirable to ask her here again. Physically, I can do her good, I know. I could see her in peace for a little time nowhere so conveniently as here."

Mrs. Malcolm said she would try; and then, as they were parting, said she was sorry to see him looking so wretchedly ill.

"I am afraid that all you have heard today will not serve to revive you."

"You will cling to your theory that physical life is a blessing?" he said, with a smile.

"I am quite sure it is a duty we owe one another to preserve it *for* each other, at any rate; and if you let yourself run down too much, you will give me the trouble of coming up to the Temple to nurse you."

"I shall not forget what you say. Perhaps it is a duty we owe one another. But you shall not be taxed in even your overflowing kindness to nurse me. That will not be necessary, you will find."

He spoke almost as if there were some significance in his words beyond their literal meaning; but at the time she did not realize what this might be.

Letters of congratulation went to Edith by that evening's post both from Mrs. Malcolm and from Marston. He wrote to her cheerfully about her health. He felt sure, he represented, that it was by virtue of a sound instinct or "intuition" of her own that she herself was so cheerful on that subject. Her organism was probably of a kind that would disconcert the experience of a doctor used only to the ordinary phenomena of physical life. She might be flying, so to speak, on a crippled wing, but might have so strong a natural affinity with the upper regions of the air as to be secure from all danger of falling.

"That is perhaps a clumsy metaphor," the letter went on, "and no illustration I can think of just now exactly fits the case, but the sources of your vitality are not the same as those which feed the life of more commonplace people—of that you may, if you please, safely trust me to know more than I can quite fully explain. Assuming, therefore,

that you are in no peril, even by reason of the great doctor's discoveries in the region of your left lung, you will permit me, I hope, to offer you all the best wishes at this crisis of your life that can be framed by the truest and deepest imaginable friendship. I will not disguise from you the disappointment I feel at the thought that I am not likely now to have any further opportunity of watching the development of your higher attributes. I have never disguised from you the reverence and enthusiasm on my part which the contemplation of them has excited, but you will realize without an effort that if this new relationship that you have entered into is to be for your happiness there can be no feeling concerning it in the breast of so true a friend as I humbly claim to be, which is worth talking about in presence of the dominant feeling —that of gladness with you for your sake. Life is a great mystery, even for those of us who fancy we know a little more about it than the majority of mankind. As we come to comprehend something about the higher complexities of our nature, we can never look at even the lower events of physical existence

without some reference to these. But it is so difficult to fit all considerations perceptible from this higher point of view properly into their places. As the circle of knowledge widens the horizon of ignorance expands, for there is infinity in all directions, and only the most narrow-minded observer thinks he can explain the whole. The upshot of which is, that though I look upon you as quite fit, so to speak, for what we call heaven, and though I certainly think heaven a better place of residence than earth, my philosophy comes to an abrupt end in presence of the simple earthly fact of your engagement, and I can only retire back into my own den with my futile conjurations and studies, and trust in the hallowed formula of the fairy stories, that you may live happily ever after."

It remained uncertain for a week or two longer whether Edith would be able to pay Mrs. Malcolm another visit before her marriage, and in the interim Terra Fildare had tided over the most difficult time connected with her trouble, not merely in so far as its most emotional aspect was concerned, but in regard to the petty embarrassments about

her wardrobe and personal properties generally. Her complete seclusion at Richmond enabled her to carry on for a few days with things lent her by Mrs. Malcolm, and then her own luggage, packed under the direction of Lady Margreave, was sent on from Oatfield. Little or nothing was said during her stay at Richmond concerning George Ferrars Mrs. Malcolm faithfully reported all that had transpired to the Hague, and did not try to mould her brother's destiny. Obviously it would be premature to raise any question of that sort now, and Mrs. Malcolm was content with having done the right and serviceable thing at the right time, leaving subsequent events to the guidance of the persons chiefly concerned. Terra was meanwhile sincerely grateful, as also was the Colonel her father, who had been spared the trying duty of wearing down the first sharp edge of his daughter's grief. He had written to Mrs. Malcolm proposing to come to town —he had returned to Oatfield in the first instance with Sir James Margreave—and resume possession of Terra, with a view of taking her abroad for a continental tour; but

Mrs. Malcolm had pressed her to stay, and her own inclinations were strongly in favour of that arrangement. Mrs. Malcolm's soothing and unobtrusive sympathy and companionship were far more acceptable to her just then than her father's company, and the Colonel, for his part, had been easily persuaded that it would be best for his daughter to stay on quietly where she was, rather than undertake a tour she could hardly, under the circumstances, be expected to enjoy. So her Richmond visit was indefinitely prolonged. At last a little opening appeared in the clouds, which seemed at one time to bar out all prospect of a visit from Edith. It was considered necessary by her friends that the best medical skill available in London must pronounce upon her case before the arrangements for the winter were definitely selected among the various possibilities suggested by an anxious bridegroom with an ample purse. She was to be brought up to town, she wrote, under befitting chaperonage, and lodged for a day or two at Claridge's—or rather, that had been the idea at first, the Miltenhams' town house at that season of the year being very

much dismounted; but Edith had "moved for leave to bring in an amendment," as she expressed the matter in her explanatory note, rather mixing up some of the parliamentary talk she heard going on around her. She had suggested that she would bid adieu to her girlhood by paying a short visit to her friend of friends, Mrs. Malcolm, and with the advantages belonging to her position had carried her point. "The opposition saw I really meant it," she wrote, "and discreetly gave way."

So one day in the early part of September it came to pass that, having been duly surveyed by her battery of doctors at Brook Street, she was delivered over with much ceremony, and gallant protestations from Colonel Danby concerning the magnitude of the trust, to the custody of Mrs. Malcolm, who came up to town to meet her. Her leave of absence was to cover three days. Colonel Danby had a short conversation with Mrs. Malcolm concerning her apart from the others who were present.

"The verdict about Miss Kinseyle," he said, "seems to be contradictory in some

respects. There is a great deal of organic disorder, but a great reserve of general strength in her constitution. From a mere examination of her lungs the doctors would have expected her to have been much less healthy and vigorous generally than she seems. The inference would be that the organic attack, though no attention has been paid to it hitherto, has been defeated by Nature, and does not threaten further development. But under the circumstances, it is needless to say that the utmost possible care must be taken to guard our patient from its renewal."

Edith herself laughed and joked with Mrs. Malcolm on their way down to Richmond about the solemnity with which she had been inspected. She did not feel ill in any way whatever—had never felt better or stronger than during the last few weeks, and the new theory that she was a very fragile invalid, requiring to be surrounded with elaborate precautions, seemed merely part of the fuss incidental to her engagement. It gave Colonel Danby a great deal of innocent amusement to lay out a plan of compaign against the unfelt foe

supposed to be conspiring against her welfare. The Riviera was their first line of defence, and Algiers their citadel. They were to keep several steamboats ready saddled at Nice, and watch their enemy through stethoscopes. At the first cough they would slip across the Mediterranean, and a serious cold would involve a strategic movement on Madeira. She was in mortal terror lest some medical authority should declare a hearty laugh too great a strain on her system, in which case she would be condemned to read sermons and serious poetry for the whole of the honeymoon. Certainly it was immensely devoted of Colonel Danby to make her health in this way his main preoccupation, but if she was obliged to pose as an invalid for the whole winter, she would have to try a low diet, and be bled at intervals to cultivate an appearance befitting the part.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIST CLEARING.

Mrs. Malcolm had already explained by letter the circumstances under which Terra Fildare was then staying with her. They would be a square party for dinner that evening, she now told Edith, for she had laid on Sidney Marston for the service of any psychic emergencies that might arise during Edith's short stay. When he came, towards dinner-time, Edith greeted him with a sympathetic smile, and said it was delightful to be all three "as they were" again. The excitement of the moment obliterated all traces of the worn and weary look that Mrs. Malcolm had taxed him with at their last interview.

"And you are so little changed to look at," he said to Edith, "that it seems difficult to realize the great change that has really taken place."

"How did you expect me to be transmuted? Ought I to show myself crushed by the burden of care so soon? At all events I have come down to Richmond to throw it off for three days."

Marston was constrained and awkwardly silent at first. Mrs. Malcolm focussed their talk after a little while on the old topics that used to engage them formerly.

"I have been out of your world down here," she explained, in reference to some incidents connected with people Edith thought she knew, to which allusion had been made, "and have been quite content with Terra's companionship. Besides, I have been most interested,—in getting your letters,—in what you have told me of your psychic adventures."

"I haven't been having any lately. Zephyr has been a faithless friend, and has altogether deserted me. I am beginning to think he is a poor substitute for my old trances—with Mr. Marston at hand to make me remember all the nicest parts. I think we must celebrate this happy reunion by having some more. But Miss Fildare will

be wondering what on earth I am talking about."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Malcolm. "I have told her quite enough of what used to go on here to prepare her for anything that may take place."

"I had no idea that you were so—wonderful a person when we were together at the Margreaves'," Terra said.

"Oh, *please* don't look upon me as anything of the kind. Mr. Marston is the magician, and I am only a sort of instrument for him to play upon."

"History repeats itself," said Marston, replying to Edith's last remarks, "according to the current phrase, but not in the narrower cycle of private lives, I fear."

"I do not seem as if we had ever left off from the point of view of this my own old sofa corner. Marian, I am glad you are not given to hunting your furniture about the room. I would never have forgiven you if this sofa had not been exactly where I have been used to find it."

"I wonder if its magic still survives," said Mrs. Malcolm. "How do you think, Sidney?"

"I should think Miss Kinseyle is about as likely to have lost her psychic attributes as Joachim to have forgotten the violin in the last few weeks."

"Or Mr. Marston to have lost the art of paying compliments," added the young lady herself. "But that habit is too deeply engrained to serve as an example for me. Perhaps I have merged myself altogether in my commonplace aspect since we last met. Perhaps, as Mrs. Graham Lee used to put it—don't you remember?—I shouldn't mesmerise now, even if I were tried."

"I think," said Mrs. Malcolm, "that the temptation to try will get very serious after dinner."

Marston did not warmly endorse the proposal; but as he had never been in the habit of attempting to impress his wishes on their arrangements in the former time—content to direct the actual course of the mesmeric processes when these had been decided on or demanded by the ladies—his passivity in the matter now did not strike them as remarkable. They went in shortly afterwards to dinner, and the little ceremony passed over

without any special incident. Terra, indeed, had been troubled with an uncomfortable feeling—as the conversation reverted from time to time to the psychic mysteries with which she was quite unfamiliar—to the effect that perhaps she would be in the way, and had indicated a readiness to take herself off into privacy when dinner should be over; but Mrs. Malcolm had declared this wholly unnecessary.

"I do not treat you ceremoniously, my dear, by interrupting our talk to try and explain things to you. But do you, on the other hand, spare us the feeling of being rude by remaining quite at ease yourself. I am specially pleased to have you here while Edith is with us."

In the drawing-room afterwards she again reverted to the idea which possessed her imagination.

'Well, what are we going to do this evening? It is very nice to have you here, Edith, and chatter idly as we have been doing, but the combination seems to suggest something more."

"What does the master of the ceremonies say?" inquired Edith.

"He is the servant of the ceremonies, if you please."

"But why are you not eager to renew our old proceedings, Sidney, if you are really disinclined, as it seems to me?"

"Disinclined is certainly not the right word. It is more fascinating to me than I can say to watch Miss Kinseyle's psychic flights at any time, and it would be rather more so than usual to-night. I merely wonder if you recollect that the counsels given through her in her last trance were against repeating the process in the old way."

"I should think," Edith said, "that the orders were not intended to operate for ever. There has been a long interval."

"It was left to your discretion, if I remember rightly," said Mrs. Malcolm. "Was not that so?"

"Yes; I think it was so left, and that is what makes me so cautious. I can't see my way through it quite. I can't see any reason why it could possibly do harm, but there must have been some reason in the warning."

"Suppose we try," Edith suggested, "and then if I go black in the face, or begin to scream, you can call me back. I can't feel frightened of anything in this dear old sofa corner, and with you at hand to take care of me."

"Then let us try," Marston said; "perhaps it is only a superstitious reverence I entertain for a warning your lips have spoken. It may be that your impulse and Mrs. Malcolm's are better entitled to be trusted than mine. Besides, I am not sure but that my impulse is in the same direction now."

There were no preparations needed beyond the simple movement of his chair a pace or two forward, but a great deal seemed embodied in the fact that Edith should again put her hands in his, going back across the memories of the painful scene they had passed through in that room on the last evening of her former visit, to the earlier time of their first acquaintance. There was no mystery between them now. The dark horror in his life had been disclosed and shuddered over, and a little interval had smoothed down the storm of emotions thus evoked. She knew

now all that there was to know about him, and resumed their sympathetic intimacy on its old footing. And yet, as he took her hands, he noticed some costly rings upon them that had not been there before, and the meaning of the shining symbols stung through and through his imagination as it were, and left a physical sensation in the track of their rays. He said no word about them, and did not even look at them, but in a little while she drew away her hands and took off the rings.

"Take care of them for me, Marian. They seem to me somehow in the way. That will be better," as she restored her hands to Marston's keeping, and looked up in his face with a smile.

"Is it fancy, I wonder," she said soon afterwards, "or do I see a kind of cloudy light floating about between us?"

"I suppose you see something. Could you lower the light, Mrs. Malcolm? She might make out more clearly then."

Some candles that stood upon the mantelpiece had been already blown out so that they might not glare in Edith's eyes, but a lamp was burning on a table behind her.

Mrs. Malcolm went to this, turned it down as low as it would go without being quite extinguished, and put a shade over it.

"Oh yes!" Edith cried, "I do see a light. Don't you, Marian?"

Mrs. Malcolm saw nothing distinctly. Marston, appealed to in turn, said he did not see, but felt an influence which might be what Miss Kinseyle saw.

"It seems to flow from your side and move round towards me in eddies. And there is light round your hands, too! Hold away your hand for a moment. Yes, like that," as he held it pointing towards her. "There is light coming from the tips of the fingers."

As her eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness she was able to observe these effects more distinctly, and described the colour of the light she saw as a purplish-blue. Then, by her wish, Marston stood up, and moved a little away from her.

"That's very curious," she said. "I can still see the light, and it still flows from you to me, but as you draw away the cloud grows more like a current or band. Get away now

into quite the far corner of the room. There, that is still just as plain as ever."

"I dare say I can tell you when it looks most distinct to you," Marston said, as he leaned against the wall at the side of the room farthest from her sofa. "Wait a few moments. . . . Now!"

"Yes; I distinctly saw the light brighten. A sort of pulsation passed through it."

"That is the mesmeric, or magnetic force, no doubt, which you, as a sensitive, are conscious of. I know when it goes out towards you by my own sensations."

"I'm beginning to understand things," she said dreamily, in the influence of that light. "Come back again now."

She remained thoughtful and quiet as he sat down again beside her.

"You need not take any trouble in the matter. You are magnetising me all the time."

"I know."

"Do my forehead a little, though; perhaps it will make me see clearer."

Marston laid his hands on her head, and made a few passes of the kind that had

generally before sent her off to sleep. And, indeed, this time again it seemed as if the usual effect had been produced. She lay with her head back upon the pillows for a minute or so in silence, sighed a little, and then said:

"It's draining your life away."

"What then?" said Marston.

"That has been going on some time. You have been forcing the current to flow—it is not merely that I have been absorbing it. That is why I have been feeling so strong and well. I ought to have been nearly dead by this time, if I had been left to myself."

