COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 2996.

A BANKRUPT HEART. BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

A BANKRUPT HEART

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT,

AUTHOR OF

"LOVE'S CONFLICT," "MY SISTER THE ACTRESS,"

ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1894.

A BANKRUPT HEART.

CHAPTER I.

THE country was in its full spring-tide beauty. The hedges were gay with shepherds' purse and pimpernel, and merry with the song of birds rejoicing over their young. The green meadows were dotted over with the late lambs, skipping like the high hills of Scripture; and as Nell followed on Hugh Owen's track, she trod the sweet woodruffe under her feet. A balmy, south-west wind blew on her heated face, as she ran over the grassy hill, up which he was slowly wending his way, with his eyes bent on his book. She had captured him at last. A long stretch of grass land lay between them yet, but there was no friendly copse or orchard on the way in which he could take shelter from her. Not that Hugh even knew of her approach. He had seen her coming up the gravelled walk that led to the Dale Farm, and slipped out as usual by the back-door,

in order to avoid her. After her last words to him, he thought his presence must be as objectionable to Nell as hers was distressing to him. That she should take the trouble to follow him never entered his head; so he went on slowly, poring over his book, and was more startled than she could imagine when he heard a voice calling gaspingly after him,—"Hugh! Hugh!" He turned round then, to meet Nell's beautiful face, flushed with exertion, as she panted to come up with him.

"Stop, Hugh! Stop a minute! I want to speak to you," she said breathlessly.

He halted at her appeal, but he did not smile as she reached his side.

"Oh, Hugh, I have wanted to speak to you for so long," said Nell, as they stood opposite each other. "What is the matter with you? Why do you never come to Panty-cuckoo now?"

He looked at her with grave surprise.

"Why do I never go to Panty-cuckoo now?" he repeated after her. "I should have thought you were the last person to ask me that question, Nell. Have you forgotten the words with which you sent me from you?"

"Yes. What did I say? Anything very dreadful? How little you must know of women, to fancy they mean everything they say. You made me angry, I

suppose, and then I resented it. But that is four months ago. It's ridiculous to keep up a grudge all that time."

"I don't think you were angry," replied Hugh, in his low, sweet voice. "I think you were in earnest, Nell, when you told me to leave Panty-cuckoo Farm, and never come back again; and that, after what had passed between us, my presence would be an extra pain to you. Was it likely, after that, that I could intrude my company on you? You must know that I didn't keep away from choice."

"No, I didn't. I thought, perhaps, you considered me altogether too bad to associate with—that I should contaminate you and make you unfit for the ministry, and so it was your duty not to come near me any more. That is what I thought."

"How very little you know me," said the young man with a sigh.

"But mother and father are always asking after you," continued Nell, hurriedly, "and wondering why you never come near us; and it makes it rather awkward for me, you know, Hugh. I have told them all kinds of stories to excuse your absence; but it would be much better if you could come and see the old people now and then. I would keep out of the way, if you prefer it, whilst you are there."

He did not contradict her, only saying,—

"I should be sorry to vex Mr. and Mrs. Llewellyn, who have always been very good to me. I hope they thought it was my duties that kept me away. I should not like them to know that you and I have quarrelled."

"But *have* we quarrelled?" said Nell, wistfully. "Cannot we be friends still, Hugh, as we were before—before your last visit, you know? We are rather sad up at Panty-cuckoo just now. Father seems quite down-hearted about his farm. Sir Archibald has decided to raise the rent again, and father says he won't be able to make the place pay if he does. Sometimes he talks of emigrating. Fancy his doing that at his age! and, oftener, the poor old man says he has lived too long, and it will be a good day when he is carried to Usk churchyard. And, what with that, and—and—other things, I think sometimes, Hugh, that life is altogether too hard to bear; and it is a pity mine wasn't ended when I tried to end it!"

"Poor Nell," said Hugh. "No, don't say that. If your life had not held better things in store for you, surely the Lord would not have given it back to you twice running. But I must come over and talk to your father, and see if I cannot cheer him up. If the worst comes to the worst, Nell, I don't see why he should not try his fortune in another country. He is not so very old—sixty or thereabouts, I think—and he will

take his experience with him, and sell it, maybe, to other men. There are countries, as I daresay you have heard—like Canada, for instance—where Government gives the land away to men who can cultivate it; and your father must have a good sum of money sunk in his stock and implements. With a little money in hand, a man with knowledge may do wonders in Canada or New Zealand, and live out there as long again as he would have done in England."

"Oh, Hugh, you are talking nonsense. How would father and mother feel, uprooted from the old place where they have spent almost all their lives, and set down in a strange country, without a friend or acquaintance near them? They would die. They couldn't stand it. It would be too great a wrench."

"Would not *you* go with them?" asked Hugh dubiously.

"*I?* Oh, yes, of course I should. But what good should I be to them? Only an extra burden. If father had a son it would be different. But he would require some strong young head and hand to lift the greater part of the burden off his shoulders."

"I agree with you. But don't stand talking here. You don't look fit for that yet, Nell. Surely you should be looking more like your old self after all these months. Sit down on this turf, it is quite dry, and let us talk over what you have told me, together."

He held out his hand to her as he spoke, and Nell availed herself of his assistance to take a seat on the bank by the side of the field.

"Oh, Nell!" he exclaimed as he released it, "how hot your hand is, and how thin! Do you feel weak?"

"Not over strong," replied Nell, laughing as they sat down, side by side. It was true that she had hardly gained any strength worth speaking of since her illness. The wild longings she indulged in—the regrets for her lost position, and the remorse with which she was occasionally attacked—were all working a great and abiding change in her constitution. The old people saw her going about as usual, and never heard her complain; so they thought she was all right, and attributed any little languor or daintiness on her part to her London schooling. But Hugh, with a lover's eye, perceived the change in her vividly, and noted with grief the hollowness of her eyes and the attenuation of her hand.

"My poor girl," he said tenderly, as he gazed at her thin face, "what have you been doing to yourself? You've been fretting sorely, I'm afraid, Nell, since I saw you last."

This direct appeal broke Nell down. No one had given her such sympathy as this before.

"Oh, yes, Hugh, yes, I have," she cried. "I try so

hard to forget, but it seems impossible. I longed so much to come back to Panty-cuckoo. I thought the beautiful, quiet, peaceful country would heal my sore wound, and help me to forget. But it seems worse than the town. There, the rattle and the noise might have shut out other sounds. But here, in the peaceful silence, I hear voices and see faces that I want to shut out from my mind for ever. Oh, it is very hard that, when one tries and wishes to be good and do no wrong, God should let the devil have such dominion over us. Why is it, Hugh? Why doesn't He hear our prayers and let us forget? Sometimes I feel as if I should go mad in Panty-cuckoo, when I remember the time when I was a little girl and went blackberrying or nutting with you and the other children, and remember those happy, innocent days can never, *never* come over again. Oh, Hugh, I feel as if I had been in possession of untold wealth, and I had deliberately thrown it away. Will it always be so? Shall I never be any better? Am I to go on suffering like this to my life's end?"

"I hope not, Nell," replied the young man. "You are not strong enough for dairy and farm work, and it leaves your brain too little to do, so it broods incessantly upon the past. The work you want, Nell, is head work—something by which you will feel you are benefiting others. That is the employment to bring

peace and forgetfulness in its train. You should be a missionary as I am."

"A missionary, I? Ah, now, Hugh, you are laughing at me. A preacher should have no sins to look back upon."

"Then there would be no preachers in the world, Nell. I say, on the contrary, that no one can teach others till he himself has been taught of God. He cannot relieve suffering, unless he, too, has suffered. He cannot know the enormity of sin, nor the trouble it brings in its train, till he himself has sinned as we all have, and if any man says he has not, he lies before the God who made him."

"But not like I have," said poor Nell, with her face hidden in her hands.

"Don't you think, Nell," said Hugh, "when you remember all the suffering and shame and remorse that your sin has brought you, that you could speak very forcibly to any girl whom you saw in danger of running the same risk? Would not you, out of the kindness of your woman's heart, warn her not to do as you have done, and point out to her the pain that must succeed it?"

"Oh, yes, of course I could and would, Hugh. It would be very cruel not to do so."

"Then, you see, you *are* fit for a missionary. You said just now that, if your father had a son to accom-

pany him to a new country, emigration would be a different thing for him. Well, if he elects to go, *I* am willing to accompany him, and to be, as far as in me lies, a son to him—aiding him all I can with my strong young arm and head—on one condition,"

"What is the condition, Hugh?" asked Nell.

"That you will come, too, as my wife and helper. If you consent, I will show you a way to heal your sore hurt, that shall bring you the utmost peace at last. I don't promise you happiness, though I would try hard to secure you that also; but peace I know you will have, for God will send it. Come with me, and be my helper and companion. We will go to some country, so widely different from England that nothing in it shall ever have the power to remind you of the terrible experience you have passed through here; and in a warmer climate you will, I hope, regain the health and strength which you have lost. Do you remember how you told me long ago that I was cut out for a missionary, and you were right. The very thought warms my blood. We will go to South Africa, or anywhere that is considered best for us all, and I will devote my life to securing the happiness of yours. Will you come?"

Nell turned round and looked at him with astonishment.

"Will I go to South Africa with you as your wife? Hugh, do you know what you are asking me?"

"Exactly. I am asking you the same thing I asked you four months ago, and you refused."

"But you thought I was a different girl then from what you know now. I have told you all. I—I—am—"

And here she faltered, and looked down at the blades of grass she was twisting about in her hands.

"Let there be no misunderstanding between us, Nell. Let me finish the sentence for you, and don't be offended at what I say, for I speak plainly, so that you may be sure that I do not deceive myself any more than you. I know now that you have parted with the greatest glory of your unmarried womanhood; that you have, what the world calls, fallen; that you lived in a state of sin for three long years, knowing it to be sin, and wished for no better lot; and that even at this moment you would go back to that condition if you could. Do I speak too plainly, my dear? Do I hurt you?"

Nell shook her head, but did not answer him in words.

"Well, then, you see there is no need for you to tell me anything; and if there were the remotest chance of your being tempted to go back to that life, or if the man you cared for were in a position to marry you, I would not dare ask you to share my lot. But there is no chance of either of these things occurring to you. The

only future I can see before you is, to live in this simple place where you will have no distraction from your sad thoughts, and where maybe you will eventually die, from fretting after the impossible, or from remorse for that which can never be undone again. If you can make up your mind to leave England with me, I think I can save you much of this. I think I can lead your thoughts to dwell on something better than your past life, and renovate your health by diverting them. I think that, with the help of God and time, I may be able to show you a way out of all this terrible trouble that bids fair to blight your youth, and live, perhaps, to hear you acknowledge that it was permitted in mercy to make you better able to sympathise with the sin and sufferings of your fellow-creatures. This is what I hope for, Nell; but I may be presumptuous in hoping it after all."

"And you would make *me* your wife, Hugh; knowing all and hating all, as you do. Oh, it is impossible. You are too good for me. I am not worthy to marry you. I told you so from the first."

"We need not talk of worthiness or unworthiness to one another," answered Hugh. "We are man and woman, and I love you. That is quite enough. The matter lies between ourselves alone. No one else will ever hear of it."

"Ah, Hugh, forgive me, but I *don't* love you.

Therein lies all the difference. I will not deceive you in the slightest particular. My heart still clings to, and is wrapped up in this—this—man. I cannot forget him. I cannot un-love him. For three long happy years he taught me to regard him as my husband, and the fact that he never married me in church makes no difference to my affection. I am sorry—I grieve deeply night and day that he has left me in so cruel a manner, but still I love him. I am more like a widow than a wicked girl. I suppose it is part of my wickedness—the greatest part perhaps—that I *cannot* feel how wicked I have been. I only know that my husband has left me for another wowan, and that he cannot have realised what my love for him was, or he never would have done it. Is that very wicked?" said Nell, as she looked up into the young man's face.

The answer he made her was very different from what she expected of him.

"No, Nell, it is not wicked. If I had not known that *that* was the way in which you regarded the past I would not have asked you to be my wife. But the heart that can be so faithful to one man—the man who has betrayed it—will be as faithful to another when once its tears are dried for the first. I, too, look on you as a widow, as something far more to be pitied than a widow. But it is all over now, my poor girl. You know that without my telling you; so, whether

you can forget it or not, let me try to make the remainder of your life useful and happy. Will you, Nell?"

"Oh, Hugh, you are too good. I never knew anyone so good and kind in all my life before. If—if—we went far away from England and all its dreadful associations, where we should hardly ever hear its name again, I think I could be happy, or at least contented with you as my friend. And if, Hugh, it was some little time before I could think of you in any other light than that of a friend you would not be angry, would you? You would be a little patient with me, and remember how much I have suffered—how hardly I have been used—until I feel as if I could never trust to a man's promises again."

"If you will come with me to South Africa and help me in my missionary work, Nell," said Hugh, as he took the listless hand hanging down by her side and pressed it softly, "I will never ask you for the affection nor the duty of a wife till you can tell me that you are ready and willing to give it me. Will you trust me so far—that if the love I long for should never spring up in your heart for me I will never demand it, nor worry you because it is not there, but still do my utmost to teach you how to lighten your heavy burden by working for God and God's creatures? Do you believe me? Will you trust me?"

"Yes, Hugh, yes. I will trust you through everything. And if father and mother should elect to emigrate and leave the dear old farm for good and all, why, I will go with them and you—as your wife."

And she held out her hand to him as she concluded. Hugh seized it, and carried it to his lips.

"You have made me so happy!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Nell, whether as friends, or as husband and wife, you are *my* Nell now for evermore, and I will never let you go again."

CHAPTER II.

As Nell walked back to Panty-cuckoo alone (for she would not let Hugh accompany her) she could not decide if she were pleased or sorry at what had taken place between them. Certainly she did not realise it. She was as much Lord Ilfracombe's widow as she had been on setting out, and did not feel like the betrothed of anybody. But one thing did seem to please her—the idea of leaving England and all its sad associations behind, and going to a new country, to live amidst new surroundings and new people. Her heart had been growing faint and sick with England for a long time past. To go to South Africa; to sail on the sea; to see the wondrous vegetation that adorns it—the hedges of cacti, the bowers of orange-trees, the ostriches and the gorillas; all the wonders, in fact, of which she had read in the books which Hugh had lent her—this was what she thought of most as she wended her way slowly homewards. If an occasional remembrance struck her that they could not be enjoyed without the accompaniment of Hugh's society she put it from her with a

slight frown, and fell to thinking of the other instead. Hugh had said he would not worry her; that she should do exactly as she pleased; that he would ask nothing from her till she was ready to grant it; and Hugh was a man of his word. He would not say one thing and do another. She was quite safe with him. They would go out to Africa together, and whilst he taught the men and preached to them she would be kind and helpful to the mothers and the little black children, and show them how to make their clothes, and take care of their health, and cook their food. She pictured herself clad in a white dress, with a broad straw hat on, walking amongst her sable sisters, nursing them when they were sick, or joining in their merry-makings and festivities. She should better forget there, Nell said to herself, than in a country that reminded her at every turn of what she had lost. And Hugh was very good to her, there was no doubt of that, and would guard and protect her from further evil till her life's end. He knew her secret, and he did not despise her for it, that was more than she could say for anybody else. Even the servants in Grosvenor Square, over whom she had reigned supreme, had shown her, but too plainly, as soon as they dared, that they considered her a little lower than themselves. She dared not think what her father and mother and Hetty would say if they were made cognisant of the truth. Nell knew her parents'

strict ideas on propriety too well. Her mother would upbraid her for having brought the first shame into their virtuous family—her father would, in all probability, turn her out of the house, and tell her her presence contaminated both her mother and her sister. The poor, when virtuous, are very virtuous indeed. They cannot understand the temptations of the upper classes and those who are thrown in contact with them, because they are not subjected to the same themselves. What working man has the leisure to go after his neighbour's wife? When his day's labour is over he is too tired to go courting, to say nothing of the fact that his neighbour's task is over at the same time, and he is keeping safe guard over his sheepfold. No, her own people would show no sympathy for her disgrace! Nell was quite aware of that. Hugh, who was so good himself and a minister of the gospel, was the only one she would have dared tell her story to, and he could so far overlook it as to wish to make her his wife. She owed Hugh something, and some day, perhaps, she might repay the debt. At present, however, what had passed between them was to remain with themselves. She had made him promise that. She felt if it were made public property she could never get out of it again. What with the Owens and the Llewellyns she would be forced into a marriage, to think of which made her shudder. Things must go on exactly as

usual, till she knew what was going to happen at Panty-cuckoo Farm, and then, if her father decided to emigrate (which was by no means likely at present), it would be time for her to make up her mind. Meanwhile, it all seemed a long way off, and Nell felt easier for the concession she had accorded Hugh. She had experienced so many qualms as to whether she had been wise in placing confidence in him, but now there was no doubt that he would respect her secret for his own sake as well as hers. So she went back to Panty-cuckoo Farm in better spirits than she had displayed for some time past, and found her mother in close converse with Mrs. Hody, the housekeeper from Usk Hall. The two women had tea spread before them, and were evidently going in for a regular "confab."

"Going to raise the rents again," old Mrs. Hody was saying as Nell walked into the room. "Well, I never. I wonder Mr. Bastian, the steward, didn't tell me of it. I expect he was too much ashamed. Not that it's his doing, poor man. He can only follow the master's lead. But, dear me, Mrs. Llewellyn, it's easy to guess who is at the bottom of it. It's my lady's high jinks and no mistake. It would take twice Sir Archibald's money to cover them. Now, there's all new papering to be put up in the bedrooms. I'm sure the paper was good enough for anybody. It's not been up more than a couple o' years, but there's to be

a grand party at the hall this summer, and I suppose nothing is too good for 'em."

"When are the family coming home, Mrs. Hody?" asked Nell.

"Next month, my lass, and you'd better get your best gowns ready, for there's to be a power of young gentlemen with them and no mistake. I've just been talking to your mother here about her rooms. I wish she could let us have the use of four, just for a month or two, for where I'm to put them all I don't know."

"But it is impossibe, Mrs. Hody, or I'd willingly oblige you. But you know I couldn't do it even before my Nell came home, and it is more impossible than ever now."

"I could lend you the furniture," said the housekeeper, coaxingly, "if that's the obstacle. We've got enough stowed away at the top of the house to furnish five or six rooms. We make up sixteen beds ourselves, but they'll be all full. Whatever they can want with such a heap of guests beats me. I've been up the village this afternoon to see if the Wilkins' or Turners' girls were at home, for we shall want extra help, but, like my luck, they're all in service."

"Perhaps our Nell here might be of use to you, Mrs. Hody," interposed Mrs. Llewellyn. "She's been used to service, you know, and I guess she's a good

hand at it. What say, Nell? Will ye go up to the Hall and help Mrs. Hody when the folks arrive?"

Nell grew scarlet. What if some of the "folks" should have seen her in London and recognise her!

"Oh, no, mother," she exclaimed, shrinking back, "I couldn't! I don't know enough about it. I've never been in any place, remember, except in the nursery and then as housekeeper. I have never done any housework or cooking."

Mrs. Hody looked at the girl's beautiful face suspiciously.

"You're very young for a housekeeper, especially since you can have had no previous experience. Who engaged you for the place?"

"Lord Ilfracombe," replied Nell timidly—she always became timid when the earl was alluded to.

"And what aged man was he, my dear?" continued Mrs. Hody.

"Oh, I don't know—somewhere between twenty and thirty, I suppose; quite young, of course, but I hardly ever saw him. He was often absent from home."

"And how did the servants like taking their orders from such a lass as you? Didn't they give you trouble sometimes?" went on her inquisitor.

"Oh, no, they were all old servants. They knew their duty," said Nell confusedly, and then she added, to hide her embarrassment,—"But do tell me, Mrs. Hody, the names of some of the visitors you are expecting. It is such an event to see strangers in Usk. Are there lords and ladies amongst them?"

"Lords and ladies, my dear. Why, they're most all lords and ladies this time, asked on purpose to meet a royal prince, who has condescended to stay for a week with Sir Archibald. Lor'! what a fuss my lady will make over him, to be sure. I expect she's half wild with joy that he is coming. And there'll be more cards and high play than ever, I suppose, and turning night into day, as I've just been telling your good mother. No one in bed till two or three in the morning, and candles left guttering all over the tablecloths, and wine spilt over the carpets, and there—it makes me sick to talk of it. I do declare if the play goes on this time as it did last year, I shall give Sir Archibald warning. It's scandalous! I did hear as one poor man—Captain Trelany was his name—was quite ruined by it, and has been obliged to sell out of his regiment in consequence and go abroad. Such a wicked thing for a man of Sir Archibald's age to encourage in his house, but there! it's all *her* fault. She don't go on a bit like a married lady, and I don't care who hears me say so. A running after gents as she does, screaming and laughing

like a schoolgirl, and driving over the place like a mad woman. I'm sure I wish sometimes I'd never set eyes on her face."

"Ah, I'm glad our Nell has nothing to do with such," said Mrs. Llewellyn, "for it must be a bad example for a young girl. My daughters have been brought up steady and respectable, and if I thought they would ever take to such ways, it would break my heart."

"What gentlemen are you going to send to mother, Mrs. Hody?" said Nell to turn the conversation.

"I don't know yet, my dear, but they are sure to be bachelors, so don't you listen to any nonsense they may say to you. Young gentlemen are not half particular enough in these days. They talk a lot of rubbish to a pretty girl and mean nothing by it, whilst she maybe takes it all for gospel truth, and cries her eyes out when she finds it was only their fun. Men always have been took, and always will be took by a pretty face to the end of time, and think it's an honour for any poor girl to receive notice from them; but don't you believe nothing they may say to you, Nell, for gentlemen marry for money now-a-days and nothing else it strikes me."

But at this adjuration Mrs. Llewellyn ruffled up her feathers like an old hen when her chickens are attacked.

"You needn't come for to give such advice to any girl of mine, Mrs. Hody!" she exclaimed, quite hotly, "for it isn't needed. Believe any rubbish a gentleman born might say to her? I should think not, indeed. Nell is much too sensible for that. She knows that gentleman's compliments mean no good for poor girls, and would not encourage such a thing for a moment. My lasses are not like the Simpsons, Mrs. Hody, nor yet the Manleys. They've never been allowed to run loose for anyone to talk to, but been reared in a God-fearing way and taught that His eye is on them everywhere. There's no occasion for you to caution them. I can assure you, I would rather see Nell stretched dead at my feet, than think her capable of such folly. Why, who knows what it might lead to? Gentlemen have flattering tongues sometimes for country girls, and put all sorts of silly ideas into their heads. If I thought our Nell would even speak to such lodgers as you may choose to send us, Mrs. Hody, I wouldn't let my rooms to you, not if you gave me ten pounds a week for them, there!"

And Mrs. Llewellyn, quite exhausted by her efforts, stopped talking and wiped her steaming face with her apron.

"Oh, mother, dear, why make so much of it?" said Nell, with cheeks of crimson. "I am sure Mrs. Hody never thought that I or Hetty would behave ourselves

in an unseemly way with your lodgers. It was only a kindly caution on her part. And you need have no fear for me, believe me."