Marston made no comments on these calmly uttered assertions, which were put forward in a subdued voice, sentence by sentence, and slowly. Presently Edith resumed:

'I can see the feeling that has governed you. You have not been trying to draw me towards you. You have not wanted any reward, but you have so arranged things that your vital strength is all draining away, to make me strong at your cost."

"And is not that a very good arrange-

ment? I do not want strength, and you do."

"I cannot accept the sacrifice—knowing all it means."

"Then let what you are saying be wiped off your physical memory, so that you will not recollect it when you wake."

She made no direct reply to, or acknowledgment of, this injunction.

"It is not of any permanent use, after all," she went on. "This influence is preventing the effect of my illness from showing itself; but the causes are going on all the while. The doctors are mistaken in thinking they have been stopped. It will require a stronger influence than anything you have yet been able to do to save my lungs altogether from getting worse."

"A stronger influence, you mean, than anything I have been able to do yet; but it might be possible for me to accomplish what is needed—by a final effort."

She remained silent for a little while, and then, still speaking in the same calm and unimpassioned tone as before, answered:

"Yes; I must answer you truly. You

have penetrated some great mysteries, and learned to understand some part of the power controlled by self-sacrificing love. But you do not know all that your own project will accomplish. You cannot know all the risks."

"Are not we bound to do all we can for one another?"

"Not bound to do what you want to do for me."

"If not bound, at least permitted?"

"It is never right to waste power obtained at such a sacrifice. It may be that the knowledge I have acquired to-night as to the nature of the sacrifice you are trying to make for me will defeat your own intention. Already that purpose, as far as you have already carried it, has been imperilled. It was dangerous to let me learn so much."

Marston looked towards Mrs. Malcolm, though the darkness was too nearly complete to let them see each other's faces.

"This was the meaning of the warning against another trance," he said to her in a low voice.

"Try and turn her on to something else."

"There is something else," Edith said, answering the suggestion herself, "going on all the while. Don't you see it, Marian?"

Hitherto in her trances she had been apparently unconscious of any voice but Marston's. Her response, in this way, to Mrs. Malcolm's remark was a novelty.

"I only feel an emotion, dear. My Guardian's magnetism is all about us."

"Come and take my hand, and look straight before you with me."

Mrs. Malcolm came to the back of the sofa, and, kneeling there with her arms on the low back, took one of Edith's hands. After a time she gave a low murmur as of admiration and awe.

"Yes; I can see her faintly through the darkness, as though at a great distance."

"She says, so kindly and sweetly, that she is not so far from us as we are from her. That sounds a paradox; but she means that we do not yet realize how near she is to us, so she seems far to our eyes."

"Does she seem far off to you also?"

"Yes; not as I have seen her before, when my body has been completely en-

tranced. But then I was drawn to her by her power. It is different now. But it only makes me wish to feel as I used to with her. I do not see and feel to-night as I have done before; but I understand things better. Oh, everything else does seem so poor and worthless, compared to the glory and joy of being away there with her in the state she is in. Nobody would live in the body, if they knew what it was to live in the world of spirit. And yet it is not merely by quitting the body that we can reach the world of spirit. People who cling to physical life do so with wisdom very often; though they do not know why they are wise. They would be very foolish if what they believe was really as they believe it. One must never hasten the change."

"Not even for you, then," said Marston, "would it be wise to hasten the change."

"Certainly it would not be wise to hasten the change. Why do you ask me questions I am bound to answer, but also bound to leave only half answered?"

"I must ask you what arises in my heart to ask you. I am willing to listen to any-

thing you have to say to me beyond the direct answer."

"Why are you talking with her in riddles?" said Mrs. Malcolm. "You seem to understand each other, but I cannot follow you."

"Do you ask me questions, Marian," Edith said in reply, "and I shall perhaps be able to answer more plainly to-night than usual. But ask me about the things of the spirit life. It seems a kind of blasphemy to talk of anything else when *her* influence is upon me."

"But there is one thing I want to know, that it cannot be wrong to be anxious about. Are we going to lose you, dear, or to keep you with us?"

"You will never lose me, Marian. We shall be more closely united hereafter than we ever have been, or can be, amid the barriers and changes of life in the body."

"That does not seem to answer what I was anxious about for the moment. I can't help thinking selfishly of the present, though I would be reconciled even to losing you, if you say distinctly it is best for you."

"Wait and see. I cannot tell you which is best now."

The strange conversation was prolonged for a considerable time, Mrs. Malcolm obeying the injunction to press no further for definite information about Edith's prospects of life, and asking questions relating to her own past experiences in relation with the Spirit Edith described herself as interpreting. When at last Mrs. Malcolm, speaking to Marston, asked if he did not think Edith ought to be brought back to consciousness, they were made fully aware of the fact —already suspected from the course the proceedings had taken — that this time she had never properly lost consciousness.

"You need not make any efforts to bring me back," Edith said. "I have never been away. I know this time all that has taken place."

"You remember all your talk with Mrs. Malcolm, and how it began?" asked Marston.

"And also my talk with you, which came first. You can only keep away from my

physical recollection what has never been established there."

Marston was silent. She spoke in a significant tone, but very gently and sympathetically.

"You might turn the lamp up a very little," she went on; "and then by degrees I shall feel as usual again. I am rather languid at present."

They did as she suggested, and discussed the new phase on which her faculties had thus entered, at length, in all the bearings it suggested. Then, as their eyes grew used to the light, the room was restored to its ordinary condition.

All the evening, however, Edith remained in a rather dazed and dreamy condition, and spoke of feeling weak and exhausted, as she had never felt before after one of her trances.

"I am not free from self-reproach in all this," Marston said. "I fear I ought never to have agreed to attempt another trance. It seems almost to have done you harm, and —perhaps—has worried you needlessly with some fancies."

"I do not regret what has happened," said Edith. "Not at all. It has been wonderfully instructive. Perhaps a little sobering for the moment, it is true. That may be all for the best. Meanwhile, self-reproach under the circumstances does *not* seem to me quite the right feeling for *you* to be troubled with."

It was not till after Marston had gone that Terra Fildare joined again in the conversation.

"How good you have been, dear," Mrs. Malcolm said to her, "to sit quiet and self-effaced the whole evening. So much that we have been talking about must have seemed quite unmeaning to you."

"I have not understood it," Terra said; "but that only makes it stranger that I should have been so impressed."

"How have you been impressed?"

"I can't describe. Awestricken, somehow. It seemed so thrilling that you and Miss Kinseyle should have been seeing something that I could not see. But it was not that only—but perhaps I ought not to ask questions."

"Ask any questions you like."

"What was it Mr. Marston had been doing? — something that Miss Kinseyle seemed to find out about while she was talking."

After a short pause, Mrs. Malcolm answered:

"That would be for Edith to say, if she likes."

"He has been suffering himself," Edith said slowly, "to an extent I never dreamed of before, in the effort to make me well."

"That was what I vaguely made out; but I was not sure. And without even intending that you should know?"

"Yes; that is what makes the self-sacrifice so very complete."

"Self-sacrifice! What an extraordinary thing it is, when you come to think of it," Terra observed reflectively.

"It is unusual," said Mrs. Malcolm, "but happily not quite impossible."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SACRIFICE ACCOMPLISHED.

The next day did not work itself out quite in accordance with the intentions the little party at Richmond had formed. Marston, to begin with, did not come down in the afternoon, as had been proposed. He telegraphed to Mrs. Malcolm in the morning to say he was not very well, and a great deal occupied, so that he could not join them for lunch—nor, perhaps, even at dinner; but he would certainly appear in the course of the evening.

Mrs. Malcolm was puzzled, the notion of Marston being kept away from Edith, when he had the option of being in her company, by any occupation she could think of, seeming absurd. But Edith's condition gave her concern also. The girl seemed somehow dispossessed of the bounding good spirits

that she generally enjoyed. In the morning she slept long and heavily. She declared herself still tired when Mrs. Malcolm went to her room, and accepted the offer of breakfast in bed. Not that she was eager for the breakfast — she was simply disinclined to leave her bed. Mrs. Malcolm sat with her, and talked and did knitting; and Edith read for a time, and only got up in the middle of the day. There was nothing the matter with her, she protested; she was merely dominated by the sentiment of the previous evening.

"All the same," Mrs. Malcolm argued, "if Colonel Danby saw you this morning, he would have a poor idea of me as a nurse for you."

"I dare say. People are so strangely mistaken about things they think they understand very often. I *am* languid to-day, and more face to face with the fact that I am ill than I have ever been before. And yet, if I were snatched away from Richmond just now, I should disappoint some hopes, I am quite sure; and should probably never be well enough to be manœuvred about the

south of Europe in the way Colonel Danby proposes."

"You talk with as much confidence, my dear, as if you were in your clairvoyant state."

"The two states are coming together, Marian; and it is a very strange experience. But don't be alarmed about me. Nothing could be so good for me, in regard to health even, as being down here, though I don't look flourishing to-day; and you don't want to be told, I'm sure, that it is best for me in every other way."

She got up in the middle of the day, and sat in the garden for a time, and then did a little piano-playing, and so on, whiling away a very quiet day. During intervals, while they were alone together, she and Mrs. Malcolm left nothing that concerned her, in the current crisis of her life, untalked of. She would not dilate at any great length, however, on her engagement, though she did not show any inclination to shirk the topic. The thing explained itself, and there was no intricacy of any interesting kind to be disclosed concerning its origin. As to Sidney

Marston, and his sad position in the world, they also talked at length.

"Is there no hope, don't you think," Edith asked, "that he will get a little more cheerful and interested in life after a time?"

Mrs. Malcolm could hardly explain to Edith all the grounds she had for believing this impossible; but, attributing the hopelessness of the case altogether to the circumstances which had crushed him, she nevertheless admitted frankly and fully that the case was hopeless.

"He sometimes has talked," she said, "in a way that has frightened me; for I do not think that anyone has a right to put a violent end to life, however wearisome it may be. But I must say—though I would not say this to him—that, if poor Sidney could be kindly translated by a higher power to another sphere of existence, I should mourn personally, for I have a very deep friendship for him; but not for his sake."

"It seems to shock me—the idea," Edith said, after a long, reflective pause; "death is so strange a metamorphosis. I suppose it ought to seem more shocking for me to con-

template the idea in my own case. It would disappoint so many people, now, if I were to die. And, as you say, it might be a release for Mr. Marston, while I ought to enjoy life if anybody can ; and yet——"

She did not finish the sentence at once, but went on presently, in a dreamy voice :

"From what you say, I suppose, if some higher power should say either I or Mr. Marston had to die, you would choose me to live ?"

"It's a comfortless kind of fancy for you to have, but—of course I should."

"And yet it would be odious and horrible for me to make that choice."

"My dear, the idea is—rather repulsive, as you say. People in general could hardly realize the idea of choosing to live at somebody else's expense, in that way, except as a selfish choice. But, if one can imagine that you had the power of choosing, it would certainly be a poor kindness to Sidney to choose that he should live, and see you die."

The idea was not developed any further, and the day passed—not exactly in sadness, but as though clouded by some solemnity,

and quite without any of the bright sallies of high spirits which generally threw a moral sunshine on any company to which Edith belonged.

"Dear Marian," said Edith, after they had gone through the brief and simple ceremony of dinner, and were re-established in the drawing-room; "I think it would be best, if you do not mind, that you should leave me to speak to Mr. Marston by myself for a time to-night. I know he will wish this; and I shall have some things to say to him, which you will know all about, no doubt, very soon, but which I ought to say to him in the first instance, with no one—not even your dear self—by to hear."

"Very well, dear. I am sure your impulses are entirely to be trusted."

"I knew you would not mind."

"*Mind!* As if I could have had so petty a thought! Terra and I will settle ourselves in the dining-room."

When, a little later, they heard a ring at the outer door, which they knew to mean Marston's arrival, Mrs. Malcolm was gathering up her work-things to go away in advance

of his coming; but Edith objected to this, and said there could be no such hurry.

"Let us wait and have some general talk first. We shall see. Perhaps I may be mistaken."

"You are getting beyond the liability of being mistaken in your intuitions, I think."

Marston was paler than usual, and evidently under the same kind of serious impression that had overruled Edith herself during the day; though his dark eyes seemed to gleam with more intensity than ever, and his manner to show a suppressed excitement.

"Are you better than in the morning?" Mrs. Malcolm asked. "I was afraid at first you were seriously ill, to be kept from coming to us as intended."

"My coming was very certain in the long run, though it was a little delayed."

"Perhaps it was best for Edith to have a perfectly quiet and restful afternoon. She has not been at all herself to-day."

"I suppose last night left its effects upon her; but I trust they will be only transitory. I am not anxious."

"How dreadfully unfeeling," Edith said with a touch of her usual gaiety, but a look that guarded the words from being taken too literally. "At Deerbury I could not cough without being gazed at with fearful solicitude; and if I had caught a cold the household would have trembled."

"I think all the better of Deerbury. From that point of view anxiety is most reasonable."

"You have been getting further and further from the common stand-point of late, it seems to me," said Mrs. Malcolm. "Have you been making any special progress, Sidney, in mysterious knowledge?"

"It is against all recognised rules and regulations for people who are studying mysterious knowledge at all to boast of their progress. Still, for once I may give myself a dispensation. I have been making progress —in some directions. I have concentrated my efforts more on learning certain things, with a definite purpose in view, and have succeeded in proportion to my concentration."

"I don't think you look as if success had agreed with you."

"Knowledge is worth more than physical vigour; and no one should understand that better than you."

"That is quite true; but so few people are weaned from the things of this world sufficiently to realize it."

"Scarcely anyone. Not I, for one, though I can state the theory in words."

Edith was listening silently, looking at him with a fixed gaze that seemed to see more than the external appearance of things. Mrs. Malcolm went on with the dialogue:

"What paradox do you mean by that? I should say you were as little wedded to the things of this world as a human being can be, to live at all."

"One may care not at all for the hundred-and-one pursuits and pleasures that most people are absorbed by, and yet not be weaned from this life. I can imagine conditions under which I should revel in it and enjoy it intensely. While that consciousness lurks in the background, it is a spurious kind of spirituality that is achieved by merely growing indifferent to life as it is."

"Sometimes I distrust even your meta-

physics, when you get morose and revile your own personality."

"You can see what I mean by comparing my spirituality, born of discontent, with the spirituality of nature and sympathy that Miss Kinseyle shows in her trances and half-trances."

Launched on this current, the conversation went on for some time longer on the same lines. It was only a phrase of Edith's later on, when the subject had been changed, which led Mrs. Malcolm to withdraw from her share of it. Marston had declared himself quite ready to refresh their sensitive by a dose of the old strengthening magnetism, which had exercised so potent an effect upon her on former occasions.

"I do not say I will not consent to be helped," Edith said, "but before I do I must come to some understanding with you, Mr. Marston."

"Well," said Mrs. Malcolm, "as I want the understanding come to, I shall leave you to arrange it by yourselves. Come, Terra, let us leave the magician and his pupil to their conference."

Marston merely answered, "Thanks; it's very good of you," opened the door for her as she rose and went out with Miss Fildare, and then returned to the seat he had been occupying—a low easy-chair near the sofa corner, in which Edith was as usual established.

"It is a part of the strange artificial life which we lead, that the chance of saying a few words alone to you should be a difficult privilege to gain."

"Did you inspire me to ask her to leave you alone with me ?"

"I tried to."

"It only makes me the more anxious to speak plainly about all this. I have all kinds of impressions as to what you have been trying to do—more than impressions; and yet I do not like to speak of them to you till I am quite sure, in the ordinary way, I mean, by your telling me."

"I wish nothing better than to tell you quite plainly all that is in my heart about you —all I feel, and all I have provided for—though I saw last night that you came to know it by your higher faculties. It is quite

needless for me to be conventional and self-suppressed any more. It is a farewell I am taking of you, Edith, my beautiful queen; for I have learned how to realize the cry which rose to my lips, though I could not utter it then, when I was last talking to you in this room, on that miserable evening when I made you see the gulf between us, so plainly visible to me all along."

He had come up to her quite naturally and untheatrically as he spoke and knelt down by her side, taking one of her hands, which she made no affected effort to withdraw, but suffered him to hold quietly as he went on. She leaned sideways against the arm of the sofa, looking into his face with sad tenderness.

"What I thought, then, as I stood by you here was: Oh, that I could pour my life out at your feet, and know no more the desolation of vainly yearning for you! But it was a fruitless and empty groan then, and if my wish had been realized at the moment as I framed it, no purpose would have been served."

"I have had the reflection of your feeling

in my heart all day, and it has made me so intensely sad."

"But now—it is sad still, of course; but there is one thing made clear, and that is, what you know already, that I have found a way to pour out my life, not merely to ease my suffering, but in your blessed service. You ought not to have known it yet. I see now; there was the mistake of last night. But for that mistake, in the final and complete transfer to you of the life-energy which holds my body and soul in unwilling companionship, you would have gained all that was needed without the disturbance of feeling due to knowing how it was gained. Now you must know and understand it all; but, my pure and unattainable love, do not reject the offering. Take it in perfect frankness and simplicity. Let your acceptance of it be the only return you can make—the only return you can make for my unutterable love."

She did not speak as yet, but only shook her head slowly and sadly, though her hand vitalized itself in his grasp, and conveyed thanks more eloquent than words.

"If you do this, then you condone last night's mistake for me."

'My friend, you talk of laying down your life for me in a way that ought to startle me into terrified protest, only I have understood what you meant since last night, and have been thinking of nothing else—so I am not startled now. But you must not—you *must not*—I could not accept life on such terms."

"But, Edith——"

"Hush! Think of the whole thing from my point of view. I am bewildered about myself; but remember what pledges I have given. Your supreme devotion is so wonderful, you are entitled to say anything to me; but I should be frightfully to blame if I go on listening to you. It is all a terrible entanglement."

"Edith," he repeated softly, but firmly, again using her name, in spite of her protest, "I may give you your dear name because, in telling you of my love, I am not pleading for any reward—as you truly saw in your clairvoyant state last night. The memory of this love shall not be a trouble in your heart

in the future, but, if I may humbly say so, an elevating thought. It is not as if I ever dreamed of trying to tear you away from the bright prospect life holds out to you, to make your beautiful existence my prey. I have never contemplated the idea that you could make the extravagant sacrifices required to bring that about. Death sanctifies such recollections as this talk of ours to-night may leave with you; and in the very act of telling you how I adore you—in this one-sided exhalation of love—I am speaking almost as I might have spoken in a written paper, to be left behind me when I go away. I had thought that would have been all I could do. I meant to have written a letter to you, to leave in Marian's care, that she might have given it you some day when alone with you. But you divined everything last night, and now I may speak instead of writing; but it is the same thing. Edith—Edith, my divinity, never mind how or why I love you in this way—never mind the mystery of the thing—perhaps that will grow clearer later; but, you see, the fact is so, and cannot be altered. I love you in a way which, if you

could constrain me to live on—for I should have in that case to live without you—would make life a torture. It would not be in the nature of things that you should have any corresponding feeling. I know you have not, and I do not claim it for one instant. All I claim is, that you should think of me with just so much trustful regard as may enable you to receive my offering without reluctance, and wear the memory of it as something that need not be in any way irksome."

"I tell you I could not. It may be weakness of a kind. If I wanted to live for any grand purpose, then I would accept what you offer me; but if I live, what will it be for? Just to lead an empty, frivolous, luxurious life, that will not make me or anyone else any better really. Dear friend, you forget that the very influence you have been bringing to bear upon me, especially since last night—indeed, since last night it seems all translated into that—tends to raise my thoughts and aspirations above the sort of happiness life holds out to me. Would it be happiness at all, now? I hardly know; but, at any rate, that sort of happiness purchased this way

would be unbearable. I cannot—I cannot——"

"My love, be merciful and gracious, and do not reject my offering. For, Edith, dearest, I tell you the die is cast—the step is taken. I could not draw back if I would, and Heaven knows how little I would if I could! This day has been spent in work that cannot be undone. If I had been dying from common-place illness in the ordinary way, and you had come to me, when the result was known to be inevitable, at my entreaty, to give me the blessing of dying with your adored face before my eyes, I should not be more free than I am to speak to you as I am speaking. I shall never see you again, my beloved, after this night. Listen——"

As he spoke, they caught faintly the sound of wheels on the little sweep of road coming up to the hall-door from the main road, for the house stood back a little from the thoroughfare in which it was situated.

"I have got a carriage here to take me back to town, for the—the irritation and strain of going by the railway after I leave you

would have been too much to face. My Edith, that is my excuse for the freedom I give myself in these last few moments. Even now I love and reverence you so that I would obey you if you deny me the farewell I want; but you will not rob my parting from you of the sweetness, the remembrance of which will be the blessing of my future existence—the one thought, the one consciousness, that will vibrate there."

He leaned forward as he spoke, and gathered her slight form in his arms and kissed her wildly again and again. The conflict of emotions by which she was torn and shaken forbade her from speaking distinctly. Her eyes were swimming with tears and her lips quivering.

"I give you my life, my own. It is my supreme act of will. You cannot refuse it. It is transfusing into your being as I speak, and my heart, that has been beating for you only for so long, is beating nearly its last now in glad and proud exhaustion for your sake, as it rests for the first and last time against your own. You shall be happy in this life, my glorious queen—in this life as

well as in the next—and you will not be pained by the recollection of this evening after the first excitement of it has passed. You will *know*, with your splendid spiritual consciousness, that this settlement of things is best. My beloved, we could not both be happy on this earth, at all events, and I choose to stand aside and let you pass; and then—I do not know what will happen to me exactly; but I shall be no longer bound to this suffering organism which has been condemned to exist apart from you. Anyhow, I am of service to you in dying, and I can be of no service to you living."

Whatever influences were working upon her—the intense excitement through which she was passing, or something else as well,—were now so powerful that any coherent thought, not to speak of argumentative protests, were wholly impossible for her. She lay in his arms panting and flushed and giddy with the tumultuous energy pulsing through her veins. She clung to him, unconscious of what she was doing, and he remained kneeling beside her, clasping her in a close embrace and murmuring words of love and devotion

and farewell. Under the dominion of a different kind of bewilderment his own words became more confused and his own sight uncertain after a time.

"Ah!—I am staying—too long," he stammered,—"I must go—good-bye—good-bye."

He rose to his feet, staggering as if intoxicated, clutched at the chairs, and made his way to the door. The noise he made as he stumbled across the hall attracted Mrs. Malcolm from the dining-room. He had already seized his hat, which he held in his hand as he opened the outer door.

"Sidney, what on earth is the matter?"

"Don't stop me — good-bye. *She* will explain."

"Ah, you will fall!" she cried, as he almost fell over the two or three steps which separated the level of the hall from that of the road.

Edith came flying through the hall from the drawing-room as he was opening the carriage door.

"Do not let him go," she cried, "Marian —he is very ill. Stay; I command you to stop. I will not live without you."

"Too late! too late!" he answered, but rather in exultation than in sorrow. He was stepping into the brougham, but she came impetuously up to him and he embraced her once more. "I shall carry your last thought with me," he whispered, "my love, my love—my gratitude and blessing for it;—but do not keep me back another moment." With the same gesture he put her away from him, and threw himself backward into the carriage, drawing the door to after him. "Drive on," he called in a loud voice to the coachman.

The tone of intense adjuration in which he had bidden Edith not to delay him, held her paralysed in obedience to his wish. In the darkness outside Mrs. Malcolm and Terra Fildare in the hall had not seen what passed. The carriage started off quickly, and its wheels in a few moments grew fainter along the road.

"Darling," said Mrs. Malcolm, coming to the door and calling to Edith. "Don't stand there. Come in out of the night air; you will be taking cold. Tell me what extraordinary thing has happened."

"Taking cold!" repeated Edith, with a strange scorn for the idea in the tone of her voice. "You don't know yet, Marian. There is little fear of my taking cold." She came back into the lighted hall, and faced Mrs. Malcolm—gazing at her wildly. "Good Heavens! it is terrible."

"What possesses you?"

But the noise in the hall had attracted one of the maids.

"I will tell you," she said, seizing Mrs. Malcolm's hand and dragging her along to the drawing-room with a greater exercise of force than she was conscious of giving out at the moment. Terra hesitated whether to follow, but Edith held the door open and called to her to come.

"Why should there be any secret? Surely such things should be known, that people may understand what heroism is possible."

The whole situation seemed to flash on Mrs. Malcolm's understanding as they stood together in the room without another word being spoken. Edith stood on the hearthrug with compressed lips, breathing hard through her nostrils. Mrs. Malcolm uttered a cry,

and put up her hands to each side of her forehead.

"Yes; he has died for me," Edith said almost fiercely. "We shall never see him living again."

"How do you mean, died?" cried Terra. Mrs. Malcolm, understanding the whole position, had remained silent, but Terra was startled into disregarding her usual rule of not asking questions across the current of her friends' mysterious talk, by the nature of Edith's last exclamation.

"You may well ask," Edith said. It was a necessity for her to speak, in the intensity of her excitement and vehemence, and Terra's complete ignorance of the whole mystery involved was an opportunity on which she seized.

"These things which are so strange to you are tremendous realities to him and to me. He had always been able to make me strong —to refresh me by magnetism when I was enfeebled—and that used to exhaust him in exactly the same way it strengthened me. It was a transfer of vitality. He could give it out, I could absorb it. But these small

efforts in the past were as nothing to what he found out at last to be possible. He has learned how to pour out his life in a great flood upon me, so that I have been made strong and well, and he—is dead at this moment in the carriage that is driving his body to London!"

Terra uttered a cry of astonishment and horror, and sat down trembling in a chair. Mrs. Malcolm put her handkerchief to her eyes, and sitting down on the sofa corner, buried her face in the cushions. Edith began to pace the room, backwards and forwards along the side that was clearest of furniture, pushing the light things out of her way as she passed.

"But why," asked Terra presently in bewilderment, "why has he done this?"

"Why? Well, indeed, you may ask, for love, I suppose, does not often take such a turn as that. He had come to care for nothing in life but me, and now I see quite clearly he had such power over me really, though I never felt it, because he never tried to exert it, that he might have drawn me to anything, in spite of—in spite of everything

that made me never think of him in that way. But he wouldn't do that, because he cared more for my happiness than for his own—more for my life than for his own. Oh, Marian, was there ever anything so heroic, when you come to think of it? It is not the sacrifice of life that is the great thing. It is the other sacrifice that overwhelms me, though the life sacrifice illuminates it so wonderfully."

Mrs. Malcolm shook her head and looked up when thus addressed, speaking with difficulty, for she had been giving her lost friend a genuine and hearty tribute of tears.

"It is altogether beautiful and noble, and it is miserable to lose him, but I verily believe he did the best and wisest thing possible."

"I am not sure," said Edith.

"Do you mean that his intention in some way may fail?"

"Fail? In one way it is accomplished. I could tear myself to pieces for it, but as for my physical strength I feel wild with strength—like a panther or a leopard. But I can't bear the feeling. If it was altogether another sort of strength he had given me, if I was so

much the higher raised towards the nobler state he has sometimes been able to put me into, that would seem a result better worth the sacrifice; but merely to get health—that is not what I want, not what I care about—What?"

The last exclamation was suddenly uttered as if in answer to some interruption that had not come from either of the two living people with her. She had stopped suddenly in her walk facing the unoccupied corner of the room, as though the interruption had come from there.

"Did you see anything?" she asked of Mrs. Malcolm, who had looked up, following the direction of her gaze.

"No."

"It was Zephyr again. He was visible there for a few moments, and he seemed to speak to me, but I did not distinctly hear what was said . . . What did he mean? I feel he meant to call my attention somehow——"

Obeying an impulse that she did not stop to reason about, she went to the door and threw it open.

"There!" she cried impetuously, "Don't you see that—— ?"

Both Mrs. Malcolm and Terra Fildare sprang forward and looked out into the hall, following the direction to which her arm pointed.

This time they both saw—the same effect that she saw herself.

"Mr. Marston!" Terra called out in astonishment.

"Sidney?"

Edith herself made no sound, but she made a step forward beyond the doorway. Marston's figure had been seen by them all, standing in the middle of the hall, with a proud and joyous look lighting up the face. As Edith stepped forward it seemed to grow indistinct. She paused, and it remained in sight a few moments longer, and then seemed to move across the hall and disappear, though there was no way out in the direction towards which it passed.

"Oh, good Heavens!" Terra exclaimed, trembling violently, "was that a ghost?"

"One that you need hardly fear," said Edith. "My noble, true-hearted friend!" She

went out into the hall and wandered about, standing where the figure had been perceptible just before, and passing across in the direction it had taken.

"He looked happier than he ever looked in life; did he not, Marian?"

The vision somehow worked a soothing effect upon her, but when she came back into the drawing-room she found Terra very much overcome and almost fainting. Her nerves, entirely unused to psychic appearances, had been upset by the sudden contact with what to her had all the terrors of the supernatural. She had clung for support to Mrs. Malcolm, who guided her to the sofa, and her usually glowing colour had faded to an earthy tint.

Edith went to the dining-room to get water, and, held up by Mrs. Malcolm's calm and resolute assurances that there was nothing to be frightened about as much as by her own natural strength of character, which made her instinctively struggle against faintness, she passed the critical moment without actually losing consciousness. She took some of the water which Edith brought, and wet hand-

kerchiefs were dabbed on her forehead till she recovered her self-possession and could talk of what had occurred.

"That sort of spectral appearance," Mrs. Malcolm assured her, "is often seen when people are at the point of death. Nothing is more natural than that it should have been visible here under the circumstances."

"It's such an overwhelming thing to actually *see*," she protested, none the less. "But how did you know it was there?" she asked of Edith.

"Zephyr told me. That's a spirit I see all to myself. He showed himself and spoke to me just before, and then I half understood what he meant, and opened the door."

"But do you mean to say you saw some other spectre in here?"

They were none of them in a laughing mood, so the question, which at another time might have had a ludicrous aspect, was met by some grave explanation that had all the greater force for Terra by reason of the shock she had just gone through.

"I *wish* Zephyr would come back and talk to me quietly," Edith exclaimed impatiently

after awhile; "he might tell me things I want to know," and in her eagerness she called aloud upon her absent sprite; Terra shuddered, and entreated her not.

"It wouldn't affect you," Edith said. "You wouldn't see him. Marian even does not see him. But it seems no use for the moment. Perhaps I am too excited just now; I may be able to get him to come when I am alone upstairs and quiet."

This idea appeared so frightful to Terra that it led to further talk about psychic phenomena, which constituted a revelation for her that could hardly have had the same effect at any other time. Her nerves, however, had undergone so great a strain that she gladly accepted Mrs. Malcolm's offer to take her over into her own room for the night.