"No, indeed, Mrs. Llewellyn," interposed the housekeeper, anxious to make peace with her hostess, "I only put in my little word on account of your Nell here being so handsome, and I, knowing but too well what some of the gentlemen as come to the Hall are. Why, didn't one of 'em wrong poor little Katie Brown only last autumn twelvemonth, stuffing the poor child's head up with some nonsense about marriage not being necessary, and that he'd stick to her all his life, and then going off when the shooting was over and leaving her with a baby at her back. Tom Brown was after bringing an action against the gentleman—Mr. Frank Leyton, it was—and getting some money out of him for his daughter's shame; but the lawyer advised him not, for there was no evidence except Katie's word, and that wouldn't be enough in a court of justice, he said. I've taken good care not to have any pretty girls about the Hall since, and if your Nell had come up to help me, I would have kept her out of their way, for such a set of unprincipled vagabonds I never see before!"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Hody," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, grandly, "no amount of wages would make me send a girl of mine up to the Hall after what you've told me. My daughters have been very humbly born and bred,

but they are good, virtuous lasses, though, perhaps, I should not be the one to say it. It would break my heart if I could think them capable of taking up with folks as never meant to marry them, and as for their father, well, I do believe he'd take a gun and shoot 'em if he knew of it. So, our Nell, she'll keep down at Panty-cuckoo, if you please, whilst your family's at home, and do her duty by keeping the lodgers' rooms clean and tidy, instead of making the acquaintance of their occupants."

"There, there, mother, say no more about it, pray!" cried Nell in real distress, as she carried off the tea-tray in order to hide her burning cheeks.

It was such conversations as these that made her fearful to think what might happen if her secret ever became known to her parents; which made her contemplate the thought of South Africa with something very much like gratitude, and even remember the condition attached to it without a shudder. She had quite made up her mind by this time that she should never see the Earl of Ilfracombe again. She had never heard him mention Usk, nor even Wales. It was not likely, in her simple ideas, that he would ever find his way there; she thought that they were as widely separated as if the sea divided them. She had but two alternatives—either to end her days at Panty-cuckoo Farm,

in the maddeningly quiet manner she was passing them now, or to become Hugh Owen's wife and go away with him, far, far from everything that could possibly remind her of the happy, thoughtless time she had believed would never end; and, of the two, the last appeared to be the best to her. Yet not without her parents. That was, of course, plainly understood between Hugh and herself. But her father still talked despondingly of his prospects, and of the ultimate necessity of his making some change, and Nell seemed to see the future looming before her, even though it was as yet no larger than a man's hand. Hugh Owen had resumed his visits to the farm, much to the content of Mrs. Llewellyn, and, sometimes, he and Nell took a stroll together in the summer evenings. Only as friends, though. Notwithstanding the half promise she had made him, Nell would not permit him to consider himself anything more than her friend until the matter was finally settled between them, and the young man was quite content it should be so. Perhaps he required a little time also, to recover the great shock experienced on hearing Nell's story, and preferred to gain her complete confidence and friendship before asking for any closer privilege. But he was happy in knowing that she trusted him, and never doubted but that the end for both of them would be a perfect union.

So the time went on until May was over, and Mrs. Hody announced that she would require Mrs. Llewellyn's bedrooms for two gentlemen on the following day. The task of preparing them was confided to Nell. There was no rough work to be done—Mrs. Llewellyn's rooms being always kept in spic and span order—but the linen sheets had to be taken out of the old walnut-wood press, where they had lain for the last year between sprigs of sweet lavender, and aired before the kitchen fire, and the creases ironed out before they were put upon the beds. Then the fair white toilet-covers, trimmed with lace made by the farmer's great-grandmother, were spread upon the dressing-tables and chest of drawers, and every speck of dust flicked off the polished furniture. Clean lace curtains were hung before the windows, about which clambered the honeysuckles and roses, which poor Nell used to see in her London dreams, and before which lay the beds of flowers which adorned the side of the farmhouse. These two rooms, as has been said before, lay apart from the rest of the domain, and opened into the bricked passage at the back of the parlour. They had a little private entrance of their own, and, when they were occupied, the lodgers were allowed to come in and out as they chose. This was absolutely necessary with the guests of Sir Archibald Bowmant, as the revelries of Usk Hall

were kept up so late, that the Llewellyns could not possibly have sat up for them. So, in that primitive place, where latch-keys were unknown and robbery was unheard of, the simple farmers left their side-door unfastened, and scarcely ever set eyes on their lodgers. When the two sleeping chambers were clad in their white adornments, Nell fancied they looked too cold and colourless, so she fetched some old-fashioned vases of blue china from her mother's store closet, and filled them with roses and lilies, overshadowed by graceful branches of crimson fuchsias and tufts of sword grass. She placed one upon each toilet-table, and heaved a sigh to see how pure and sweet and clean the rooms looked, like an unstained conscience in the bosom of a child.

"Nell! Nell!" called her mother, from the parlour, "open the side-door, there's a good lass. There's one of the Hall gardeners bringing over the gentlemen's luggage."

Nell did as she was desired, and encountered a man with some portmanteaus, and bags and plaids in a wheelbarrow standing outside the door.

"These are the things, miss, of the gents as is to sleep here," he said.

"All right. Bring them in," was the reply.

The man brought the articles in, one by one, on

his shoulders, and heaped them all down in the first room.

"But stay!" exclaimed Nell, some must go in the other room. What are the gentlemen's names?"

"Sure, I don't know, miss. All I was told was to bring the luggage over here."

Nell examined the portmanteaus first. On one were the initials M. L., on the other J. S. P. One bag had M. L. on it, the other was blank. The two bundles of plaids and umbrellas were not addressed at all.

"Take that portmanteau and that bag," said Nell, intimating the two marked M. L., "into the next room, and leave the others here. The gentlemen can sort their own plaids when they come."

The man did as she told him, and withdrew, as Mrs. Llewellyn came bustling into the room to see if the luggage betokened wealth or not.

"Nice portmantles, ain't they, Nell?" she remarked, as she examined the locks and leather. "Lor'! what a lot of money young gentlemen do spend on themselves. M. L. I fancy I've seen him before. I think that must be Mr. Martin Lennox, who was down the year before last. Such a nice, free-spoken young man, and will be an earl some day they told me. J. S. P.," she went on, looking at the other portmanteau, "I've never seen that before. I wonder what it stands for—J. S. P."

"What letters did you say?" asked Nell curiously.

"J. S. P., my dear. John something, I suppose. However, it don't matter to us, so long as they don't make too much noise when they come home at night. There was one gentleman we had once who was dreadful. He wasn't content with singing all sort of songs as soon as he got into his room, but he must go for dancing, and he used to make such a row and keep it up so late, that at last father and I could stand it no longer, and were obliged to speak to Sir Archibald. There was no rest for anyone, and when you have to be up at five o'clock, that's no joke. So Sir Archibald was very good about it, and sent us a quieter gentleman instead.

But Nell had heard nothing of her mother's discourse. She was kneeling down by the portmanteau marked J. S. P., and examining it all over.

"What do you see there, my lass?" said Mrs. Llewellyn. "What's the matter with it? Anything gone wrong?"

"No, mother, nothing—nothing," replied the girl, as she rose to her feet again.

She was wondering what there was in the stranger's portmanteau that seemed so familiar to her—where she could have seen it before—for what name the initials J. S. P. stood? The intermediate letter prevented her

grasping the truth at once. She had never associated it with the other two. But something about the luggage seemed to bring an old memory with it, and made her feel uneasy. Could it possibly belong to someone whom she had met in Grosvenor Square? or at Thistlemere? —anyone who might recognise her as having been in Lord Ilfracombe's household? The thought made her turn cold with apprehension.

"Both these bundles of shawls can't belong to one gentleman, Nell," said her mother presently. "Come and take one into the other room. Ay, but that's a beauty. And what a pretty plaid, too—green and orange and blue. Wouldn't I like just such another to keep my feet warm when father drives me to market at Newport. Carry it carefully, lass. Don't let the straps get loose, or maybe the gentleman will be annoyed."

But Nell had already let the plaid of green and orange and blue fall to the ground. She recognised it now; she recognised the initials also. They both belonged to Mr. John Portland. The thought made her head whirl. She sat down on the floor to recover herself.

"Eh, Nell, my lass, but you're faint," cried her mother. "Don't sit on the bed, child, for mercy's sake. You'll ruin the look of the sheets; but get into the par-

lour as quick as you can. Why, what ails you? You were looking ever so well this morning."

"Yes, mother, and I'm all right now," said Nell, as she made an effort to raise herself. "The day's warm, you know, and I'm only a little tired. I'll be better when I've had my dinner. I don't think there's anything more to be done to the rooms now, so I'll go and look after my own," and so she escaped to the shelter of her bedroom. But when she had time to consider the scare she had received, she was ready to call herself a fool for having been frightened so easily.

"The initials are certainly his," she thought, "and I'm almost sure he had a plaid something like that one; but, after all, I cannot be certain, and the initials J. P. might fit half a hundred names—John Platt, or James Philpott, or Joseph Plowden. It is silly of me to make sure they belong to Mr. Portland until I have better proof. What should he be doing here in Usk? I never heard him mention the place, nor the name of Sir Archibald. I saw so much of him, they would have been sure to crop up some time or other. Oh, I have been frightening myself with a bogey. I am sure I have. How weak my nerves must have become. I was never like this in the old days," and Nell heaved a deep sigh as she spoke. Still, as the day drew to a close, and the owners of the portmanteaus might be

expected to arrive at any moment to dress for dinner, she grew so nervous she could not stay in the house. The first person she encountered outside it was Hugh Owen, come to see if she would go for a country walk with him.

"No," said Nell decidedly; "I can't walk to-night. Mother wants me, and I have work to do indoors."

"Have you heard that all the company's arrived at the Hall?" demanded Hugh; "six carriages full, the gardener told me, and as many more expected to-morrow."

"Of course I know it," replied the girl petulantly; "we've two of them coming to sleep at the farm to-night. Do you know who they are?"

"No, I heard no names, except those of Sir Archibald and Lady Bowmant. What is it that is keeping you indoors, Nell?" asked Hugh.

"Nothing that concerns you," she answered.

He looked surprised at her manner, but did not notice it openly.

"I thought if it wouldn't take you long, you might come out a little later. A walk would do you good. You are looking very pale."

"No, I shall not go out this evening," she replied. "I'm tired, and want to be quiet and by myself."

"That means I'm to go then, dear," he said wistfully.

"That's as you please, Hugh. Mother's indoors, and always glad to see you, you know that without my telling you, but I'm too busy to have any more time to spare. Good-night."

She held out her hand to him in token of farewell, and he was fain to accept it and take his leave of her. But, intuitively, he felt more upset than the occasion demanded. He walked on further towards a neighbouring village, and did not return till an hour later. Then he distinguished in the gloaming a white dress cross the road, and go towards the Hall by way of the fields. Hugh felt sure that the dress belonged to Nell, and yet she had told him she should not leave the farm that night. And what should she want up at the Hall, too, just as the family had returned to it, when she never went near Mrs. Hody for weeks together when the house was empty. Hugh puzzled over this enigma for a long time without coming to a satisfactory solution, but he turned into Panty-cuckoo Farm just to see if his suspicion was correct. Meanwhile Nell was creeping up to the Hall by a back way to gain an audience of old Mrs. Hody while the family was at dinner. She felt she must know the best, or the worst, before she slept that night.

"Mrs. Hody," she said, as she burst in upon that worthy, making a comfortable tea off all the tit-bits that came down from her master's table, "mother sent me up to ask you if the gentlemen will take tea or coffee in the morning."