"I thought I was a fairly courageous person," she said; "but I am sorry to see I am a greater coward than I thought."

"There is no question of cowardice or bravery in the matter, my dear. It is a question of familiarity."

Edith meanwhile had grown all the more

impatient for the seclusion of her own room.

"Perhaps I shall understand things better in the morning," she said; and with that they separated.

CHAPTER X.

SEEN IN A NEW LIGHT.

Mrs. Malcolm did not wait to receive news of Marston's death through any ordinary channel, but telegraphed to her brother at the Hague the following morning, begging him to come over at once in connection with an urgent matter affecting their friend. She said that an explanatory letter would await him at his club, as she had no wish to bring about a premature meeting between himself and Terra Fildare. To Terra she said nothing at the time on the subject of the message, though a great deal of earnest talk passed between them during the day. The events of the previous night had made a deep impression on Terra, and put a new face, for her, in many ways, on her own trouble. Edith had been up early, pacing about the

garden by herself, but, though restless and excited, was more inclined to remain alone, wrapped in her own thoughts, than to open them out even to Mrs. Malcolm just then. She had seen Zephyr again in the night, she declared, and had learned some things she wished to know, but had not got her mind clear enough to talk of them for the moment.

"Look at it how you will," she said, "it is a tragedy—a catastrophe of which I am the cause. There might have been a very different end to it, and perhaps there ought to have been."

Terra naturally asked, when alone with Mrs. Malcolm, for information concerning the course of Edith's engagement.

"It was a very natural result about Colonel Danby," she said. "Everybody saw that he was paying her great attention at Oatfield; and it was a very nice match for her. But had this affair with Mr. Marston gone far?"

"The situation was so strange and unusual, that though it had gone far in one way, it had not gone on at all in the way you mean. Of course Mr. Marston was in love with her—I knew that—but he never said a word

on the subject to her, and he never entertained the thought of marrying her. There was a great shadow over his own life that made him think it would be wrong to ask any woman to share it. He had the most beautifully unselfish nature; and he let Edith know about the shadow that I refer to, in a way that he intended to put all thoughts that he could be aiming at acceptance as her lover out of the question."

"If he had kept the secret, do you think——" Terra asked mournfully. "Could he have made her care for him?"

"I am sure he could; not merely because there was so much lovable in him in the ordinary way, but because he had so much psychic influence over her. You can understand that now, after what you have seen. But it is impossible for anyone who knew Sydney Marston as I did to think of him as attempting to gain any object of his own at the cost of a deception like that. The truth is, I believe, that without any deception at all, even after he had told Edith the secret I speak of—which was nothing disgraceful to himself in any way—that he might have won

her. But, as I say, he did not think his life bright enough for her to share; and under the circumstances, much as she liked him, she never came to have any feeling about him that was overwhelming in its strength—enough to make her put aside all worldly considerations."

"Oh, Mrs. Malcolm!" said Terra, with something like a groan. "Just think of the difference between his behaviour and—the way I was treated!"

Absorbed in her thoughts about Edith and Marston, Mrs. Malcolm had not at first seen the intricate parallel. She looked up at Terra now, as they sat together by the drawing-room window, and realized the course of the girl's thoughts.

"Yes; there is something in common between the two cases. Don't let it hurt you too much, dear. Perhaps it was thoughtless to bring the idea before your mind."

"Hurt me! It ought to hurt me!" said Terra. "Oh! I deserve so thoroughly to be hurt for worshipping an image of gilded clay."

The perfection of Mrs. Malcolm's sympathy

had always guarded her from the mistake that a friend of less delicacy of feeling might have made, and she had never aggravated the distress of Terra's position by reviling the behaviour of the Count. Even now she did not break out into any emphatic endorsement of Terra's outcry, but cherished her instead, taking her hand and speaking soothingly.

"My poor wounded bird, we are all liable to be short-sighted and to make mistakes in life!"

"But just think of it. There was more than a shadow over the life in my case—something that made it a horror and an outrage to me that I should be asked to share it. But merely because he coveted me in mere selfish desire for his own sake, he exposed me to all that. If my future had been wrecked, and destroyed, and made shameful, he would have been indifferent by that time. He simply sought me as a man might seek the basest gratification for himself. Oh, heavens! to think what human nature is capable of!"

"Human nature is capable of both extremes, dear."

"Yes; I see that now, and the sight of one extreme has shown me the other. But oh! Mrs. Malcolm, I was mad enough to love him, and I am so *ashamed* of myself!"

She burst out crying and knelt down, hiding her face in Mrs. Malcolm's lap. Her wise friend did not regret or ridicule the tears, but caressed her and spoke affectionate words in a disjointed way, without arguing the matter at all. Terra's intense and passionate nature, however, made the crisis a severe one for her, and she went on with fresh self-reproaches when she had recovered command of her voice.

"I suppose a disgusting thirst for rank and riches had more to do with the matter than I supposed. I ought to go and be a semptress for a punishment, and earn my living in a garret."

"Terra, dear," said Mrs. Malcolm, not thinking it necessary to answer the last outcry definitely, "I was drawn to you at first just in mere sympathy with you in your trouble, but I never expected I should come to love you as I do now."

"I'm not fit to be loved."

"Then I must be very foolish.'

The strain of her emotion was relaxed after a time, and later on they spoke again of Edith.

"Do you think she is suffering very much?" Terra asked. "She seems so wild and excited I do not understand her."

"Edith has such a wonderful double nature, it is very difficult to judge her thoughts and feelings by ordinary rules. After last night you will realize that. In general it is only people with what we call psychic faculties who can understand others of their own kind. Other people have an incredulous impression that psychic attributes are all fancy and nonsense; but of course, for those who have them, they are the most real things of all."

"But why didn't she fall in love with Mr. Marston?"

"I don't know. As I say, she has a double nature. Of course, all the ordinary feelings and facts of life told upon her too. Away at Oatfield, you see, she was under the dominion of the more worldly side of her nature, I suppose, and from that point of

view of course poor Sidney would have been an impossible person as a lover. And indeed he *was* impossible, if her health and life could only be purchased by the sacrifice that has been made."

"That is so utterly extraordinary."

"Yes, indeed; but just as physical a fact, you see, as commonplace things that are better understood."

"What a realm of wonder you and she must have been living in when she was down here with you before!"

"Yes, indeed; to a greater extent than you can realize yet. Even after what you have seen you would not be able to believe some things I could tell you about Edith."

"I do not torment you with questions, Mrs. Malcolm, because I have seemed to be so outside it all. But I am sure I should not disbelieve anything you tell me really happened."

"Well, let it come bit by bit, dear. It will be better so."

In the afternoon, when Edith, who had been roaming about the house in an unquiet way, had gone out for a walk by

herself, Terra began again about her own affairs.

"I think I ought to write to papa, Mrs. Malcolm," she said, "and make some sort of abject confession that I have come at last to see what a fool I have been, and how badly I behaved to him."

"Write him a nice letter, dear, by all means, but I am sure he will not want any apologies. It will be reward enough for him if he can be enabled to see that you are getting over your trouble a little."

"How did he find it all out, Mrs. Malcolm? That's what I can't understand. How could he learn everything all at once over in India, and come straight home, picking up—that woman on his way without a day's loss of time? It's perfectly bewildering."

Mrs. Malcolm remained silent.

"Of course I haven't a right to be told anything; but do you know anything as to how he found it out?"

"I know some things, dear, but—it's so awkward."

"Very well," said Terra, with a new im-

pulse of the meekness with which she was lashing her own remorse. "Indeed, I do not complain if you choose not to tell me. I do honestly feel what I say, that I am utterly without any claim in the matter of any sort."

"My own dear, I have hesitated from such different reasons. First of all it did not seem necessary to worry you with details. All I was anxious to do was to soothe and sorrow with you when you suffered. It is very nice of you to reproach yourself, but of course you will not really suspect me of joining with you in any reproaches of that sort. I only look upon you as my dear patient, who has been cruelly hurt, and if I can nurse you into health again I shall be very happy."

Terra responded by a look of gratitude, but said nothing for the moment. Mrs. Malcolm went on—

"But I can see that, of course, you must be wanting to know more, and now I will be brave enough to be frank. You see, we all helped your father in one way or another, and though it was done, of course, in the

purest and simplest way imaginable, I was afraid at first that you might think we had been meddlesome. There, dear, you see it is I who have to make a confession, and I do hope now I have begun it that you will give me absolution, and tell me you do not think my interference was impertinent."

Terra gazed with open eyes of wonder, but the right note in her heart had been struck by the conversation of the morning, and without waiting to hear more she sat down on the ground, with her arm across Mrs. Malcolm's lap, and said:

"Now, then, let me know the full measure of my debt to you. So you have not alone nursed me through my misery, but were the person who saved me from the first!"

"I am so glad you take it in that way that I will absorb all the praises you can give me. It is so difficult to do people a service sometimes, because, indeed, it is only a generous nature that can feel gratitude, and one is so apt to excite a very different feeling, especially where there is so much pain to be borne as you have gone through."

"Oh, I'm a very noble and beautiful

specimen of humanity, I know," Terra replied with a sarcastic emphasis. "And now may I know some more, and see whether I can forgive you for rescuing me from the horrible snare my own wisdom and goodness was taking me into?"

"I can tell you the main thing in half a dozen words, and you will understand them now, though you could not have done so yesterday. The whole situation was seen clairvoyantly by Edith!"

The revelation was so entirely different from anything she had expected that Terra was dumb for a while with surprise. By slow degrees, and bit by bit, the whole story was told; how Mrs. Malcolm's suspicions had been awakened by impressions Edith had had at Oatfield, and how the whole truth was brought out afterwards during her trance.

"But then, how was the woman to be got at? Did you write to papa?"

"No; that would have wasted too much time." Up to this point of the conversation George Ferrars' name had not been mentioned. Now, as naturally and easily as she could, Mrs. Malcolm added: "You see, my

brother was with us then, so he took his share of the work at that point—went over to Spain and found the woman, and induced her to go with him to Brindisi, where he gave her over to Colonel Fildare, with all the necessary information. And then he went back to the Hague."

The emotions Terra had been going through during the day had exhausted her liability to fresh agitation for the moment. She listened in a kind of stupor, and said nothing in immediate reply, while Mrs. Malcolm stroked the beautiful masses of her loose tawny hair.

"Oh, the trouble I've been giving to people!" she murmured presently. "Oh, Mrs. Malcolm, what a *pity* I wasn't drowned in my cradle!"

"My dear, do you think there is anybody of all the people concerned who would not feel rewarded over and over again by knowing you were content—that is, that you had accepted the service rendered without thinking it meddlesome?"

"I am very grateful," said Terra in a low voice presently, "to everyone concerned."

CHAPTER XI.

RECOVERED.

George Ferrars would have had news of Marston's death even if Mrs. Malcolm had not sent him the telegram. For papers were found upon Marston's person directing that news should be sent to his friend. He lived in utter loneliness at Temple chambers, and had no intimate friends among his neighbours, but the final course of events had been provided for with much careful arrangement. When the brougham reached town, and the coachman endeavoured to obtain from his passenger some information as to which of the Temple entrances he should make for, he could obtain no response. He had to stop and get down from his box, thinking his temporary master was in a very sound sleep. When he found that something was wrong he appealed to a policeman, and then, by the

counsels of this sensible adviser, drove to the nearest hospital. There the true state of the case became apparent, and search being made for pocket-book or letters to identify the dead man, a letter was found addressed "to the proper authorities if I should die suddenly." This letter, in an open envelope, announced that the writer knew he was suffering from heart disease, and might expire suddenly at any moment. It explained that in that case he would wish the news of his death communicated to Mr. George Ferrars, his greatest friend, then at such and such an address abroad, and also to solicitors, whose address was given. The solicitors applied to the following day on behalf of the hospital authorities confirmed the statement in the letter. Within the last few weeks their client had actually mentioned to them that his sudden death was an event within reasonable probability. They held his will, of which Mr. Ferrars was the executor. The whole incident was perfectly intelligible, and was disposed of by a paragraph of six or seven lines in some of the newspapers. The inquest was a mere formality, and before

Ferrars could actually start in obedience to his sister's message he received news of the death from the solicitors. He was in London on the day following that on which the conversations last recorded had taken place between Terra Fildare and Mrs. Malcolm.

Mrs. Malcolm had not entrusted even to the letter she sent to meet her brother at his club any full account of the extraordinary circumstances really attending Marston's death. These she gave him at a meeting they arranged in town, at the private hotel in a street off Piccadilly where he generally put up when in London. This rendezvous took place on the third day of Edith's visit, when, in fulfilment of the original programme, she delivered herself up to her Deerbury Park friends at Brook Street, coming up from Richmond with Mrs. Malcolm.

"If I could have seen my way clearly," she told Mrs. Malcolm, as they were going up in the train, "I should have insisted on a longer stay with you under the circumtances; but I don't know yet what I ought to do. The only thing I feel bent upon is that I must go back home to Compton Wood for

a time. I can't explain what has occurred in any way that will be in the least intelligible to any of the people about me, but I shall tell them I have shared the shock you have experienced in the sudden death of a very near and intimate friend, and this may be an excuse for some little delay in the arrangements that were being made."

"But are you coming to shrink from them, Edith dear?"

"I don't know. At all events, anything immediate would be intensely distasteful to me."

"I can understand that—and I should be sorry if you felt differently; but still I have a feeling now that since the sacrifice has been made, the truest response you can make to it is to let it bear the fruit it was meant to bear."

"We must see. But at all events for the present I must go to Compton Wood. Marian, will you hold yourself ready to come to me there at short notice, if I should really have need of you?"

Mrs. Malcolm promised, but at once foresaw a possible difficulty about Terra, if such a summons should come soon.

"You must bring Terra with you, if you cannot make any other arrangement; but I have a feeling that I might be wild to have you with me. I feel on the brink of some kind of crisis. I don't know what it is, and I have had nothing unusual happen to me in the way of psychic things—but I seem somehow just ready to burst some sort of shell. That is why I must go to Compton Wood. If anything is to happen to me, it will be at Kinseyle Court."

"I wish I could go with you at once."

"I wish to goodness you could."

They both felt, however, that a real duty stood in the way, and nothing more was said on that subject. Mrs. Malcolm did not go in with Edith at the Brook Street Hotel, but ascertaining that her friends were there, bade her good-bye in the carriage, which had been sent to meet Edith at the station, and then went on alone to see her brother.

"I shall see you again soon," Edith had said, "I am sure of that," and their parting was not treated as a serious solemnity.

"And now," said George Ferrars to his sister, when they met shortly afterwards,

"is there any clue to this mystery? I never knew that Sidney had heart disease."

"He hadn't anything of the kind. His death has been something too solemn and wonderful to write of in a letter. But now I will tell you all about it."

When the whole situation had at last been made clear to him, Ferrars declared that the tragedy of the death had been lost in the splendour of it. "It was well and grandly done. That was Sidney Marston all over."

"Yes; it was beautiful and heroic, we have all felt that;—no one more so than Terra Fildare."

"Does she realize the thing? It is so out of the common way that I should think no one could understand it without having been trained by knowing you or Miss Kinseyle."

"She was present, you see, on the evening when we saw Sidney's wraith. That made an immense impression on her. And then there were other things to guard her from incredulity. She understands fully what was done, and it is a great blessing for her that she has so understood it."

"How do you mean?"

"It has let in a flood of light on her mind, and has shown her her own recent adventures in their true colour. It was she detected the significance of the contrast, when I had been so wrapped up in thoughts of poor Sidney that I had not seen it—the contrast, I mean, between the devotion and unselfishness of his life sacrifice on Edith's behalf, and the cruel reckless selfishness of the man she herself was so nearly falling a victim to. It was a great crisis for her, George, but she has come through it cured to an extent that might have seemed quite impossible, considering the short time that has elapsed."

"I am *very* glad to hear it."

"Indeed, I may almost say that without your name having been explicitly mentioned I have a sort of indirect message for you."

"But, good heavens! Marian, you have not told her anything about my share in the late discoveries?"

"Trust me, George, to have done right. I knew your feeling, and I knew the risk, but I knew that the proper moment had come. I never thought to do so so soon, but I told Terra

everything, and though it was a shock to her to realize all the trouble that had been taken for her, her final comment was that she was deeply grateful to all the persons concerned."

"How faultless your tact is, Marian! But your perfect influence has been at work, too, for the last fortnight."

"It was Sidney really who worked the double miracle; but my part has been made easy in more ways than one — especially because I have come to love Terra more sincerely than I ever thought to."

"That's good."

"I have not had any talk with you, George, since the crisis. I should like to know whether anything—any subtle working of all that has happened—has affected your own feelings in any way, or whether you still feel as you used about her."

"Of course; one does not change in matters of that kind."

"That's right; because I should think now, in the long run, everything ought to be as you wish."

Meanwhile Mrs. Malcolm said nothing at Richmond of her brother's presence in London,

and a few days passed without the fact betraying itself to Terra. Her "nice letter" to her father in the interim had produced satisfactory results, and was answered, as regards the most important reply it elicited, by Lady Margreave. Terra was assured that in view of what she had written to her father she was entirely forgiven, and would be welcomed back to Oatfield whenever she liked to come.

"Very black storms will sometimes break up more quickly than seems likely at first, when the change once sets in," Mrs. Malcolm remarked on reading the letter. "It will be right for you to respond to that proposal cordially, and to go back to Oatfield soon. But you have a second home here, you know, at all times, and you must look on coming here as a duty—a pleasant duty, I hope, but a duty still, seeing that I shall be wanting you so badly."

This led to some discussion as to when Terra should go, and this to an admission on Mrs. Malcolm's part that when she went she herself would go down for awhile to Edith, at Compton Wood. An apprehension that

she was in the way of this arrangement was at once kindled in Terra's mind; but Mrs. Malcolm contrived to subdue it by representing that Edith had not yet summoned her to go down. Terra was only partially satisfied by the explanation, but Mrs. Malcolm persuaded her to wait on at Richmond till Edith's summons should come, assuming that it might come within a week or so. Thus they could set out for their respective destinations together. Then, however, they got talking about Marston, and Terra asked some straightforward questions about what had been the course of events in regard to the funeral, and so forth. What friends and relations had Marston lived amongst?

"He was practically alone in the world," Mrs. Malcolm explained. "He had a brother in Australia, and a sister out there married."

"But somebody must have looked after the funeral. Who were his nearest friends?"

"We were by far his nearest friends in the sense of true affection and sympathy. My brother George was his only real in-

timate amongst men, and of course he has been doing what was necessary."

"He—Mr. Ferrars? but I thought he was at the Hague."

"He came over to look after Sidney's affairs, and has been doing what had to be done."

Terra was silent. That the fear lest she had been in the way in this matter again, and had been keeping George Ferrars out of his natural resting-place in his sister's house, was passing through her mind, was too obvious to be overlooked. And when she said in a serious, constrained tone, and with a clouded brow:

"Marian, tell me where your brother generally lives when he is in England?" Mrs. Malcolm met the inquiry with a frank and open smile.

"In Half Moon Street, my dear, at the Crown Hotel. He finds it conveniently near his club."

"But he was down here with you when Edith was with you the other time."

"He used not to sleep here. He came down for dinner, and so forth—but that was all."

"But now he can't come, however much he and you may wish it, because there is an intruder in the field he would find it awkward or disagreeable to meet. What an unfortunate creature I am!"

"My dear Terra, we are all bound to consider your feelings and peace of mind, after all you have gone through. I can easily see George in town whenever I want to; but you must not be disturbed in this retreat by anyone till you are quite ready to see people."

"I tell you my retreat ought to have been a penitentiary."

"But you see my poor little house and Oatfield are both competing for you, so the claims of the penitentiary are borne down."

"But, Marian, it is horrible to feel I am making your house unapproachable to your own brother, whom you value so intensely. If it is too disagreeable for him to meet me here, do let me go off at once."

"Who said it would be disagreeable for him to meet you, dear? The whole thing is a question of your peace and comfort. Of course, if you do not really mind having him

come here sometimes, he will be very glad to come."

So they met again the following afternoon —quite unexpectedly for Terra. She and Mrs. Malcolm were sitting in the bow-window of the drawing-room, with tea on a little table beside them, also bearing some fancy work materials—with which Terra, infected by Mrs. Malcolm's example, was getting into the way of sometimes occupying her fingers—when the maid opened the door and, in the most natural tone in the world, said, "Mr. Ferrars."

George came in, grave with a sense of the momentous nature of the visit, but as undemonstrative and simple in manner as if he had been paying any other ordinary call. Terra bent forward for a moment over her work—she was turned away from the door, facing outwards towards the garden—and then looked round, rose up and shook hands, with the usual question of conventional greeting on her lips. Ferrars replied to it in the same terms, kissed his sister, and sat down, drifting into a commonplace chat about the appearance of the garden, the tea, and

the wool-work—the key-note of the situation once struck in this way dominated the conversation all the afternoon and during dinner. No burning questions were touched upon, and nothing said in regard to the important part Ferrars had played in bringing about the overthrow of Terra's recent engagement; but the fact that she was ready to be on friendly terms with him—knowing all that he had done—was sufficient evidence for him that she did not resent the interference.

They naturally discussed Edith and her affairs at great length, and Marston's great sacrifice, and all the wonderful views of psychic mystery which the whole of that transaction opened out; but George and Terra were at no time alone together, and perhaps neither regretted that the evening should in this way have been dedicated merely to a dissipation of the first feeling of awkwardness incidental to the renewal of their intercourse.

The ice once broken, Ferrars was free of his sister's house again, and resumed coming there, as a matter of course, every day. Probably, if Terra had been regularly settled

at Richmond, some time might have elapsed before any definite words were spoken in renewal of his old suit to her; but on the third day of his restored intimacy, he found a crisis impending, on his arrival by appointment for a drive with the two ladies in the park. A letter had come from Edith, claiming the fulfilment of Mrs. Malcolm's promise to go to Compton Wood. She entreated her to come with all possible speed, bringing Terra with her if need were, but in any case to come.

In accordance with the plan already settled, Terra had written off at once to Oatfield, warning Lady Margreave to expect her the following day; and Mrs. Malcolm was upstairs when Ferrars arrived, making her own arrangements for the journey. Ferrars was rather disconcerted by the new programme at first, and sat down in the bow-window, not far from Terra's chair, with an expression of regret at the break-up of the party.

"One is never left in peace for long in this world. Fate seems to hunt us about in a very persevering way."

"It has been an incalculable blessing for me to have been left all this time with your sister. Her sympathy and friendship are substantial, good things in this life, which it is worth—going through a great deal to have gained."

"You have certainly gained them very completely. I need hardly tell you how fond she is of you."

"I know that is so, though the reasons of it are altogether in her own goodness. I have only caused her a great deal of trouble and worry. But it has been my destiny to serve all my friends and relations in the same way."

"I suppose there might be some way of accounting for it, if they none of them mind?"

"I mind very much myself, at any rate. I used to be what people stupidly call proud, which means very surly and reluctant to accept services. Part of the penalty for me has been that I have been overwhelmed by services that——" She hesitated a little, and Ferrars finished the sentence.

"That you need not have known anything

about—in some cases, at all events. Then you would have been spared any uncomfortable feelings on the subject."

"At the expense of having my own worst qualities fed and stimulated. I am not sorry that I have to acknowledge the help rendered me in spite of myself. It is a good lesson."

There was still some internal chafing in her nature against the attitude she thus took up, which hardened her tone a little; and with the promptitude to misapprehend feelings that lovers are prone to, Ferrars read more in the words than they were intended to convey.

"I do not think anyone concerned can have had the ungenerous desire to look on anything done in that light."

"Nothing was meant in that way, I know, but I can't help reading it so."

"I am very sorry. I did not wish you to know I had played any part in recent events, lest you should—by a most natural impulse—do me the wrong of thinking that I had even the least flavour in my mind of a desire to triumph over you. If I had been your brother I could not have done what I did with a purer or simpler motive. But I had

the feeling that, because of some things in the past, it might seem obtrusive."

"Mr. Ferrars, I must be clumsy and stupid in some way. You are misunderstanding me somehow. I merely meant to thank you humbly for what you did in my behalf. The very fact that you did it in simple brotherly kindness only makes your action the more generous. I don't want to talk of it more than can be helped, but I should have been ashamed of myself if I had not frankly thanked you. Of course you would know I was grateful, but it would have been mean to have said nothing."

"It is very good of you to say that, and now by all means let us put the matter aside. But I wish you had been staying longer here. Oatfield is a pleasant house, but I have a boundless faith in the virtues of Marian's companionship, and I would rather you had that than anything else just now."

"I am looking forward to coming here again when the Margreaves return to town."

"I am afraid that will not be till after Christmas."

There was a pause in the conversation at

this point. No conversations are so apt to be halting as those in which floods of thoughts have to be pent up on one side or the other. Ferrars found he could only break the silence by speaking seriously.

"There is one thing I must say before you go. I shrunk so much from seeming importunate that I should rather not have asked you to remember this just yet; but to guard against any possibility of mistake in the matter in your mind, you will understand, of course, that as long as you are free I can never give up—my old purpose—about you. I don't want ——" he was going on with some phrase that should have saved her from the necessity of making any reply, but some feelings had been pent up in Terra's breast too, and she cried:

"Oh, George! George! how can you ever forgive me?"

A sort of bewildered sense that he had heard the words before came over Ferrars as she spoke; but he was not in the mood to analyse psychic phenomena at the moment. He was kneeling by her side in an instant, all cautious weighing of words forgotten,

broken down by the flood that had burst its barriers.

"Forgive you, Terra! my only love! How can there be any place for such a thought in my heart about you? You didn't think, did you, that I could have changed an atom? I might have had to repress all outward sign of my love for you under some conditions, but nothing could have made me think of you differently from the way I do. And if you lift the seal from my lips, of course the expression of my love for you must come forth in a torrent. But even now I do not know whether you have really lifted the seal."

At all events she did not oppose his caresses.

"What more would you have me say?" she asked.

"Only that if I ask Lady Margreave to let me come down to Oatfield you will not be displeased."

Later on in the conversation, which took a good deal for granted, Terra spoke of her former "pride" again as something that had been pretty effectually subdued now, so

it hardly mattered what the Margreaves would think of her when they should learn what had transpired.

"But it matters everything," Ferrars answered. "It matters above all things that you should be protected from any criticism that may annoy you. And besides, I really never hoped to get free speech with you—not to speak of an understanding so complete as this—so soon. The whole thing can remain an absolute secret between us, with Marian alone excepted, of course. I was wrong to suggest coming down to Oatfield. Let that wait."

Mrs. Malcolm came in while they were talking. Ferrars put her in possession of the facts in a delicate way.

"I have heard from Terra of your sudden plans," he said; "but she has promised to come back here as soon as that can be managed, and then I hope something may be settled that will keep us all together permanently. Of course, meanwhile, nobody will be in this understanding but us three."

Mrs. Malcolm went up and kissed her.

"I am so glad, dear Terra."

"You see," said Terra, in a tone of mockery, not without a certain bitterness, "if the Margreaves were told at once, that might be pleasanter for your brother, but it would perhaps involve a little wound to my vanity. Naturally, it is only right, considering how meritorious a person I am in all respects, and such a blessing as I have been to my friends, that anybody's feelings should be sacrificed rather than mine."

"Dearest," said Mrs. Malcolm, "don't you see that we who love you have a sense of luxury in making little sacrifices for your sake?"

"Perhaps," said Terra; "I am indeed beginning to learn the lesson, and to realize that the principle may cut both ways."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUTURE VISIBLE.

The moment Mrs. Malcolm saw Edith, on her arrival at Compton Wood, she noticed that some subtle change had come over her. The gloomy pensiveness that had settled upon her for the day or two immediately following the recent events at Richmond had given way to a return of something more like her old bright vivacity; but with all this she was evidently under the dominion of some exalted feeling which gave a peculiar radiance to her eyes, and a dreamy sweetness to her expression when her face was in repose, different in some way from the varied and manifold charms it had always worn. Her colour was heightened, but more concentrated than formerly.

"Has anything happened to you?" Mrs.

Malcolm asked. "You have a look that I do not understand."

"Quantities of things have happened, dear. I have so much to tell you that I do not know where to begin. I have been living in two worlds since I have been back here; but that can't go on always, and I must choose between one and the other."

"But first, how have you been as to health?"

"A great impostor, I am afraid; but no one except yourself will ever understand rightly about that, and I have not attempted to explain. First of all, you see, I have been puzzling the doctors again. A new light of science was brought to bear upon me before I came down here, after we parted—a medical friend of Colonel Danby's, that he swears by. This man was away abroad when I was first examined, but came back just afterwards, and Colonel Danby had arranged for him to see me before we left town. He stethoscoped and sounded me in every sort of way, and had the satisfaction at last of declaring all the other doctors to have been entirely in the wrong. He quite reassured

poor Colonel Danby, and said there was nothing in the nature of disease about me. One lung was abnormally small, that was all. They were both quite healthy. All the doctors were right, and all wrong, of course, but they had not the clue to the mystery. At all events, it made my plans all the more easy of fulfilment, and there seemed no desperate hurry about anything, so I was the less opposed in regard to coming back here for a time than I should have been if I had been thought in imminent peril."

The conversation was taking place in Edith's own room, whither she had carried off Mrs. Malcolm on her arrival, after interviews of politeness with Mr. Kinseyle and Miss Barkley. The window, which commanded a wide prospect over level country, was fitted up as the boudoir department of the room, and here the two ladies were settled in comfortable chairs with a small table between them.

"It's a humble imitation of your bow-window at Richmond, you see," Edith had said when they first came in.

"It is very nice, but——" then Mrs.

Malcolm had asked if anything had happened, and their more serious talk had begun.

"But tell me at once," Mrs. Malcolm said, in answer to Edith's somewhat equivocal statement, "how you really are as to health. Do you know anything that goes against the last report?"

"Dear Marian, Mr. Marston's achievement was quite successful. The last doctor was right at the time, but it does not follow he will always remain right. There are queer complications to be considered about so eccentric a person as myself."

Already, while she was speaking, Mrs. Malcolm noticed her glance wander about the room once or twice, and now she was looking out over the country as if something had attracted her attention there.

"Are you *seeing* anything, Edith?"

"I am always seeing now," Edith replied. "It is perfectly wonderful how populous the world is, and not merely with the shapes and shades of people, but with spectral buildings and trees that have existed in reality some time ago. There used to be an old Roman

encampment on the very site of this house, and I can see it dimly all round us now, with the soldiers and horses going and coming. I have sat here for hours and watched them. This window is like a box at a theatre for me, and this house swarms with animated shadows—if you understand—not the spirits of the people who have lived here, but the impressions they have left behind them in this teeming picture-gallery that the eyes of the flesh do not see."