"Lor'! my dear, neither I should say. What will they want with troubling your mother about such things. If they've been used to it, her ladyship will order me to send it down for them from the Hall. I wonder whatever put such an idea into her head."

"Oh, she thought it best to make sure," replied the girl, "and please, what are their names?"

"The gentlemen's names? Why, one is the Honourable Mr. Lennox, and the other is a Mr. Portland."

"Portland?" exclaimed Nell. "Are you sure? *Portland?*"

"Yes, my girl, I'm quite sure. Mr. John Portland, though I've never seen him at the Hall before. He comes from London, I believe. Sir Archibald's always picking up strangers, and bringing them here to eat their heads off at his expense. Well, some folks have queer notions of pleasure. Haven't they? Oh, you're off. Well, give my respects to your mother, and tell her to mind and keep all her spare cream and chickens for the Hall, for I'll want everything she can send me."

"Yes, yes, I will tell her," replied Nell, in a muffled voice, as she turned away repeating in her inmost heart,—"What *shall* I do? What *shall* I do?"

As she walked into the farm parlour, she encountered Hugh Owen, who looked at her through and through.

"Well my lass," began Mrs. Llewellyn, "here's Hugh waiting for you, you see, so I'm glad you're come. He's been main patient, sitting here for the best part of an hour."

"Well, good-night," said Nell, making for the door that led to her chamber.

"Why, won't you stop and talk to him a bit now you have come?" remonstrated her mother.

"I have already told Hugh that I have no time for talking to him to-night," replied Nell, without arresting her footsteps.

"And you told me, also, that you were not going to leave the farm to-night, Nell, said the young man, with the least bit of reproach in his tone.

She turned round on him with unnecessary fierceness.

"And what is it to you if I do or not? Are you my keeper? Am I obliged to account to you for my actions? My father and mother are the only people who have any right to find fault with me, or to regulate

my goings-out or comings-in, and I do not hold myself responsible to anyone else. You are taking too much upon yourself, Hugh. For the future, I shall refuse to tell you anything."

And she flew upstairs, leaving both her mother and Hugh Owen in a state of consternation at such an unusual exhibition of temper on her part.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS was over; the Countess Dowager and the Ladies Devenish had taken their departure from Thistlemere; the weather was inclement, and a great deal of time had to be spent indoors; which made Nora often wish that she and her husband were alone. One day she expressed something of the kind to him. She said,—

"I thought people usually kept their country seats for the purposes of retirement, but we have never been alone since we came here."

Ilfracombe laughed.

"Why, my darling, what do you call us at the present moment? We couldn't well be much more alone."

"Mr. Portland is here," replied the countess.

"Old Jack! You don't call him anybody, surely? He's as much at home at Thistlemere as we are. I wish he would live here altogether. I don't know what I shall do when he *does* go. I shall be lost without my old chum to smoke with and talk to."

"I don't think you need anticipate any such calamity," said Nora, with something of her old, sharp manner. "Mr. Portland does not appear to have the slightest intention of moving."

"He *was* thinking of it, though. He had a letter yesterday, which he said obliged him to return to town, but I persuaded him to write instead. It would be awfully dull for me if he went away, just at this time when there is nothing going on."

"Complimentary to *me,*" retorted the young countess, with a shrug.

"Now, my darling, you know what I mean. You are all the world to me—a part of myself—but you can't sit up till the small hours playing billiards and smoking cigars with me."

"No. I draw the line at cigars, Ilfracombe."

"And then, how many rainy and dirty days there are, when you only feel inclined to sit over the fire and toast your pretty little feet. What would become of me then, if Jack were not here to go potting rabbits, or turning the rats out of the barns with the terriers. The country is so frightfully dull at this time of year, you would be bored to death with only me to talk to."

"Do you think so, Ilfracombe?"

"I feel sure of it, and how should we pass the evenings without our whist? Babbage is the only man

within hail of us who thinks it worth his while to come over for a game; so if Jack were not good enough to exile himself for the pleasure of our company, we should be obliged to import someone else, who would probably not play half so well."

Lord and Lady Ilfracombe were riding together at the time of this conversation, walking their horses slowly round the lanes about Thistlemere, for Nora was not an experienced horsewoman. She had had no opportunity of either riding or driving in Malta, and her husband was employing his leisure by teaching her something of both arts. She was a pupil to be proud of; plucky in the extreme, and only a little reckless and disposed to imagine she could do it all at once, which kept the earl on constant tenter-hooks about her. As he finished speaking to her now, she exclaimed rather impatiently,—

"Oh, very well, let us say no more about it," and struck the spirited little mare she was riding sharply across the neck with her whip.

The animal started and set off suddenly at a hard gallop, nearly unseating her rider by the rapidity of her action. The earl followed, in an access of alarm until he saw that the mare had settled down into a moderate canter again.

"Nora, my darling!" he exclaimed, as he came up

with her, "you mustn't do that. Leila won't stand it. She will throw you some day to a dead certainty. You gave me a pretty fright, I can tell you. What should I do if you were thrown."

"Pick me up again, I hope," replied the countess, laughing, as if it were an excellent joke.

"Yes, but with a broken limb perhaps, and fancy what my remorse would be if that happened. I should never forgive myself for having mounted you on the beast. But she really is a good-tempered thing if you know how to take her."

"Just like her mistress," said Nora, smiling. "But, seriously, Ilfracombe, I will be more careful. I don't want to break my leg before I am presented at Court."

"Nor after it, I hope, my darling. But walk Leila now, there's a good child, and let her simmer down a little. You've made me feel just as I do when I think I've missed the odd trick."

"I believe you are fonder of playing cards than anything, Ilfracombe," said Nora slowly.

"I am—except you. But they are so jolly—there's so much excitement about cards. They keep a man alive."

"But, Ilfracombe, why need we always play for such high stakes? Do you know I lost thirty pounds at 'Sandown' yesterday evening?"

"Did you, dearest? Are you cleaned out? I will let you have some more as soon as we reach home."

"No, it is not that. It would not signify once in a way perhaps, but it is the same thing every night. It seems an awful waste of money."

"Not if you enjoy it, dear. We must pay for our whistle, you know. Cards would be no fun without the stakes. And somebody must lose."

"Yes, and somebody must win. Only, as it happens, it is always the same somebody, which doesn't seem fair."

"Nora, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, Ilfracombe. I lose every night; so do you; so does Lord Babbage; and the only person who wins is Mr. Portland. All the money seems to go into his pocket."

"Oh, Nora, my darling, this is not fair of you. You are prejudiced against my old chum—I have seen that from the beginning—but to say that dear old Jack wins all the stakes, night after night, is as good as saying—oh, I am sure you cannot mean it—you cannot think of the meaning of what you say."

"My dear Ilfracombe, there is no meaning about it. I am only speaking the plain truth. I've seen it for a long time. Doubtless, Mr. Portland is the best player of the four, and that is the reason, but it has struck

me as rather remarkable. And it seems so strange, too, that friends should want, or like to pocket each other's money. Why can't we play for the love of the game? It would be quite as interesting, surely."

"No, no, child, it wouldn't. Whoever heard of such a thing as grown men sitting down seriously to play for love?" cried the earl merrily; "that's only schoolgirl's games. And I wonder to hear you, Nora, who are such a little woman of the world, suggesting such a thing. I should have thought you liked staking your money as well as anyone."

"Perhaps it is because I am a woman of the world that I don't like to see my husband's money wasted. No income, however large, can stand such a strain long. Besides, I know it is not only cards on which you bet with Mr. Portland. You go to races with him, and lose a lot of money there. Mr. Castelon told me so!"

"It is not true, Nora, and Castelon had better mind his own business. Everybody must lose occasionally; but I always follow Jack's lead, and he's as safe as the church clock. And, after all, my dear girl, I'd as soon the tin went into old Jack's pocket as my own. He's awfully hard up sometimes, and if one can't share some of one's good things with one's best friend, I don't know what's the use of them."

"Well, leave a little for me," cried Nora gaily, and

her husband's answer should have at least satisfied her that she would always be his first care. But she was not satisfied with regard to the nightly games of cards. She watched the players more closely after this conversation than before, and decided within herself that she had been correct, and Jack Portland was by far the heaviest and most frequent winner. One day, when they were alone together, she could not help congratulating him, in a sarcastic manner, on his continual run of good luck. He guessed at her meaning in a minute.

"Do you mean to infer that I cheat?" he asked her abruptly.

Then Nora felt a little ashamed of herself and did not know what to reply.

"Oh, no, of course not. How could you think of such a thing? Only it is evident that you are a far better player than Lord Babbage or Ilfracombe, and, to my mind, the odds are very much against them. As for poor me, you have ruined me already. I have lost all my pin-money for the next three months."

"Nonsense!" he said rudely (Mr. Portland could be exceedingly rude to her when they were alone), "you know you can get as much money out of Ilfracombe as you can possibly want. The man is infatuated with you.

More fool he. But he'll find out how much your love is worth some day."

"Perhaps you intend to enlighten him?" said her ladyship.

She could not resist letting fly her little shafts at him, whatever the consequences might be.

"Perhaps I do, if you egg me on to it," was Mr. Portland's reply. "But, seriously, my lady, don't you attempt to come between his lordship and myself, or you may rue the day you did it. I am a *vaurien*—adventurer—swindler—what you like. I'm not afraid of you or your tongue, because I hold the trump card and should have no hesitation in playing it. But my income, though tolerably expansive, is a fluctuating one, and I am compelled to eke it out as best I can. I amuse my friends, and I live chiefly at their expense. Lord Ilfracombe is, luckily for me, one of my best and greatest of chums, so I cling to him like a double-sweet pea. Until you came in the way there has never been a suspicion cast on the honour of my intentions—the disinterestedness of my friendship. See that you don't do it, that's all."

"And what if I did?" asked Nora, defiantly, with her head well up in the air.

Mr. Portland moved a few steps closer to her.

"I would deliver those letters of yours into Ilfracombe's hands within the hour," he said, between his teeth.

Nora quailed before his glance, but her voice was steady as she replied,—

"You would not. You *dare* not. You would ruin yourself for ever, and be pointed at in Society as a scoundrel and a blackmailer."

"Never mind what the world would say of me. Think only of what it would say of *you.*"

"It could not say anything," she retorted, with the boldness of despair; "there would be nothing for it to say. There is no harm in those letters. I should not mind if my husband read them to-morrow."

"Wouldn't you?" said Jack Portland, with open eyes. "Then I'll show them to him before he is twelve hours older."

"No, no," said Nora quickly, "you would not do so mean an act, surely. You must have some instincts of a gentleman left in you. Remember under what circumstances they were written, and that I thought at the time I loved you."

"I suppose you did," replied Mr. Portland; "but they are delicious reading all the same. I read passages from them once to a select party of my men friends, and they said they would never have guessed they were

the productions of a young lady. They voted they would have been warm even from a barmaid.

"You did not! You cannot have been such a blackguard!" exclaimed Lady Ilfracombe so shrilly, that he laid his hand upon her arms to caution her she might be overheard. "You have promised to give me those letters back, over and over again, and you have not kept your word. I will wait no longer, but have them at once. I insist upon it. Do you hear me? I will stand this treatment from you no longer."

"Oh, I hear, fast enough, and I'm very much afraid that everybody else in the house, including Lord Ilfracombe, will hear also, if your ladyship is not a little more guarded."

"But you promised—you *promised*," she continued vehemently, "and now you threaten to break your promise. You are no gentleman, Mr. Portland. The lowest man on earth wouldn't degrade himself by such vile conduct."

"I daresay," he answered coolly, "perhaps he would. But your behaviour is enough to make a saint forget his natural instincts. You remind me that I promised to return your letters. I know I did, and if you had treated me decently since coming here, I might have kept my promise. But I won't give them to you now. I will only sell them."