"And how has it been at Kinseyle Court?"

"At Kinseyle Court it has been glorious. I can get out of myself—out of this bodily self altogether there, and pass into perfect union with——our Guardian. Day after day, if you understand, I have put myself to sleep in the old green chair, and then I have rushed into union with what we used to call the Spirit Queen, and have looked back upon my every-day self, considering what to do with it, and very much tempted sometimes, I can tell you, to let it alone altogether, and be bothered about it no more."

"Oh, Edith!"

"You remember all that Mr. Marston used to explain about our Guardian, Marian. She is our Guardian Spirit in one sense, but then she is not separate or different from us, as one living person would be separate or different from another. I do not want you to look upon this"—touching herself lightly with the tips of her fingers—"as the spirit you have been reverencing; and *this* me, this phase of me, is not of course anything of the kind; but when I rejoin her there, she and I are one. She is just what Mr. Marston used to call it—my Higher Self."

"How has it all come upon you with such wonderful vividness?"

"Because of what Mr. Marston did, though he did not mean to do exactly that. Do you remember, Marian, how I said to you before we last separated, that I felt as if I was going to burst some sort of shell? Well, now the shell *is* burst, and the energy Mr. Marston put into my body, meaning to give me a new lease of physical life, has been transmuted to something better, just because I was so much more impressed by the absolute nobleness of his conduct in the whole matter than by the

pleasure of being restored to health and strength. He understands that now, and will not be disappointed if his work bears a different sort of fruit from that he meant it to bear at first"

"How do you know?" Mrs. Malcolm said; for Edith had spoken in a tone of calm confidence that seemed to imply more than a mere vague trust that things might be as she said.

"He told me so yesterday—though I don't mean that he told me in words, the same as if he had been still in this life. *You* will understand, Marian, if you think of it. When I am properly united with my true self, of course I am in a state which corresponds to the state into which our friend has also passed. Naturally I can exchange thoughts and share feelings with him, as I can also with your own dear Higher Self, Marian—don't you see?"

"You have rushed forward into such astounding developments, Edith, that I can hardly follow you, even in imagination."

"It sounds mystic and unintelligible, perhaps, but it has all come to be so perfectly

simple and straightforward to me, that I am sure you will understand it too. And yet, you know, you must not think of us as so many isolated people going about in our Higher Selves on the spirit plane of nature. There is something very curious about that. When I look at my Higher Self from the body with clairvoyant sight, of course there, you understand, is the Spirit Queen of my former visions in a definite shape, radiant and beautiful; but when I fly to her, then I am all thought and feeling, and in the most intimate relations with the thoughts and feelings of that other centre of thought and feeling we have been in the habit of calling Mr. Marston, as with others also. Whenever I appear in the future to you, I shall appear in the shape you have been used to, only much plainer and clearer, and more companionable."

"Oh, Edith, darling, what you say makes me see that you mean to go away!"

Mrs. Malcolm drew up her chair to Edith's, and put her face down upon the girl's shoulder.

Edith soothed and caressed her, reversing the relations that had generally existed

between them, in which Mrs. Malcolm had, as it were, played the part of the stronger and wiser friend.

"Dear," she said, "don't you see it must be so? Knowing all I know now, and with the consciousness so vivid as I have described to you of what the other life open to me is like, how can I possibly go on with this? If it had all been different, I might have been bound to stop. But in the natural course of things my life ought to have run out about now. It would have been with me as it was with my mother. Nobody knew she was ill till she was on the point of death. Then it was a hurried good-bye, and all the trouble was over. The *un*natural thing with me has been that if I had clung very desperately to life I might, through our friend's sacrifice, have circumvented my proper destiny."

"You may be right, Edith, and wisest, but, oh! it will be such a wrench for me."

"That's the sad trouble of it. And it will be a wrench of a different kind for others, too. Next to you, poor papa in his quiet way will feel it most."

"And your husband that was to have been."

"I'm very, very sorry to have been the cause of trouble; but the mysteries of these things are too intricate to understand fully. I only know this much, that if it had not been for Mr. Marston my marriage would have been intercepted just as certainly as it will be. If I could have foreseen everything, of course I would never have let things develop as they did. But still I know, for it has been shown to me, that in the long run the sorrow, such as it will be, that Colonel Danby will feel, will do him more good than a little transitory spell of pleasure in having me for a wife. We are not really akin in nature."

It was a hard trial to Mrs. Malcolm to answer Mr. Kinseyle's inquiries, when he sought a little private talk with her during the evening about Edith's condition, and the prospects of her marriage. Hard even to sit at dinner and fall in with the gay humour Edith endeavoured to throw into the conversation, mixed with great tenderness towards her father and poor "B.," whose mission, by

any view of the situation, was fading so rapidly into nothingness. Edith had concerned herself very anxiously for Miss Barkley's future, which she had made her father promise to provide for satisfactorily out of means which, as she pointed out, could easily be spared by her, though the precise way in which she would be able to spare them was left in some obscurity; but "B." was too sincerely distressed at the break-up of her long intimacy with her pupil to look forward with much joy to her independence, and was ready to subside into a tearful hopefulness about the impending separation on small provocation.

"She seems well," Mr. Kinseyle had said, when speaking to Mrs. Malcolm apart, "but there is something about her that alarms me. I do not know why. She seems so exalted in feeling, and yet to dwell so little on the future."

"She has an intensely spiritual nature," Mrs. Malcolm answered vaguely; "and then again she feels, no doubt, that she is bidding a sort of farewell to you and her old home."

"She makes me think of her mother continually. I don't know why, though even her dear mother was not her equal in beauty and intelligence; but her mother was very loving, and Edith has seemed so gentle and sweet of late. She has always been that in one way—a dear, faultless girl—but there is something about her now that seems to bring back her mother to my fancy, and I never properly valued *her*, I think, till I lost her."

"I suppose it is inevitable that you should lose her, too, in another way, and if it is best for her happiness——"

"Of course, I would not be selfish about it; but I wonder will she be properly valued and cherished."

"Mr. Kinseyle, I am sure she will be." Mrs. Malcolm could hardly control herself, but there was enough in the mere notion that a serious change was impending to justify the solemnity of her tone, and Mr. Kinseyle took the assurance in its simplest signification.

Edith and she drove over to Kinseyle Court the following afternoon in the little pony-phaeton. Mrs. Malcolm had been

telling her about the prospect of a happy settlement at last for Terra and George, and Edith gaily applauded herself for having brought that result about.

"I haven't been altogether useless to my fellow creatures after all, Marian, have I?" she said. "How curiously all our destinies have been linked up together, haven't they? I should have been nothing without you to set my feet upon the right path, and without me your brother would never have got his happiness, and Terra's life would have been wrecked."

"But I didn't know where the path was leading you to, Edith. Forgive me for being so selfish, dear, but my heart is bleeding at every pore, and I can't help it."

"My own Marian, I am going to see if I can't do something to heal it this afternoon."

"Edith, tell me one thing. The strain is greater than I can bear. When—when is it to be?"

"When am I going to say good-bye?" Edith was driving the little carriage, and her hands were occupied, but she nestled her head for a moment up against Mrs. Malcolm's

shoulder, and said with a bright smile, "Not till you give me leave to go, dear. There, you have my fate in your own keeping."

She would not make her meaning more explicit, but she assured Mrs. Malcolm that, at all events, there was to be no sudden wrench that day. "Don't be apprehensive, dear. Everything shall be made as easy for you as possible."

"I can't treat the whole business as a tragedy," she went on shortly afterwards. "I know you are in pain, but, indeed, I do see so clearly beyond. Marian, if I led a horrid, stupid, conventional life, I might drift away from you a thousand times further than I shall drift as things will be. We are in perfect sympathy and union as it is, and you only have to wait a bit and come too. But I am sure you will be happier about it all presently."

They left the phaeton in the care of Mr. Squires at the lodge, and walked up the avenue to the quiet old house.

"Don't you feel the magnetism, Marian?" Edith asked, as they shut themselves into the library.

"My senses are all confused, and my sight is blurred."

"You will be better directly. Wait a bit. I am getting to be something of a mesmerist in my turn. Sit you down here." And she put Mrs. Malcolm into the corner of a couch in the library commanding a view of the door leading into "the Countess's Study."

"We used to fill the place with such influences," Edith said, "in the Countess's day, that it is still a sort of psychic sponge, and we can squeeze out all sorts of effects from the atmosphere."

She kissed Mrs. Malcolm on the forehead, and stroked her head and brooded over her for a little, and asked her if she did not feel better.

"You make me adore you, Edith, as if you were my Guardian herself; but I don't know that that makes me feel more reconciled."

"Well, stop where you are. I am not going out of your sight; but I am going to have a nap in my own green chair over there."

She went into the inner room, and sat down in the chair she pointed out.

"You'll promise me to wait patiently for a little while, won't you? and I will promise you to bring myself round again presently."

"Yes, dear."

Edith gave a sigh of relief as she settled low down in the corner of her chair, with her head propped on a pillow, and sank into a motionless stupor. But as Mrs. Malcolm gazed upon her, she seemed to see her figure gradually surrounded by a sort of mist, and through her strained emotions came back upon her heart the rapt feeling of ecstasy with which the presence of her Guardian Spirit had always been greeted. By degrees the mist intensified and shone as if with a white brilliancy of its own, and interposed itself before the form of the sleeping girl. Then, as Mrs. Malcolm leaned forward in eager excitement, the shape settled into that of the radiant figure she was familiar with in snowy drapery, but far more vivid and distinct than she had ever seen it before, with bare arms and feet, and surmounted with the old diaphanous veil, through which—so faint and thin it was—she seemed already to divine the well-known and well-loved features. The

spirit-figure came forward and stood for a moment in the doorway, and then, lifting one hand to her head, drew away the cloudy gauze from her face.

"Edith, it is yourself, my darling!" Mrs. Malcolm cried.

The spirit-figure came forward with a beautiful exalted smile upon her face. Mrs. Malcolm's clairvoyant faculties were now in full play; and in the way she knew by old experience, though no sound that would have been audible to coarser ears was made, she heard the words spoken to her.

"Dear Marian, yes, it is I, and I shall often come to you—almost whenever you like. You have been so good in doing always all I have asked you, when I could only make myself half known to you. We will have many a talk together now, face to face and much more openly. You have come to know me piecemeal up to now; but it will be my real self you will commune with in future."

"Forgive me, my guardian angel, if I have fought against your will in anything."

"You have got so fond of the casket," the

spirit said, with a wave of her hand towards the inner room, and with no reproachful tone, but rather, as it were, in gentle excuse for the weakness Mrs. Malcolm confessed. She stood quite close up to the couch now, and Mrs. Malcolm was leaning back with her head almost enveloped in the snowy drapery. Mrs. Malcolm followed the direction of her hand, and saw the bodily form lying motionless in the chair.

"It is a lovely casket."

"But it cannot hold all of me that craves your love. And now you shall sleep too for a while, and we will be even more together than we are at this moment."

In losing consciousness of her physical surroundings, as Mrs. Malcolm leaned back, her eyes fixed and her whole soul concentrated on the face of the beautiful spirit, she never for a moment seemed to lose consciousness of *her;* but by degrees—or rather without noticing the degrees, and yet not suddenly—she seemed to float into a state of beatitude in which she and the spirit were together in an intimacy which blended them almost into one being. Side by side with her, in a union

closer than the closest earthly embrace, and with thrilling emotions of ecstasy—keener and more intense even than the strong love of her waking consciousness—she seemed to pass away into regions of infinite distance and splendour, and, without putting her ideas into the slow concatenation of words and phrases, to drink in a sense of the larger existence to which she was thus introduced, and of the relative insignificance of the faintly remembered joys and pain of the physical state of life so left behind. As her thoughts turned to one or the other of the stronger interests of her earthly life, these seemed vitalized before her. As she thought of her brother, he was there beside her, and seemed to be welcoming her to the new realm she was exploring, as if he already belonged to it—and as she thought of Marston, she suddenly found herself face to face with him, recognising him instantly as the friend she had known so long, but as a glorified presentation of himself, with all the old weariness of existence and the stains of sorrow washed out of his nature, and a look of supreme happiness in his wide-open eyes—a glowing conscious-

ness of Edith's presence which, filling his whole existence with rapture as it did, yet left him able none the less joyously to greet her and share with her the sense of love for the object of their double devotion. There was no perception of hurry in the progress of all this; on the contrary, a sense of long, calm durability in their delight, and the panorama of a new nature round them was not neglected, but surveyed as it were by all three with the feeling that they were now in final security as regards their companionship, and in a position to take interest in minor things at leisure. Some impression, too, of her earlier life on earth came back to her, and the corresponding vibrations of emotion were taken up in their turn—always in tune, as it were, to the dominant note of her new condition—her close identity with Edith. She did not measure time as it passed; but the pain that had gnawed at her heart all that morning died quite away, as though it had never been felt, and her soul was refreshed, so that the recollection that there had once been a kind of sadness somehow associated in her emotions with Edith was almost difficult

to recover, when the spirit which was Edith, and yet seemed almost a part of herself, came at last to be emphasised again before her sight as a being external to herself. Not losing sight of her, but gradually taking in as well the impressions of the scene then around her, she was aware again of the library at Kinseyle Court.

"You are not leaving me?" she said.

"Of course not, dear. We shall be always together, really, only there is something to be done, don't you remember, for the others. It is only turning your attention away from me for a little while."

She was awake again now, and understood the situation; but the spirit was still beside her, and the rapture of her influence in her heart, cleansed for the time of its distress and trembling apprehensions.

"I had forgotten the burden of life, but it will not be so hard to bear now."

"You will know now I am ready waiting for you, will you not?—even though sometimes for awhile you do not see me."

"Where have we been, Edith? It has seemed to me a great way off, and that we

have been away a very long time—a gloriously long time. I am altogether refreshed, as if by a sound sleep after fatigue."

"You must compare notes, and ask *her* when she wakes," and the spirit again pointed to the inner room, where Mrs. Malcolm's glance, following her gesture, saw the sleeping, bodily Edith as before.

"*Her!* But Edith, dearest, *this* is you?"

"And so without unfaithfulness in love to me you will come to be a little less anxious about the casket, will you not?"

"To do what you tell me is my supreme joy and desire."

The spirit bent over her, and pulsations of intense emotion seemed to sweep across her soul in waves, and then, still smiling and waving her hand in a light farewell, as if to imply that the good-bye was only for a little while, she passed back up the steps and through the doorway, and enveloped in the white folds of her drapery the sleeping figure in the chair. Mrs. Malcolm had the feeling in her ears that the words came back to her, "Stay where you are a moment longer," and then, passing beyond Edith's form, the spirit

seemed to grow indistinct, and float upward, and away, and disappear.

Almost directly Edith stirred in her chair, then sat up and swept her hand across her eyes, and then looked across to Mrs. Malcolm and smiled.

"Edith, darling, may I come to you now?" She got up as she spoke, and came across to the door. Edith held out her hands with a bright look of welcome. Mrs. Malcolm came up and knelt by her side, and put her arms round her without speaking.

"Do you remember everything?" Edith asked.

"Every moment—every look. What an ineffable wonder it all is!"

"I'm better worth your friendship that way, am I not, Marian?"

"My dearest, where your soul is centred for the time, that is the phase of you to which my love clings. As you are now, you wear in my eyes the glory of your higher state, and as you are then, you are filled with your own sweet loveliness."

"And you are more reconciled to the situation now, are you not, Marian?"

"I have been looking at it so long from the other side, dear, I have lost for a little the sense of pain it must give from this side. But I am reconciled, dearest, in one way—I am resigned, and accept what must be, submissively."

"The trial for you is that you will seem separated from me, no matter what I try to do to soften the impression, while I shall never be conscious of being separated from you at all. But in real truth, even from your point of view, I shall be more with you than if I had been living in the flesh, away from you most of my time, in all parts of Europe. People talk very stupidly about the separations of death. The separations of life are often quite as complete, and much more so than the other separation may be."

"But tell me, Edith, dearest, are you conscious, as you sit there, of your power to enter on the other life as you please? What was it that floated away and left you just now?"

"I know I can get back into union with that higher part of me when I choose now, but it is she who knows all the rest. You

see, this is the unnatural state for me to be in now. I ought to be gone, and I am kept in bodily life by a sort of effort. The machinery is going with an energy that does not properly belong to it. As soon as all restraint is thrown off it will run down with a whirr, like a watch with the spring broken."

Even now Mrs. Malcolm could not repress a little shudder at the idea.

Edith laughed.

"I tell you," she said, "I feel elated about it myself, and I want you to share my good spirits. Of course, poor dear, you have got to bear all the disagreeables, and, worst of all, to help poor papa to bear them. You will judge how far it will be possible to get him to realize all you have been through to-day. I think he will understand it in a great measure, but I shall never be able to visit and console him, because he would not see me in that state as you can. But I am going to say some things to him beforehand that will prepare him to believe you."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HIGHER SELF.

She found an opportunity of doing so that evening, when Mr. Kinseyle asked some question as to how they had spent the day.

"Over at the Court a good deal, papa dear. I have been indoctrinating Mrs. Malcolm with my love of the place."

"You ought to get your husband to rent it, or borrow it, from the Miltenhams," suggested Mr. Kinseyle, "and make part of it habitable. Then you might stay there sometimes."

"Poor old Court! I don't think I should welcome the idea of having it turned into a modern dwelling, where common-place people would congregate to have breakfast and dinner. It would take all the poetry out of the place if it were used for anything but to dream in and see visions."

"I hope you have been dreaming pleasant dreams there, and seeing visions of a bright life before you, my dear. Where have you been laying the scenes of them?"

"Ah, so you want to consult the oracle after all, papa, and find out what is going to happen? You would come to have faith in my prophetic sight if my visions should come true, wouldn't you, papa?"

"I'm afraid my imagination is not poetic enough for the sort of faith you mean. I would not shut out belief in any demonstrated truth, however new or strange, but poetic imaginings, however vivid, do not easily link themselves on to the kind of tests that constitute a demonstration."

"That's true; and I, with plenty of fancies of my own, I am not practical enough to bring them to a focus for you. Mrs. Malcolm would be better able to do that. I think, papa dear, I must put you in her hands, and make you her pupil. I am sure she could explain things far better than I can."

"Perhaps Mrs. Malcolm might think herself better employed in other ways than in

wasting her explanations on so prosaic a person as I."

"Well, I can't appoint the time now; while she and I are together here I want the whole of her time to myself. But do you remember this, papa dear, whenever you have an opportunity of discussing my fancies in a really serious and searching way with Mrs. Malcolm, that she will be talking my sentiments, you know, infinitely better expressed. That's really a happy idea."

Keeping to the bright tone of gaiety in which she had already been speaking, or rather, assuming a solemnity of manner that belonged to one of the varieties of her old familiar gaiety, which would sometimes express itself in a half jesting stateliness, she added slowly, and with one hand extended—

"I lay it as an injunction upon you, papa as a parting injunction mind, which has all the immense importance of a serious occasion, to believe all that Mrs. Malcolm will tell you about me, whenever you two may be consoling yourselves for my absence by talking of me. Whatever she says to you I confirm, recollect."

Mr. Kinseyle listened with a kindly smile, treating the words as so much airy trifling, but ready to fall in with them, however, to please his daughter.

"To hear is to obey."

"I will improve on that declaration, loyal and satisfactory as far as it goes. To remember will be to obey. But mind you, do not forget. What is the date, and the hour, and the minute?"

Insisting on the realization of her whim, the exact moment was ascertained.

"Put it down, papa. Where is your pocket-book?"

"A capital memory is one of my few good points, dear," said Mr. Kinseyle, affecting laziness good-humouredly.

"And a perfect craze for having my own way *exactly*, one of my numerous bad ones," replied Edith. "Produce the book, papa, this *moment*."

The book was produced, and coming round to the back of the sofa on which he was sitting, looking over his shoulder with her arms round his neck, he entered the memorandum at her dictation. "To remember

that I have made a promise to Edith on the 17th day of September, at forty-nine minutes past seven o'clock."

"That will do," said Edith contentedly, giving him a kiss; while Mrs. Malcolm, to conceal emotions she could not easily control, got up from her seat, and went over to the window, as if to look out at the darkening landscape.

"I'm a perfect angel for good temper," remarked Edith, keeping up the tone of the situation, "when people do precisely what I tell them."

Mr. Kinseyle went away to write shortly aftert his, and Mrs. Malcolm sat beside Edith, holding her in a clinging embrace, and giving way to the feelings that had been pent up during the little scene that had just passed. "Forgive me, Edith darling; I am not rebellious, but I can't help crying. It is so sweet to have you with me in this way."

"It is sweeter still in the other way."

"Whichever form is present, that is the best."

They made no pretence of passing the evening with any sort of occupation, music,

or reading. They simply sat side by side alone together, not talking much about the impending change, or much about anything indeed, though every now and then Edith's clairvoyant senses, which were operating with great intensity, led her to speak, not only of appearances she noticed round about them, but of the scenes in which Terra and George Ferrars—he in London, and she in the North—found themselves at that moment, and even of stray bits of conversation in which they were concerned. At last they parted for the night, and Mrs. Malcolm would have liked to ask some question about what they should be doing the following day, but dared not.

It was long before she slept; and her bosom ached with sadness as the hours crept by slowly. She could hardly refrain from getting up and going to Edith's room to sit by the girl's bedside, if she should be sleeping, or to watch with her if she should be awake. But her restless grief calmed down at last, and in the sleep which came upon her, though she hardly seemed to lose consciousness of her room or the impending change, her pain all passed away, and the well-known thrill of

spiritual rapture swept over her weary senses. She *felt* the glorified spirit of Edith beside her, even as she lay in a state of semi-slumber, consciously refraining from the least movement, lest the conditions of that enchanting experience should be disturbed. She was summoned to wake presently, however, by the voice which spoke to her inner ear:

"Look up, Marian. I am not going to slip away from you."

By virtue of a radiance which appealed to the clairvoyant sense she was as plainly visible as she had been in the afternoon, and even the room, which had been nearly dark before, was faintly illuminated for Mrs. Malcolm's perceptions, through some mysterious sympathy of her inner and outer faculties.

"Dearest, I was afraid to move, lest I should have been only dreaming."

"I could have taken your inner self away with me without waking you up, and we will go away together presently, if you like; but I was obliged to talk to you a little this way first, because I made you a promise."

"Yes."

"But first you do not want to go into the other room now, and sit by the bedside, do you?"

"Of course not while you are here."

"Just so—and Marian, dear, I am tired of the other room, and do not want to go back there either. You will not make me, will you?"

"I see your meaning, but I am too much enraptured with you near me in this way, to feel any sadness in it. Surely I am ready to bear my part of the inevitable pain, and willingly, for your sake."

"You will feel while I am talking to you in this way that there is no question of my abandoning you—nor of any real separation. I am not asking your leave to go away from you, but merely to keep as I am now; and, dearest, I tell you we will often and often be together."

"Let it be as you will, dearest. I give my consent."

"That's right, my own Marian." The radiant figure seemed to grow brighter and more substantial even than before, and bending over Mrs. Malcolm, embraced and kissed

her. "That's so much better so," she said; "and now, do you see any change in me?"

"I think you look a little brighter and lovelier even than ever."

"And that is the change you have been so frightened of."

"Is it finally accomplished, then?"

"That's over, dear, and the machinery I want no more has run down. Come away with me for awhile, and share my freedom and delight."

"Oh, darling! can't you take me at once and for always to be like yourself?"

"Not just yet; but that will come; and promise me meanwhile, you will not be distrustful and impatient."

"You will forgive mere weakness, dear, won't you?"

"You cannot have a thought that will need forgiveness from me, Marian; but it will be easiest for me to be with you visibly when you are most trustful and patient."

It seemed to Mrs. Malcolm, when the morning came, that she had passed through years of time, and that the bodily Edith was a beautiful memory rather than a fact of

yesterday. The real Edith came back with her from their spiritual wanderings together, and sat by her bedside and talked with her when she woke; and they waited together till they felt a foreshadowing of the early alarm which was certain to stir the house but too soon.

"And now you may bid me good-bye," said Edith, "for a little while. It is hardly good-bye from me at all, for I shall scarcely be conscious of missing any part of you from the Higher Self that will be always with me. I shall be none the less with you because I shall be also with the one other person who has earned so thoroughly the right to blend his existence with mine."

"Happy Sydney!" said Mrs. Malcolm. "Give him my love."

THE END.

BILLING & SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.

A Selection

FROM

Mr. Redway's Publications

GEORGE REDWAY,
15, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON,
1886.

In crown 8vo., in French grey wrapper. Price 6s.

A few copies on Large Paper. Price 10s. 6d.

The Bibliography of Swinburne;

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LIST, ARRANGED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, OF THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS IN VERSE AND PROSE

OF

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE,

(1857-1884).

This Bibliography commences with the brief-lived *College Magazine*, to which Mr. SWINBURNE was one of the chief contributors when an undergraduate at Oxford in 1857-8. Besides a careful enumeration and description of the first editions of all his separately published volumes and pamphlets in verse and prose, the original appearance is duly noted of every poem, prose article, or letter, contributed to any journal or magazine (*e.g.*, *Once a Week*, *The Spectator*, *The Cornhill Magazine*, *The Morning Star*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Examiner*, *The Dark Blue*, *The Academy*, *The Athenæum*, *The Tatler*, *Belgravia*, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *La République des Lettres*, *Le Rappel*, *The Glasgow University Magazine*, *The Daily Telegraph*, etc., etc.), whether collected or uncollected. Among other entries will be found a remarkable novel, published in instalments, and never issued in a separate form, and several productions in verse not generally known to be from Mr. SWINBURNE's pen. The whole forms a copious and it is believed approximately complete record of a remarkable and brilliant literary career, extending already over a quarter of a century.

*** *ONLY* 250 *COPIES PRINTED.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

HINTS TO COLLECTORS

OF ORIGINAL EDITIONS OF

THE WORKS OF

William Makepeace Thackeray.

BY

CHARLES PLUMPTRE JOHNSON.

Printed on hand-made paper and bound in vellum. Crown 8vo., 6s.

The Edition is limited to five hundred and fifty copies, twenty-five of which are on large paper.

". . . . A guide to those who are great admirers of Thackeray, and are collecting first editions of his works. The dainty little volume, bound in parchment and printed on hand-made paper, is very concise and convenient in form; on each page is an exact copy of the title-page of the work mentioned thereon, a collation of pages and illustrations, useful hints on the differences in editions, with other matters indispensable to collectors. . . . . Altogether it represents a large amount of labour and experience."—*The Spectator.*

"Those who remember with pain having seen the original yellow backs of Thackeray's works knocked to pieces and neglected years ago, may be recommended to read Mr. C. P. Johnson's 'Hints to Collectors.'"—*The Saturday Review.*

". . . . Mr. Johnson has evidently done his work with so much loving care that we feel entire confidence in his statements. The prices that he has affixed in every case form a valuable feature of the volume, which has been produced in a manner worthy of its subject-matter."—*The Academy.*

"The list of works which Mr. Johnson supplies is likely to be of high interest to Thackeray collectors. His preliminary remarks go beyond this not very narrow circle, and have a value for all collectors of modern works."—*Notes and Queries.*

". . . . It is choicely printed at the Chiswick Press; and the author, Mr. Charles Plumptre Johnson, treats the subject with evident knowledge and enthusiasm. . . . It is not a Thackeray Bibliography, but a careful and minute description of the first issues, with full collations and statement of the probable cost. . . . Mr. Johnson addresses collectors, but is in addition a sincere admirer of the greatest satirist of the century."—*Book-Lore.*

". . . . This genuine contribution to the Bibliography of Thackeray will be invaluable to all collectors of the great novelist's works, and to all who treasure an 'editio princeps' the account here given of the titles and characteristics of the first issues will form a trustworthy guide. . . . The special features which will enable the purchaser at once to settle any question of authenticity in copies offered for sale are carefully collated."—*The Publisher's Circular.*

HINTS TO COLLECTORS

OF ORIGINAL EDITIONS OF

THE WORKS OF

Charles Dickens.

BY

CHARLES PLUMPTRE JOHNSON.

Printed on hand-made paper, and bound in vellum.

Crown 8vo., 6s.

The Edition is limited to five hundred and fifty copies, fifty of which are on large paper.

"Enthusiastic admirers of Dickens are greatly beholden to Mr. C. P. Johnson for his useful and interesting 'Hints to Collectors of Original Editions of the Works of Charles Dickens' (Redway). The book is a companion to the similar guide to collectors of Thackeray's first editions, is compiled with the like care, and produced with the like finish and taste."—*The Saturday Review.*

"This is a sister volume to the 'Hints to Collectors of First Editions of Thackeray,' which we noticed a month or two ago. The works of Dickens, with a few notable 'Dickensiana,' make up fifty-eight numbers . . . . and Mr. Johnson has further augmented the present volume with a list of thirty-six plays founded on Dickens's works, and another list of twenty-three published portraits of Dickens. As we are unable to detect any slips in his work, we must content ourselves with thanking him for the correctness of his annotations. It is unnecessary to repeat our praise of the elegant *format* of these books. . . . ."—*The Academy.*

"These two elegantly produced little books, printed on hand-made paper and bound in vellum, should be welcomed by the intending collector of the works of the two authors under treatment, and the more experienced bibliographer will find the verbatim reproductions of the original title-pages not without use. . . . . For the purpose of checking the correct numbers of these illustrations, verifying the collations, and detecting possible frauds . . . Mr. Johnson's books are unique. The 'Hints,' moreover, incorporated in his prefaces. . . . and the 'Notes' appended to each entry are serviceable, and often shrewd; indeed, the whole labour, evidently one of love, bestowed upon the books is exceptionally accurate and commendable, and we hope to welcome Mr. Johnson at no distant date as a bibliographer of a more pretentious subject."—*Time.*

In crown 8vo., 2 vols., cloth. Price 6s.

The Valley of Sorek.

BY

GERTRUDE M. GEORGE.

With a Critical Introduction by RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD.