"What can you possibly mean?" exclaimed the countess. "Am I to buy back my own letters? Well, I will. What price do you ask for them?"

She was standing in the oriel window of the drawing-room, most becomingly dressed in a gown of brown velvet, that seemed to match her eyes and set off the pearly whiteness of her skin, and as she put the above question she curled her upper lip and threw such an air of disdain into her expression that she looked more charming than usual.

"Don't look like that," said Portland, coming nearer to her, "or you will aggravate me to kiss you."

The indignant blood rushed in a flood of crimson to Nora's face and forehead, until it nearly forced tears from her eyes.

"How dare you? How dare you?" she panted, as she retreated as far as she could from him.

"How dare I?" he repeated. "That wasn't the way your ladyship used to receive the same proposition when we sat together under the shade of the orange-trees in Malta a couple of years ago. Was it now?"

"I do not know. I cannot remember. I only know that your presence now is hateful to me. What sum do you require for those letters? If it was half our fortune I would give it you, sooner than be subjected to further insult. Tell me how much at once. I will

sell all my jewels if I cannot raise the money otherwise!"

"No, no, I'm not going to press you quite so hard as all that, Nora. I don't want your jewels, my dear," replied Jack Portland, with offensive familiarity. "My price is—your silence."

"Silence about what? Do you imagine I am likely to talk about a matter which I would expunge with my life-blood if I could."

"You mistake me. By your silence, I mean that you must no longer interfere, as you seem inclined to do, between your husband and myself. You must not try to separate us in any way; not in our friendship, nor our pursuits, nor our sports; we like to play cards together—"

"*You* like, you mean," she interposed sarcastically.

"*Plait-il,*" acquiesced Jack Portland, with an expressive shrug; "at anyrate, we have been used to play cards and attend races and generally enjoy ourselves as *bons camarades,* and your ladyship will be good enough not to attempt to put an end to these things, not to remark in that delicately sarcastic way of yours that it is always your humble servant who appears to win. Do I make myself perfectly understood?"

"Perfectly," said Nora, "and if I consent to this, what then?"

"Why, that packet of charming letters—twenty-five

in all, if I remember rightly—which have afforded me so much consolation under our cruel separation, and which would prove, I feel sure, such very interesting reading for Lord Ilfracombe, shall remain in my custody, safe from all prying eyes except mine."

"But you promised to return them to me," argued Nora, and then with the greatness of the stake at issue before her eyes, and forgetting everything but that she was at the mercy of the man before her, the unhappy girl condescended to entreaty. "Oh, Mr. Portland—Jack," she stammered, "for God's sake—for the sake of the past, give me back those letters."

"How nice it is to hear you call me "Jack," said Mr. Portland, gazing boldly at her. "It almost reconciles me to the great loss I experienced in you. When you call me "Jack" I feel as if I could refuse you nothing."

"Then will you give them to me?"

"Certainly, *ma chère,* haven't I said so a dozen times? Only you must positively wait until I return to town. You women are so terribly unreasonable. And you, for your part, promise never to interfere between my old friend Ilfracombe and myself, and sometimes, to call me 'Jack' for the sake of the past."

Lady Ilfracombe was shivering now as if she had received a cold-water douche. She realised what being in the power of this man meant—that he would torture

her, as a cat tortures a mouse, until he had bent her in every way to do his will.

"I promise," she said in a low voice; "but if you gentlemen will play for such high stakes, you must not expect me to join your game. You would ruin me in no time; as it is, I am regularly 'cleaned out.'"

"I would much rather you did *not* join it," replied Mr. Portland seriously. "Ladies are seldom any good at whist, and I would rather play dummy any day. I suppose Ilfracombe will take you to Newmarket and Epsom with him, but you will understand nothing of the races, so I make no objection to that. By the way, have you yet mentioned this matter of our playing high to him?

"I told him I thought the stakes were high for a private game, but he contradicted me, and said it was no fun playing except for money."

"I should think not. However, don't speak to him of such a thing again please. Besides, it is ridiculous. He has an ample fortune, and can afford to do as he pleases. I can't see myself why you sit in the card-room in the evenings, the drawing-room is the proper place for a lady."

"You would like to separate me from my husband altogether, I daresay," cried Nora heatedly.

"By no manner of means. You quite mistake my meaning. Such a proceeding would distress me beyond

measure. But I don't intend to give up any of the privileges which I enjoyed from Ilfracome's intimacy before his marriage for you. Had he married anybody else, it might have been different, but not for *you*. It would be too bad to ask me to give up both my lady-love and my friend at one stroke. You will acknowledge the justice of that yourself, won't you?"

"Don't ask me, I don't know anything," replied the Countess, wearily, as she moved away, "You have come into my life again to make it miserable, and if you have no honour nor generosity there is nothing left that I can see to appeal to." And in her heart Nora added, "And if I could stretch you dead at my feet this moment, I would do it without a single pang."

She was more cautious in what she said to the earl, however, after that, and occasionally he rallied her on having got over her objection to too high play. Once when they were quite alone, she ventured to answer him.

"No, Ilfracombe, I cannot say that you are right. You must have observed that I seldom stay in the room now when you are playing, I do not approve of such high stakes, but I do not like to interfere with your enjoyment, or to appear to know better than yourself. But you won't tell Mr. Portland I said so," she added in a wistful tone. Lord Ilfracombe looked surprised.

"Tell Jack, my darling? Why, of course not. All

that passes between you and me is sacred. I don't think you've been looking quite up to the mark lately, Nora. I'm afraid you must find Thistlemere rather dull. I shall be glad when the time comes for us to go up to town. Then we'll see some life together, won't we?"

And Nora smiled faintly, and answered "Yes."

CHAPTER IV.

THE Derby was run that year in the last week of May. The young Countess of Ilfracombe had already been presented at Court under the auspices of her mother-in-law. She had attended more than one Royal function since; she had seen all that there was worth seeing in town, and she had entertained largely at her own house in Grosvenor Square. She had been fairly launched on Society in fact, and, unlike most heroines, it had not disappointed her. Everything was new and fresh to her; everything was delightful. This was what she had longed for and dreamed of in far-off Malta, and her letters home were full of the pleasure she was experiencing and the honours that were paid to her. Nora felt happier, too, and more at her ease in the company of her mother-in-law and the Ladies Devenish, and away from the close, every-day companionship of Mr. Portland, who had at last returned to his own chambers in the Albany. She fluttered about from milliner to milliner, theatre to theatre, like a huge butterfly; all fashion, delicate tints, smiles and excitement. Ilfracombe, unlike his usual taste, seemed de-

lighted to be her cavalier on all occasions. The truth is, he was thankful to get out of the house. Fond as he undoubtedly was of his wife, the atmosphere of Grosvenor Square depressed him. He could not enter a single room without being painfully reminded of Nell Llewellyn and her devoted love for him. It had been a very real love between these two. On her side the most unselfish, adoring, humble passion—on his, a very appreciative acknowledgement of her single-eyed affection, mingled with a great admiration of her beauty. *His* love for her, however, had always been mixed with a certain amount of shame and uncertainty, because he knew it was impossible it could go on for ever, and he dreaded the moment when it would become imperative to tell her so. Nell had ended it all for herself, however, and but too abruptly, and now he could not sit in the rooms where they had for so long sat together, and which she had so confidently regarded as her own, without finding his thoughts very much drawn her way, even though his lawful wife was by his side. He thought of the time when Nell first came to his house, a tall, slender girl, with a complexion like a wild rose, and beautiful startled hazel eyes, moist with the dews of youth. How frightened she was when he first whispered his love into her ear —how passionately remorseful when he had led her astray—how wonderfully grateful and reverential when

he told her she should thenceforth reign the mistress of his heart. He looked back over the years she had managed his household for him, and could not remember one instance of her losing her temper with him—that passionate, indomitable temper, which was quickly roused by others. How often he had wished, almost decided to make her his wife, if only for the devoted love she bore him, but had been afraid on consideration of the sneers and disapproval of the world, and so had dismissed the idea from his mind. And now—well, of course, he would not change his Nora for any woman. She was a glory to him, whilst poor Nell would only have been a disgrace. Still he wished from the bottom of his heart that she had been more reasonable, and gone home quietly to her friends, and, by-and-by, married some man in her own station of life, who would have considered the settlement he wished to make on her a little fortune. Lord Ilfracombe wondered, by the way, who *were* Nell's friends, and where she came from. She had never mentioned her old home to him. Did they know of her sad death, he wondered; or of the circumstances that led to it? He thought not. She was not the sort of woman to betray the man she loved even in death. She would have carried her secret with her to the grave. It was done, and it could not be undone, he would tell himself, but the thought made the house

very distasteful to him. He became nervous, even timid. He did not care to enter his private rooms at dusk, and would fancy he heard a sigh, or caught sight of a shadowy form flitting by him in the gloaming. One day he called his wife "Nell." It was a fearful mistake, and his face grew crimson as he discovered it; but Nora was wonderfully calm under the little *désagrément.*

"Was that Miss Llewellyn's name, Ilfracombe?" she asked archly.

"Oh, my love, forgive me!" cried the earl. "What can I have been thinking of? It was the mere force of habit. You know she was here with me, and it is the first time I have been in the house since."

"Did you think I should be angry?" asked Nora, looking back at him over her shoulder. "Surely it is the most natural thing in the world that you should think of the poor girl. You would be a brute if you didn't; but don't get melancholy over it, dear boy. Come into the Park with me, or let us go down the river together. I won't leave you moping here by yourself."

And it was such things that made Lord Ilfracombe say, and rightly, that he had gained a wife in a thousand. He was anxious that she should accompany him to the Derby, for two reasons—anxious that she

should see the biggest race of the year, which, of course, she had never yet had an opportunity of doing; and anxious to let the racing world see what a charming countess he had secured. The Dowager Lady Ilfracombe was very much against the idea, and the Ladies Devenish said it was decidedly vulgar and not at all *comme il faut.*

"If Ilfracombe had taken you to Ascot, or Goodwood, it would have been different, but the Derby! Why, hardly any ladies go there. There is always such a vulgar crowd, and, coming back by the road, you are bound to be insulted."

"Do you think so?" said Nora. "I should like to see the man who would dare to insult me in Ilfracombe's presence."

"But you don't know anything about it," replied Lady Blanche. "The roughs who frequent the Derby course make no difference between an earl and anybody else. They don't know one when they see him, and the awful people you will see on the race-course, gipsies—and nigger minstrels, and low creatures of all sorts."

"Have you ever been there yourself?" inquired Nora.

"I should hope not, indeed. I would not think of such a thing. It is no place for ladies. I can't

imagine what Ilfracombe can be thinking of to let you go."

"Well, I suppose he knows better than either of us, Blanche, and it was his own proposal. We are going down—a large party on our drag. Lady Moberly and the Duchess of Downshire are going with us, so I shall offend the proprieties in good company."

"Oh, if the duchess is going with you, it makes a difference of course. No one has ever said a word against the duchess, and she is at least fifty, so she will give a tone to the whole affair and be a sort of chaperon for you; for you see, Nora, though you *are* a countess, you are rather young."

"I know that," retorted Nora; "but I'm getting the better of it every day."

"Well, you needn't be flippant, my dear," replied her sister-in-law with a sniff. "Rank has its obligations, though you do not appear to think so. There might have been some excuse for your not knowing it before your marriage, but there is none now."

"No, I suppose not. All the same I'm going to the Derby this year, if I never go again."