"There is in the book a high and pure moral and a distinct conception of character. . . . The *dramatis personæ* . . . . are in reality strongly individual, and surprise one with their inconsistencies just as real human beings do. . . . There is something powerful in the way in which the reader is made to feel both the reality and the untrustworthiness of his (the hero's) religious fervour, and the character of the atheist, Graham, is not less strongly and definitely conceived. . . . It is a work that shows imagination and moral insight, and we shall look with much anticipation for another from the same hand."—*Contemporary Review.*

"The characters are clearly defined, the situations are strong, and the interest evoked by them is considerable. The women in particular are admirably drawn."—*Athenæum.*

"Henry Westgate, the hero, is a study of no slight psychological interest. . . . It is the development of this character for good and for evil, through the diverse influence of friends and circumstances . . . . that Miss George has portrayed with singular vigour and skilful analysis. . . . It is impossible to read this story without wonderment at the maturity and self-restraint of its style, and at the rare beauty and pathos, mingled with strength, which mark every page."—*Literary World.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

In demy 8vo., with Illustrative Plates. Price 1s.

Chirognomancy;

Or, Indications of Temperament and Aptitudes Manifested by the Form and Texture of the Thumb and Fingers.

BY

ROSA BAUGHAN.

"Miss Baughan has already established her fame as a writer upon occult subjects, and what she has to say is so very clear and so easily verified that it comes with the weight of authority."—*Lady's Pictorial.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

REDWAY'S SHILLING SERIES, VOL. III.

An édition de luxe, in demy 18*mo.*

Tobacco Talk and Smokers' Gossip.

An Amusing Miscellany of Fact and Anecdote relating to "The Great Plant" in all its Forms and Uses, including a Selection from Nicotian Literature.

"One of the best books of gossip we have met for some time. . . . It is literally crammed full from beginning to end of its 148 pages with well-selected anecdotes, poems, and excerpts from tobacco literature and history."—*Graphic.*

"The smoker should be grateful to the compilers of this pretty little volume. . . . No smoker should be without it, and anti-tobacconists have only to turn over its leaves to be converted."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"Something to please smokers; and non-smokers may be interested in tracing the effect of tobacco—the fatal, fragrant herb—on our literature."—*Literary World.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

In crown 8*vo., parchment. Price* 3*s.* 6*d.*

The Anatomy of Tobacco;

Smoking Methodised, Divided, and Considered after a New Fashion.

BY

LEOLINUS SILURIENSIS.

"A very clever and amusing parody of the metaphysical treatises once in fashion. Every smoker will be pleased with this volume."—*Notes and Queries.*

"We have here a most excellent piece of fooling, evidently from a University pen. . . . contains some very clever burlesques of classical modes of writing, and a delicious parody of scholastic logic."—*Literary World.*

"A delightful mock essay on the exoteric philosophy of the pipe and the pipe bowl . . . . reminding one alternately of 'Melancholy' Burton and Herr Teufelsdröch, and implying vast reading and out-of-the-way culture on the part of the author."—*Bookseller.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

An édition de luxe, in demy 18*mo.* *Price* 1*s.*

Confessions of an English Hachish Eater.

"There is a sort of bizarre attraction in this fantastic little book, with its weird, unhealthy imaginations."—*Whitehall Review.*

"Imagination or some other faculty plays marvellous freaks in this little book."—*Lloyd's Weekly.*

"A charmingly written and not less charmingly printed little volume. The anonymous author describes his experiences in language which for picturesqueness is worthy to rank with De Quincey's celebrated sketch of the English Opium Eater."—*Lincolnshire Chronicle.*

"A weird little book. . . . The author seems to have been delighted with his dreams, and . . . . carefully explains how hachish may be made from the resin of the common hemp plant."—*Daily Chronicle.*

"To be added to the literature of what is, after all, a very undesirable subject. Weak minds may generate a morbid curiosity if stimulated in this direction."—*Bradford Observer.*

"The stories told by our author have a decidedly Oriental flavour, and we would not be surprised if some foolish individuals did endeavour to procure some of the drug, with a view to experience the sensation described by the writer of this clever brochure."—*Edinburgh Courant.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Monthly, One Shilling.

Walford's Antiquarian:

A Magazine and Bibliographical Review.

EDITED BY

EDWARD WALFORD, M.A.

*** *Volumes I. to VII., Now Ready, price* 8*s.* 6*d.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

A few large-paper copies, with India proof portrait, in imperial 8vo., parchment. Price 7s. 6d.

An Essay on the Genius of George Cruikshank.

BY

"THETA" (WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY).

With all the Original Woodcut Illustrations, a New Portrait of CRUIKSHANK, etched by PAILTHORPE, and a Prefatory Note on THACKERAY AS AN ART CRITIC, by W. E. CHURCH, Secretary of the Urban Club.

"Thackeray's essay 'On the Genius of George Cruikshank,' reprinted from the *Westminster Review*, is a piece of work well calculated to drive a critic of these days to despair. How inimitable is its touch! At once familiar and elegant, serious and humorous, enthusiastically appreciative, and yet just and clear-sighted; but, above all, what the French call *personnel*. It is not the impersonnel reviewer who is going through his paces . . . it is Thackeray talking to us as few can talk—talking with apparent carelessness, even ramblingly, but never losing the thread of his discourse or saying a word too much, nor ever missing a point which may help to elucidate his subject or enhance the charm of his essay. . . . Mr. W. E. Church's prefatory note on 'Thackeray as an Art Critic' is interesting and carefully compiled."—*Westminster Review*, Jan. 15th.

"As the original copy of the *Westminster* is now excessively rare, this reissue will, no doubt, be welcomed by collectors."—*Birmingham Daily Mail.*

"Not only on account of the author, but of the object, we must welcome most cordially this production. Every bookman knows Thackeray, and will be glad to have this production of his which deals with art criticism—a subject so peculiarly Thackeray's own."—*The Antiquary.*

"It was a pleasant and not untimely act to reprint this well-known delightful essay. . . . the artist could have found no other commentator so sympathetic and discriminating. . . . The new portrait of Cruikshank by F. W. Pailthorpe is a clear, firm etching."—*The Artist.*

In crown 8vo., cloth. Price 7s. 6d.

Theosophy, Religion, and Occult Science.

BY

HENRY S. OLCOTT,

PRESIDENT OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

WITH GLOSSARY OF EASTERN WORDS.

"This book, to which we can only allot an amount of space quite incommensurate with its intrinsic interest, is one that will appeal to the prepared student rather than to the general reader. To anyone who has previously made the acquaintance of such as Mr. Sinnett's 'Occult World,' and 'Esoteric Buddhism,' or has in other ways familiarised himself with the doctrines of the so-called Theosophical Society or Brotherhood, these lectures of Colonel Olcott's will be rich in interest and suggestiveness. The American officer is a person of undoubted social position and unblemished personal reputation, and his main object is not to secure belief in the reality of any 'phenomena,' not to win a barren reputation for himself as a thaumaturgist or wonder-worker, but to win acceptance for one of the oldest philosophies of nature and human life—a philosophy to which of late years the thinkers of the West have been turning with noteworthy curiosity and interest. Of course, should the genuineness of the phenomena in question be satisfactorily established, there would undoubtedly be proof that the Eastern sages to whom Colonel Olcott bears witness do possess a knowledge of the laws of the physical universe far wider and more intimate than that which has been laboriously acquired by the inductive science of the West; but the theosophy expounded in this volume is at once a theology, a metaphysic, and a sociology, in which mere marvels, as such, occupy a quite subordinate and unimportant position. We cannot now discuss its claims, and we will not pronounce any opinion upon them; we will only say that Colonel Olcott's volume deserves and will repay the study of all readers for whom the byeways of speculation have an irresistible charm."—*Manchester Examiner.*

Monthly, 2*s.*; *Yearly Subscription*, 20*s.*

The Theosophist:

A Magazine of Oriental Philosophy, Art, Literature and Occultism.

CONDUCTED BY

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

Vols. I. to VI. Now Ready.

"Theosophy has suddenly risen to importance. . . . The movement implied by the term Theosophy is one that cannot be adequately explained in a few words . . . those interested in the movement, which is not to be confounded with spiritualism, will find means of gratifying their curiosity by procuring the back numbers of *The Theosophist* and a very remarkable book call 'Isis Unveiled,' by Madame Blavatsky."—*Literary World.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

NEW WORK BY JOHN H. INGRAM.

The Raven.

BY

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

With Historical and Literary Commentary. By JOHN H. INGRAM.

Crown 8*vo.*, *parchment, gilt top, uncut, price* 6*s.*

"This is an interesting monograph on Poe's famous poem. First comes the poet's own account of the genesis of the poem, with a criticism, in which Mr. Ingram declines, very properly, we think, to accept the history as entirely genuine. Much curious information is collected in this essay. Then follows the poem itself, with the various readings, and then its after-history; and after these 'Isadore,' by Albert Pike, a composition which undoubtedly suggested the idea of 'The Raven' to its author. Several translations are given, two in French, one in prose, the other in rhymed verse; besides extracts from others, two in German and one in Latin. But perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book is that on the 'Fabrications.'"—*The Spectator.*

"There is no more reliable authority on the subject of Edgar Allan Poe than Mr. John H. Ingram . . . the volume is well printed and tastefully bound in spotless vellum, and will prove to be a work of the greatest interest to all students of English and American literature."—*The Publishers' Circular.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Small 4to., with Illustrations, bound in vegetable parchment.
Price 10*s.* 6*d.*

THE

Virgin of the World:

BY HERMES MERCURIUS TRISMEGISTUS.

A Treatise on INITIATIONS, or ASCLEPIOS; the DEFINITIONS of ASCLEPIOS; FRAGMENTS of the WRITINGS of HERMES.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY THE AUTHORS OF "THE PERFECT WAY."

With an Introduction to "The Virgin of the World" by A. K., and an Essay on "The Hermetic Books" by E. M.

"It will be a most interesting study for every occultist to compare the doctrines of the ancient Hermetic philosophy with the teaching of the Vedantic and Buddhist systems of religious thought. The famous books of Hermes seem to occupy, with reference to the Egyptian religion, the same position which the Upanishads occupy in Aryan religious literature."—*The Theosophist*, November, 1885.

Fourth Edition. With Engraved Frontispiece. In crown 8vo., 5s.

Cosmo de' Medici:

An Historical Tragedy. And other Poems.

BY

RICHARD HENGIST HORNE,

Author of "Orion."

"This tragedy is the work of a poet and not of a playwright. Many of the scenes abound in vigour and tragic intensity. If the structure of the drama challenges comparison with the masterpieces of the Elizabethan stage, it is at least not unworthy of the models which have inspired it."—*Times.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Fcap. 8vo., parchment.

Tamerlane and other Poems.

BY

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

First published at Boston in 1827, and now first republished from a unique copy of the original edition, with a preface by RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD.

Mr. Swinburne has generously praised "so beautiful and valuable a little volume, full of interest for the admirers of Poe's singular and exquisite genius."

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Just ready, in demy 8vo., choicely printed, and bound in Japanese parchment. Price 7s. 6d.

Primitive Symbolism

As Illustrated in Phallic Worship; or, The Reproductive Principle.

BY

The late HODDER M. WESTROPP.

With an Introduction by GENERAL FORLONG, Author of "Rivers of Life."

"This work is a *multum in parvo* of the growth and spread of Phallicism, as we commonly call the worship of nature or fertilizing powers. I felt, when solicited to enlarge and illustrate it on the sudden death of the lamented author, that it would be desecration to touch so complete a compendium by one of the most competent and soundest thinkers who have written on this world-wide faith. None knew better or saw more clearly than Mr. Westropp that in this oldest symbolism and worship lay the foundations of all the goodly systems we call religions."—J. G. R. FORLONG.

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

In large crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

Sithron, the Star Stricken.

Translated (*Ala bereket Allah*) from an ancient Arabic Manuscript.

BY

SALEM BEN UZÄIR, of Bassora.

"This very remarkable book, 'Sithron' . . . is a bold, pungent, audacious satire upon the ancient religious belief of the Jews. . . . No one can read the book without homage to the force, the tenderness, and the never-failing skill of its writer."—*St. James's Gazette.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Post free, price 3d.

The Literature of Occultism and Archæology.

Being a Catalogue of Books ON SALE relating to

Ancient Worships.
Astrology.
Alchemy.
Animal Magnetism.
Anthropology.
Arabic.
Assassins.
Antiquities.
Ancient History.
Behmen and the Mystics.
Buddhism.
Clairvoyance.
Cabeiri.
China.
Coins.
Druids.
Dreams and Visions.
Divination.
Divining Rod.
Demonology.
Ethnology.
Egypt.
Fascination.
Flagellants.
Freemasonry.
Folk-Lore.
Gnostics.
Gems.
Ghosts.
Hindus.
Hieroglyphics and Secret Writing.
Herbals.
Hermetic.
India and the Hindus.
Kabbala.
Koran.
Miracles.
Mirabilaries.
Magic and Magicians.
Mysteries.
Mithraic Worship
Mesmerism.
Mythology.
Metaphysics.
Mysticism.
Neo-platonism.
Orientalia.
Obelisks.
Oracles.
Occult Sciences.
Phallic Worship.
Philology.
Persian.
Parsees.
Philosophy.
Physiognomy.
Palmistry and Handwriting.
Phrenology.
Psychoneurology.
Psychometry.
Prophets.
Rosicrucians.
Round Towers.
Rabbinical.
Spiritualism.
Skeptics, Jesuits, Christians and Quakers.
Sibylls.
Symbolism.
Serpent Worship.
Secret Societies.
Somnambulism.
Travels.
Tombs.
Theosophical.
Theology and Criticism.
Witchcraft.

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

In preparation.

Sea Songs and River Rhymes.

A SELECTION OF ENGLISH VERSE, FROM CHAUCER TO SWINBURNE.

EDITED BY

sMr. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

With Etchings by Mackaness.

This is a Collection of Poems and Passages by English Writers on the subject of the Sea and Rivers, and covers the whole of the ground between Spenser and Tennyson. It includes numerous copyright Poems, for the reproduction of which the author and publishers have given their permission.

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Nearly ready.

Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs.

BY

THE COUNTESS EVELYN MARTINENGO-CESARESCO.

CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION.
THE INSPIRATION OF DEATH IN FOLK-POETRY.
NATURE IN FOLK-SONGS.
ARMENIAN FOLK-SONGS.
VENETIAN FOLK-SONGS.
SICILIAN FOLK-SONGS.
GREEK SONGS OF CALABRIA.
FOLK-SONGS OF PROVENCE.
THE WHITE PATERNOSTER.
THE DIFFUSION OF BALLADS
SONGS FOR THE RITE OF MAY
THE IDEA OF FATE IN SOUTHERN TRADITIONS.
FOLK-LULLABIES.
FOLK-DIRGES

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

Shortly will be published in 8vo. handsomely printed on antique paper, and tastefully bound. Price 1s. to Subscribers.

Pope Joan

(*THE FEMALE POPE*).

A Historical Study. Translated from the Greek of Emmanuel Rhoïdis, with Preface by

CHARLES HASTINGS COLLETTE.

"The subject of POPE JOAN has not yet lost the interest which belongs to it, as a fact in the province of historical criticism."—*Dr. Döllinger.*

THE PLAYS OF GEORGE COLMAN THE YOUNGER.

The Comedies and Farces

OF

GEORGE COLMAN THE YOUNGER.

Now first collected and carefully reprinted from the Original Editions, with Annotations and Critical and Bibliographical Preface,

BY

RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD.

In Two Volumes.

Some of these plays have become very scarce; and of those which have kept the stage, the text has been more or less corrupted.

NEWLY-DISCOVERED POEM BY CHARLES LAMB.

Beauty and the Beast.

A Story in Verse for Children by CHARLES LAMB. Now first reprinted from the Unique Original, with Preface and Notes

BY

RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD.

Only 100 *Copies printed.*

GEORGE REDWAY, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.