And off ran Nora to join her husband. The Derby day was for her a complete success. She was dressed becomingly—was in good health and spirits, and in the humour to enjoy all she saw and heard. Lord Ilfra-

combe's drag, with its team of perfectly-matched chestnuts, was one of the handsomest in the Four-in-hand Club, and had always attracted particular attention when he turned out for the annual Park display. Their party consisted of the Duchess of Downshire, Lord and Lady Moberly, Miss Chetwynd, one of that season's beauties, and several bachelors, amongst whom was Mr. Jack Portland—the only drawback to Nora's enjoyment. But she was seated behind her husband and the duchess, who occupied the box seat, and he was at the back of the coach, so that during the journey they did not exchange a word with one another. As soon as they arrived on the race-course, and the horses had been taken out of the shafts, the servants spread their luncheon, and they began to have a merry time of it. Presently Jack Portland's voice was heard exclaiming, as he looked at someone through his field glass,

"By George! if that isn't Sir Archibald Bowmant, my Usk friend, and his wife. I told you, Ilfracombe, didn't I, that I'm going to spend a few weeks with them next month. They're the best fellows in the world. Awful fun! and don't the old boy know a card when he sees it."

"Friends of yours, Jack?" said Ilfracombe in his hospitable way. "Ask them to come here and lunch with us, old boy, if they're not better engaged."

"Shall I? Have I *your* permission, Lady Ilfracombe?" asked Mr. Portland, looking at Nora.

"Need you ask the question, Mr. Portland," she replied without glancing his way. "If you have my husband's leave, you have mine."

"Thanks," said Mr. Portland as he descended from the coach. "They may be with another party; but I'll just ask. I'm sure you'll like them. Lady Bowmant is just your style."

In a few minutes he returned with his friends, and introduced them to Lord and Lady Ilfracombe. Sir Archibald was a stout, florid, middle-aged man, with a jolly, good-tempered countenance, and weak, watery, blue eyes. His wife, to whom he had not been married a twelvemonth, was many years his junior, perhaps not more than five-and-twenty, and was as good a specimen of a fast young woman who just contrives not to step over the rubicon as could be found anywhere. She had been a nobody, and her head was completely turned by having become the wife of a baronet. She was decidedly pretty, with a countrified style of beauty, and she was fashionably but not well dressed. Her manner was effusive, and her voice loud, but she was lively, sparkling and amusing. Lady Ilfracombe, though indisposed to accord her a hearty welcome just because she had been introduced by Jack Portland, could not

help thawing under her lively manner, and before long they were all on the most excellent terms.

"How good of you to ask us to luncheon, Lady Ilfracombe!" exclaimed the new comer. "I am sure I shall never forget it. I do so admire anything like cordiality. You meet with so little of it in this country. We Englishwomen are horribly stiff as a rule, are we not? Sir Archibald and I were admiring your drag so much. We were on the course when you drove up, just making our way to the Grand Stand. It is quite a wonder we are here. We never meant to come, but I have never seen the Derby run, and Sir Archibald thought I should not go back to Wales without doing so. We drove down but put up at the hotel. Are we not ignoramuses? I was just despairing of pushing our way through this crowd when Jack spied us out, and landed us, through your goodness, in this haven of peace."

"You have known Mr. Portland a long time then, I suppose," remarked Nora.

"Why? Because I called him 'Jack?' Oh, everyone calls him 'Jack,' don't they? He's a regular lady's man, is Mr. Portland, and a great favourite with my husband. He is coming to stay with us in Usk next month."

"So he told us just now."

"Yes, I am quite looking forward to it. He is such

a delightful companion in the country. Do you like the country, Lady Ilfracombe? Are you fond of horses?"

"I am very fond of horses," replied Nora, smiling; "but if your question means, Do you ride well? I must tell you that I never mounted a horse till after my marriage, and so I am still a learner."

"Oh, you'll be proficient in no time!" exclaimed Lady Bowmant. "Isn't it delightful? I adore riding and driving, and everything connected with horses. Don't I, Sir Archibald?"

"You do, my dear," said the jolly baronet. "That is, if adoring means riding them to death, and driving over half my tenantry," and he roared as if his wife's feats of skill were the funniest things in the world.

"Now, don't tell tales out of school, Sir Archibald," cried the lady. "You know when I hunted last season that there wasn't a woman in the field who could keep anywhere near me. And didn't I carry off three brushes? And didn't the master of the fox-hounds say I was the pluckiest horsewoman he had ever seen?"

"Oh, yes, Dolly; no one denies your pluck, my dear. Only I wish you didn't drive your tandem over the children so often. The pounds I had to pay last year for mending babies and recouping the mothers passes belief."

"Don't you believe him, Lady Ilfracombe," said his

wife with a saucy nod. "The old man's getting in his second dotage and doesn't know half he says."

At this fresh sally Sir Archibald roared again until he nearly choked himself over his lobster salad and champagne.

The races were now beginning in good earnest, but Nora did not take half so much interest in them as she did in the lively conversation of her new acquaintance, who out-talked the duchess and Lady Moberly and all the other ladies put together. She was very keen on the racing though, and explained a great deal to Nora which she could not have understood without her. The gentlemen of the party had left the drag as soon as the work of the day began, and found their way to the betting-ring.

"Now, I hope my old man won't pop too much on Caliban!" exclaimed Lady Bowmant a little anxiously. "For it looks to me as if he had been a bit overtrained. I heard Jack recommending him to put a monkey on him; but though Jack knows a thing or two I don't always take his advice in racing matters. I expect it's six for himself and half-a-dozen for his friends, like most of them, eh?"

"I know so little of these things," replied Lady Ilfracombe. "Is the Derby a great race for betting on?"

The other turned and looked at her with surprise.

"Is the Derby a race for betting on?" she repeated.

"My dear Lady Ilfracombe, men lose fortunes over it. They're mad, I tell them, perfectly mad. No one likes spending money more than I do; but to throw it away by the thousand! Why, it spells ruin for the majority, that's all."

"I hope Ilfracombe will not be reckless," said Nora. anxiously. "I sometimes think he is a little disposed to be so over cards and those sorts of games."

"If he's with Jack Portland, he's bound to 'go the pace,'" returned Lady Bowmant, laughing. "Upon my word, I sometimes think that man's mad. Have you ever seen him at baccarat, Lady Ilfracombe?"

"Who? What?" said Nora, who was vainly trying to follow her husband's movements. "Mr. Portland? No."

"It's a caution," said her companion. "I've had to positively drag Sir Archibald away from him sometimes, for fear he should get up from the table without a halfpenny. But it's a lovely game. So much excitement. We are at it at Usk Hall sometimes till four in the morning. We are terrible gamblers up there."

"See!" cried the Duchess, standing up in the drag; "they're off!"

After which they spent a couple of very fatiguing hours watching the various races, and jotting down the first, second and third winners on their cards, during which time the men did not come near them, so occupied were they by the business of the betting-ring and

the excitement provided for them there. When it was at last all over, and their party returned to the drag, Nora observed that Ilfracombe was looking very flushed, and talking very fast, a sufficiently unusual circumstance with him to attract her notice. Mr. Portland, on the contrary, seemed to take things much more coolly; whilst the baronet had lost some of his hilariousness, and Lord Moberly was congratulating himself that he had not been persuaded to back the favourite.

"Well, and how have you all fared?" cried the duchess gaily, as they came within hailing distance.

"Sir Archibald, I feel certain you have been making a fool of yourself!" exclaimed his wife. "I can see it in the set of your tie. Very well. Back you go to Usk to-morrow, and you'll have to put up with mutton and potatoes till we've recouped ourselves. Now, what have you lost? Out with it!"

"Nonsense, Dolly, nonsense," replied the baronet, as he tried to evade her scrutiny. "A mere trifle, I assure you; not worth thinking about. When did you ever know me make a fool of myself over races?"

"Scores of times," replied her ladyship decidedly, as she whispered in his ear.

Nora did not ask any questions, nor make any remarks, but she gazed at her husband in a wistful way as if she would read from his features whether he had been lucky or otherwise. Ilfracombe did not

voluntarily look her way; but after a while he felt the magnetism of her glance, and raised his eyes to hers. The silent anxiety he read in them seemed to annoy him. He frowned slightly, and affecting unusual hilarity, climbed to his seat and seized the reins.

"Now for a good scamper back to town!" he exclaimed. "We must not let the riff-raff get ahead of us, or we shall be smothered in dust. Are you tired, darling?" he continued over his shoulder to his wife; "or would you like to go to the Oaks on Friday? What do you think of our national race-course and our national game?"

"I have been very much amused. I liked it very much," answered Nora in a conventional manner; but the tone of her voice did not convey much satisfaction. But as Ilfracombe and she were dressing for a big dinner-party, to which they were engaged that evening, she crept to his side and asked him shyly,—

"Did you lose much to-day, Ilfracombe? I am sure you lost, or you would have told me the amount of your winnings. But was it *very* much?"

"I was pretty hard hit over 'The Cardinal,'" he answered; "but nothing to howl over."

"Why did you take Mr. Portland's advice?" she said. "He always makes you lose."

"Not at all," replied her husband; "Jack is the best

adviser I have. Everyone must lose at times. It's absurd to suppose you can always win."

"Then why doesn't he lose also?" said Nora boldly. "Why doesn't he give you the same advice he follows himself?"

"My darling child, you know nothing of such matters, and I don't want you to do so. They concern men only. And look here, Nora—I don't want to say anything unkind; but I would rather you did not interfere with my winnings or my losings. They are essentially my own affair. Trust me to take care of myself. And now, if you are ready, we had better go."

After which Nora was sharp enough to see that she would only make a bad matter worse by attempting to set Ilfracombe against Jack Portland, and that her only plan was to watch and wait, until the time came when she might be able to influence her husband openly.

He loved her, but he was too easily led by a stronger mind than his own, and he was too loyal to believe that his intimate friend, who shared all his good things at his pleasure, could plot to aggrandise himself at his expense.

She had brought it on herself, Nora said inwardly, and she must bear the penalty as best she might.

A few days after the Derby, Sir Archibald and Lady Bowmant called upon her, and she returned their

visit. She thought Lady Bowmant very clever and amusing, but she little dreamt the acquaintanceship would lead to a close and sudden intimacy. She was astonished, therefore, one morning, by her husband telling her that he had met the baronet at his club the night before, and that he had extended a most cordial invitation for them to go down to Usk Hall during the time that Jack Portland was to be there.

"To Usk Hall?" said Nora, with surprise. "But, Ilfracombe, we do not know the Bowmants sufficiently well to go and stay with them. I have only seen her three times in all."

"What does that signify?" replied her husband. They're awfully jolly people; you said so yourself, and Jack says they keep it up royally at Usk Hall. The Prince of Huhm-Hessetal is to be there, and no end of nice people. You'll receive a proper invitation from Lady Bowmant to-morrow or next day, and I see no reason why we should not accept it."

"I thought you had agreed to join your mother's party at Wiesbaden," said the countess dubiously.

"Oh, hang my mother's party!" exclaimed Ilfracombe irritably. "A lot of old fogies together. What fun should we get out of that? I only said something about seeing her there, just to quiet her. I never meant to go. Besides, we can go abroad afterwards if you wish it. But neither of us have ever seen Wales—

a most beautiful country, and the Bowmants' is just the sort of house to suit us. Lots of horses for you to ride and drive, and salmon fishing for me; and—well, all I can say is, that I wish to go."

"Of course, then, we shall go," replied his wife quietly.

But, when the invitation actually arrived, she made one more appeal to the earl to keep her out of the way of Jack Portland.

"Ilfracombe," she said, going to seek him, with the letter from Lady Bowmant in her hand, "have you quite made up your mind? Am I really to tell these people that we will go to Usk Hall and stay with them?"

"Of course. Why not? Haven't we decided to accept the invitation?" he demanded.

"*You* have, I know, but I feel sure it will prove a disappointment to both of us. You will call me silly, but I have such a presentiment that this visit will end in some terrible trouble for us. Is it only fancy, do you think," added Nora, with unusual softness in her voice and manner, "or may it not be a warning for us not to go?"

"A warning! Rubbish!" exclaimed the earl, as he kissed her troubled eyes. "Now, my darling you *shall* go if only to prove what a little goose you are. *A warning!* I know what you're thinking of. You're

afraid I shall succumb to the charms of the fascinating Lady Bowmant. Well, she is a flirt, there is no doubt of that, and she is setting her cap at me rather hard; but don't be afraid, little woman. Your husband is not such a fool as he looks, and he means you to go with him to Usk Hall."

CHAPTER V.

So Lady Ilfracombe gave in with a good grace, and the note of invitation was duly answered and accepted. It was a proof of Nora's growing interest in the earl, that she had quite left off trying to wield her power over him in little things. It was not in her nature ever to sink down into a very submissive wife—a meaningless echo of her husband, water to his wine; but she was learning to yield her own wishes gracefully in deference to his, and in this instance, as we know, she was too much afraid of Jack Portland to press the point. He had told her plainly that if she interfered between him and Lord Ilfracombe, she would do it at her cost, and from what she had heard of the *ménage* at Usk Hall, both from its owners and himself, she felt pretty sure their own invitation had been sent at Mr. Portland's instigation, and that he had a purpose in having it sent. He was not satisfied with having fleeced her husband all through the winter, he would drain his pockets still further at the Bowmants; in fact, she had no doubt now that he looked to the earl as the chief means of his subsistence. And till she had found some way of out-

witting him—until she had that packet of letters, the contents of which she so much dreaded her husband seeing, in her own hands, Nora said to herself, with a sigh, that she must endure Mr. Portland's insolence and chicanery. They had only been asked to the Hall for a week for two, and they intended to limit their visit to a week. If she could only have foreseen what that week would bring forth. It was a notable fact that Jack Portland had never tried to rouse the countess's anger or jealousy by an allusion to Nell Llewellyn and her former influence over the earl. Indeed, he had not even mentioned her name before Nora. The reason of this was, not because he respected her wifehood or herself, but because the remembrance of Nell was a sore one with him. He had never cared the least bit for Miss Abinger. He had thought her a very jolly sort of girl, with plenty of "go" in her—a great flirt—very fast—very smart, and slightly verging on the improper. She was a great source of amusement to him whilst he stayed in Malta, and he had encouraged her in all sorts of "larks," chiefly for the fun of seeing how far she would go. When their conduct had commenced to give rise to scandal in Valetta, and his sister, Mrs. Loveless, had spoken very gravely to him on the subject, he had sought to make the *amende honourable* by proposing for the young lady's hand. But Sir Richard Abinger had rejected his with scorn. *He*—an im-

pecunious adventurer, who lived from hand to mouth, and had no settled employment, presume to propose to marry his daughter Nora, and drag her down with himself—he had never heard of such a piece of impudence in his life before. So Mr. Jack Portland, having done the correct thing (as the lady said when she went to church on Sunday and found there was to be no service), made haste out of Malta again, and the place knew him no more. The rest of the story has been told. Both of them had only been playing at love, and neither of them was hurt. Had it not been for those unfortunately bold unmaidenly letters which remained in Mr. Portland's possession, Nora would long ago have forgotten all about the matter.

But there had been something in Nell Llewellyn, fallen woman though she was, that had made a much deeper impression on the heart of Mr. Portland, if, indeed, he possessed such an article. He had not proposed to marry her—it was not much in his way to consider marriage a necessary accompaniment to respectability; but, had Nell made marriage a condition of their union, he would have yielded to her wishes sooner or later. There was something about her grand devotion to Ilfracombe that attracted his worldly nature, that was used to associate with the most mercenary of her sex; and when she blazed out at him in her passionately indignant manner, repudiating with scorn the

idea of his advances, he admired her still more. He thought Ilfracombe a fool to have given up the one woman for the other, but he would have been the last man to have told him so. He was not going to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. And a very disagreeable feeling had been engendered in him by the knowledge of Nell's supposed fate. He did not want to mention her name, nor to think of her after that. It was a painful reminiscence which he did his best to drown in the distractions of cards and wine. Things were in just this condition when they all journeyed up to Usk together, and Mr. Portland's portmanteau and plaids were carried over to the rooms at Panty-cuckoo Farm. Nell was like a wild creature after she had discovered for certain who their owner was. To meet Mr. Portland, of all men in the world, would seal her fate. Where could she fly in order to hide herself from him? what do to avoid the contact of his presence? She dared not leave the house for fear of meeting him; she was afraid even to leave her own room lest he should have taken it into his head to explore the dairy or bakehouse. Her mother did not know what had come to her. She grew quite cross at last, and thought it must be the arrival of the grand folks at the Hall that had made her daughter so flighty and useless and forgetful.

"Just as I want all the help you can give me," she

grumbled, "and it's little enough use you are to me at the best of times, you get one of your lardy-dardy, high-flier fits on, and go shivering and shaking about the house, as if you expected to meet a ghost in the passage or the cellar. Now, what made you run away in that flighty fashion just now, when you were in the middle of doing the lodgers' rooms? I went in expecting to find them finished, and there were half the things upset and you nowhere."

"I thought I heard one of the gentlemen coming across the grass, and so I left the room till he should be gone again."

"But why, my lass? They won't eat you. They're both as nice-spoken gentlemen as ever I see. And you must have met plenty of gentlefolk up in London town. It isn't as if you were a country-bred girl, and too frightened to open your mouth. However, if you don't like to take charge of the rooms, I'll do it myself. But why won't you go out a bit instead? Here's Hugh been over every evening, and you won't stir for him. I hope you are not carrying-on with Hugh, for a bit of fun, Nell, for he's a good lad as ever stepped, and a minister into the bargain, and it would be most unbecoming in you. You must go for a walk with him this evening, like a good lass."

"Not if I don't feel inclined," replied Nell haughtily. "Hugh Owen has no right to look aggrieved if I fancy

walking by myself. Men think a deal too much of themselves in my opinion."

"Ah, well, my lass, you must have your own way; but I hope you won't play fast and loose with Hugh Owen, for you'll never get a husband at this rate. I said, when you first came home, that I'd look higher than him for you, but you're not the girl you were then. You've lost more than a bit of your beauty, Nell, since you had the fever, and it's ten to one if it will ever come back again. And now that father is so down about the farm rent being raised, and talks in that pitiful way about leaving the country, or going to the workhouse, I think you might go farther and fare worse, than Hugh Owen."

"Very well, mother, I'll think about it," the girl would say, more to put an end to the discussion than anything else, and she would wander away from the farm, keeping well to the back of the Hall, and ready to dart off like a hare, if she saw any chance of encountering strangers. Whilst Nell was leading this kind of hide-and-seek life, the festivities at the Hall were going on bravely. They began, as the old housekeeper had said, as soon as breakfast had concluded, and were kept up till dawn the following morning. A few hours were certainly devoted to eating, drinking and sleeping, and a few more to fishing, riding and driving; but the intervals were filled with cards, smoke and drink, till

Nora opened her eyes in astonishment, and wondered if she had got into a club in mistake for a private house. Her hostess appeared quite used to that sort of thing, and entered into it with avidity. She played whist or baccarat as well as anyone there, and could sip her brandy and soda, and smoke her Turkish cigarette with the keenest enjoyment. She began to think that Lady Ilfracombe was rather slow after a day or two, and, indeed, Nora's fastness, such as it was, looked quite a tame, uninteresting thing beside that of Lady Bowmant's. So she fell naturally to the company of the other ladies who were staying there, and her husband seemed pleased it should be so, and more than once whispered to her that the whole concern was "a bit too warm" for him, and they would certainly "cut it" at the end of the week. All the same, he played night after night with his hosts and their guests, and seemed to be enjoying himself with the best of them. The other lady visitors, of whom one or two bore rather a shady character (though of this fact Nora was entirely ignorant), were ready to avail themselves of all the luxuries provided for them, but that did not deter them from saying nasty things about Lady Bowmant behind her back, which struck Lady Ilfracombe as being particularly ill-bred and ungrateful.

"My dear Lady Ilfracombe," said one of them to her, "you know she was positively *nobody*—a grocer's

daughter, I believe, or something equally horrible; and this old fool, Sir Archibald, was smitten by her red cheeks and ringlets, and married her six months after his first wife's death. She is just the sort of person to take an old dotard's fancy. Don't you agree with me?"

"Well, I am not sure if I do, Mrs. Lumley," replied Nora. "I think Lady Bowmant is exceedingly good-natured, and no worse in her manners than many women whom I have met who could boast of much higher birth. I know nothing of our hostess's ancestry, so I can only speak of her as I find her."

"That is not saying much!" exclaimed the other, laughing. "To see her go on with that poor Prince of Huhm-Hessetal is enough to make one die of laughing. With his broken English, and her attempts at French, it is as good as a play. And the open way in which she flatters him. He will think he is a little god before he leaves Usk."

Their ill-nature made Nora better inclined than she would otherwise have been towards the object of it, and she found that Lady Bowmant, though decidedly fast and vulgar, was so kind-hearted and frank with it all, that she could not help liking her much better than she did her detractors.

"I know I'm an awful goth," she would observe con-

fidentially to Nora. "But I can't speak a word of French, and I want this poor prince, who can hardly speak a word of English, to feel at home with us, so I 'butter' him up as well as I know how. You see, Lady Ilfracombe, I wasn't born to the purple. My father was a poor clergyman—ah, you may stare, but it is an accredited fact that clergymens' children are always the worst—I have three brothers, the greatest scamps you ever knew. They ride like devils and they swear like jockeys; and, if you put them into a drawing-room, they don't know what on earth to do with their arms and legs, but not one of them would tell a lie or do a dishonourable action to save his life. No more would I. I am quite aware that I'm not fit to be a baronet's wife, but my old man chose me, and so I do the best I can. And between you and me and the post," continued Lady Bowmant, laughing, "I think, considering how I was brought up, that I manage very well. The people down at our place thought I should eat peas with my knife, or something pretty of that sort, the first time I went out to a decent dinner, but I didn't, and here I am, you see, with a real prince for my guest, to say nothing of you and Lord Ilfracombe. Oh, I'm afraid to tell you how much I admire your husband, for fear that you should think I want to 'mash' him; but he really is *too* handsome for anything. I do so love fair men. I told Sir Archibald yesterday, that if the earl had not

been married, I couldn't have resisted a flirtation with him."

"Have one now," cried Nora merrily. "Don't mind me. It is quite the fashion for married men to flirt now-a-days; and a lady in town told me once that she should feel quite hurt if the women did not consider her husband worth pulling caps for."

"Now, you're just the sort of girl I like," said Lady Bowmant admiringly. "I suppose it isn't good manners to call you a 'girl,' just as if you were nobody. Still you are younger than I am, so you must forgive me. You love horses, too. I can see you're regularly plucky by the way you handled my little mare yesterday, and I should love to make you as good a whip as myself. I may say *that,* you know, for my brothers and I rode and drove from little children, and it is the only thing I can do well."

"Except play cards and smoke cigarettes," put in Nora slyly.

"Oh, you think that all very dreadful; I can hear it from the tone of your voice," replied her good-humoured hostess. "But my old man doesn't mind it, and he's the principal person to please, isn't he? I don't know what he would do at Usk, dear old chap! if I couldn't take a hand at whist now and then. I have my horses, you see, but he is getting a bit too puffy for horse exercise, so he would be dreadfully dull

without his little game in the evening—oh, yes, I know what you are going to say, Lady Ilfracombe—and in the mornings, too. Well, I know it is dreadfully dissipated, but it has grown into a sort of habit with us, till we cannot do anything else. But will you come round the village for a spin with me in my tandem? I can show you some beautiful country, as well as some beautiful cobs. Sir Archibald has made it the fashion to deride my tandem, because once a stupid little child ran right under the leader's feet and got a few scratches; but you must not believe all he says. Beau and Belle are two little beauties, and I am sure you will not be afraid to sit behind them."

"I am quite sure also," replied Nora, and she went at once to get herself ready for the drive.

"You mustn't be surprised to see we are going alone," said Lady Bowmant, as they met again in the hall. "I never take a groom with me unless I intend calling anywhere. They are no earthly use, stuck up behind, listening to every word you say and retailing it in the servants' hall. Besides, I never knew a man do anything for me that I wasn't quite as well able to do for myself. So we'll have no back seat, if it's all the same to you."

"Pray don't alter any of your accustomed rules for my sake," replied the countess, as they emerged into the open together.

The dappled-cream cobs were a picture, with their hogged manes and close-docked tails. They were as perfectly matched in appearance as two horses could possibly be; but their tempers were the very opposite of one another. Beau was a darling, or, rather let us say he would have been, if Belle would have let him alone to do his business by himself. He occupied the shafts, and stood like a rock, with his forefeet well planted and his neck curved, and his eyes looking neither to the right hand nor the left. But Belle, like most of her sex, could not leave a man in peace, and thought it a bad compliment to herself if he kept steady. So she tossed her pretty head and neck incessantly, and threw the foam from her bit, in her impatience to be off. Lady Bowmant, who was nothing if she was not a whip, mounted to her seat and gathered up the "ribbons" in the most artistic manner, whilst Nora placed herself beside her.

"Let go!" shouted her ladyship, and off they set, Belle curvetting down the drive as if she were dancing, whilst good little Beau threw all his soul into his work, and pulled the dog-cart gallantly along.

"Come, that won't do," cried Lady Bowmant, as she touched up Belle and made her do her share; "you're not going to leave all the hard work to Beau, miss, not if I know it. Pull up, like a good girl, and leave off fooling. Aren't they a pair of darlings?"

she continued, addressing Nora. "I value them above everything, because they were one of my dear old man's wedding presents to me; but they are distinctly precious in themselves. Here we are at the commencement of Usk, and now you'll see some fun, Lady Ilfracombe. See how all the people—boys and girls, men and women—fly before me, tumbling over each other to get out of my way. I might be King Herod coming to massacre the innocents, by the manner they scuttle out of the road. Whoa, my beauty; there, go gently, gently, Belle. For heaven's sake, don't kick up any of your shines here, or they'll call the policeman. Have you heard that I have twice been stopped and once fined for furious driving, Lady Ilfracombe?"

"No, indeed, I haven't," replied Nora, who was enjoying the fun immensely.

On they flew through the village and out on the open road, the cobs having now settled seriously to their work, and skimming over the ground like a pair of swallows.

When they had driven half the way into Newport, Lady Bowmant turned their heads homewards, and trotted them gently up a long hill. She had them so completely under her control, that it was a pleasure to see her handle the reins and guide them with a flick of her whip.

"I'd give anything to drive as you do," said Lady

Ilfracombe, with genuine admiration of the prowess of her companion. "I should not be afraid whatever happened whilst you had the reins."

Lady Bowmant looked pleased, but she answered lightly,—

"Dear me, it is nothing, only practice. I bet you could manage them quite as well as I do if you tried. They are thoroughly well trained, you see, and that's half the battle; and they are thoroughbred into the bargain. You can do twice as much with a well-bred horse as you can with an outsider. Their mouths are like velvet. You could guide them with a bit of string; and as for their jumping about a little, that's only their fun, you know; there's no vice in it; in fact, there's not a grain of vice between the two of them. I don't know what I should do without the darlings. They are the very joy of my life."

At this juncture they came across a cottage, which seemed to recall something to Lady Bowmant's mind.

"By the way," she exclaimed suddenly, "I wonder how Phil Farley is, or if the poor old man is still alive. He used to be a *protégé* of mine last summer, and I often visited him; but I have quite forgotten to ask after him since my return. Would you mind my jumping down for a minute, Lady Ilfracombe? I *should* like just to inquire how the old man is."

"Of course not," said her companion cordially.

"You will hold the reins for me? You will not be afraid of them?"

"Not in the least," cried Nora, as she took the ribbons from Lady Bowmant's hands. "Don't hurry yourself on my account. I shall not mind waiting for you at all."

"Thank you so much," replied her hostess, as, after having stroked the necks of her horses, and kissed their noses, she disappeared into the cottage.

Nora was rather pleased to be left in sole charge. She had been longing to have a turn at the cobs herself. She had been watching Lady Bowmant's actions very closely, and noticed with what ease she guided the little horses—how quickly they obeyed her voice and the touch of her hand; and had been wishing all the time to try driving them. She had never handled a tandem in her life before, but she was a plucky girl, and her very ignorance made her bold. So, as soon as Lady Bowmant had disappeared under the low roof of the cottage, she gathered up the reins, and gave the leader a slight flick with her whip. Belle felt the difference of the hands at once; she was not used to that sort of thing. The lash of the whip had fallen on her hind quarters, and she threw out her heels at once, and struck her stable companion, Beau, full in the face. Beau resented the action; he felt he hadn't deserved it of Belle, the best part of whose work he had

taken on himself all the morning; so he swerved a little aside, and then broke into a smart trot, which the coquettish Belle soon persuaded him to change into a canter, and in another moment, before their driver knew what they were after, the pair were tearing off in the direction of their stables as fast as ever they could lay their feet to the ground. Nora tugged and tugged at the reins without producing the slightest effect on them. She was very inexperienced, but she could not help seeing that the cobs were running away, and altogether beyond her control. She grew very pale; but she held on to the reins like grim death, and just managed to steer them clear of a donkey-cart which they seemed disposed to take in their stride. She began already to wonder what she should do when they came to the drive gates of Usk Hall, which curved sharply round to the left. They would assuredly bolt through them, she thought, and upset the dog-cart, in all probability, against the postern of the gate. Perhaps they would kill her from the collision and the fall. The thought that flashed through her mind at that juncture was, "How would Ilfracombe take the news of her death?—what would he do without her?"

"I'm afraid I'm in for it," she said to herself. "It's all up a tree with me. I'm bound for kingdom come, as sure as a gun."

Even at that moment of danger Nora could not be

sentimental, though she felt the force of the situation perhaps as much as if she had been praying to heaven to avert her doom. On flew the cobs through the village, though fortunately without running over anybody, and down a narrow lane, on the way to the Hall. There was a sharp curve about the middle of it. As Nora reached the point, someone—a woman—suddenly rose from the bank which skirted the road, and stood full in the way of the flying steeds, catching with her hand at the reins of Belle as she passed. Nora thought the horses were stopped, but the next moment they started off again; but the woman was not to be seen—she had fallen.

"My God," thought Nora, "I have killed somebody. They have run over her."

The arrest, however, slight as it was, had had its effect. Belle and Beau suddenly stood still as rocks, and Nora leapt at once from the cart and approached the stranger, who was just scrambling to her feet.

"Oh, how good, how brave of you!" she cried. "If you had not done that they might have dashed the cart and me to pieces against the gate. But have you hurt yourself? Are you sure you are all right?"

"I think I am," replied the young woman, as she rose to her feet. They only knocked me down; the wheels did not come near me."

"Thank God for that!" cried Nora earnestly. "I

should never have forgiven myself if you had been hurt."

She gazed at the face of the country girl in amazement, for she thought it was the most beautiful she had ever seen. And so it was they first met—Nell and Nora.

CHAPTER VI.

BUT as she looked at Nell, Nora saw a stain of blood showing through the sleeve of her light print dress.

"But you *are* hurt. You are bleeding!" she exclaimed with horror. "Oh, I *am* so sorry. What can I do for you?"

Nell regarded the blood-stain with calm indifference.

"It is nothing, my lady. I presume I am speaking to Lady Bowmant," she added, with a courtesy that struck Nora as uncommon with her class.

"Oh, no, I am not Lady Bowmant. I am only one of her visitors. I was driving with her, and she went into a cottage and left me with the carriage, and these two little brutes ran away with me. But how am I to get them home? I dare not take the reins again for my life. How far is it to the Hall?"

"Oh, the Hall is only round the corner, madam," answered Nell; "I would help you to lead them, but—" Here she hesitated, not knowing how to proceed; then, as if a sudden thought had struck her, she stood on

tip-toe and looked over the hedge and called loudly, "Tom."

"Yes, miss," replied a hedger coming at her call.

"Come round here at once and lead these horses up to the Hall for this lady. They are beyond her control." Then addressing Nora, she continued—"You had better get in again, madam, and this man will see you safely to the Hall. You will want to send the carriage back for Lady Bowmant."

"Oh, yes, indeed. What will she think of my disappearing in this extraordinary manner? Thank you so much. I don't know what I should have done without your assistance. But I am so troubled about your arm. I am sure you are horribly hurt," said Nora, as she mounted into the dog-cart.

"Please don't say anything more about it," replied Nell; "at the worst it will only be a bruise; you need not be afraid now, madam. This man is rough, but he understands horses, and is very steady."

And so saying Nell slipped through a break in the hedge and was gone.

Lady Ilfracombe arrived safely at the Hall, and a groom was at once despatched to pick up Lady Bowmant, whom he met half-way between old Farley's cottage and the house, laughing heartily to herself over the disappearance of her friend and her carriage, having made a shrewd guess that Beau and Belle had taken

her home, whether she would or not. The occurrence formed the chief topic of conversation at the luncheon-table, and Nora was full of the beautiful country girl she had met and who had shown so much courage in stopping the runaway cobs.

"I must make her some little acknowledgment of the service she rendered me, mustn't I, Ilfracombe?" she asked her husband. "I might have been killed, if it hadn't been for her, and, or still worse, smashed Lady Bowmant's pretty trap."

"Of course you must, darling," replied the earl. "We can never repay her for what she did for us."

"But I don't know her name!" exclaimed Nora, "though I suppose she lives somewhere over the way because she ordered the old hedger to lead the cobs home, as if he were her servant. Oh, she is such a pretty young woman. Her face is perfectly lovely. I think it was because I was so occupied gazing at her, that I forgot to ask her name."

"A very pretty girl," repeated Sir Archibald. "I think that must be one of the Llewellyns. They're the prettiest girls for a good many miles round Usk. Isn't that the case, Dolly," he said, addressing his wife.

"Well, I've only seen the married one," she replied, "but I know they bear that reputation. The father is a very handsome old man."

At the name of Llewellyn, Lady Ilfracombe looked

up quickly, and the earl and Jack Portland exchanged glances with each other.

"What is there in that to surprise you?" demanded their host, mistaking the meaning of their looks. "Wales is rather celebrated for beauty, you know; at least we won't allow that England, Ireland or Scotland can hold a candle to us in that respect."

Ilfracombe did not seem disposed to answer, so Jack Portland took upon himself to be spokesman.

"I have not the slightest doubt of your superiority, Sir Archibald," he said, "and was not the least surprised to hear you say so. I only thought I had heard the name before."

"What! of Llewellyn? *I* should be surprised if you had not. We are all Llewellyns, or Owens, or Lewises, or Thomases in Wales. It's one of the commonest names here. I've about half a dozen Llewellyns amongst my tenants. But this man's daughters are really uncommonly handsome. Fine tall girls, with splendidly cut features. By Jove, it's a pleasure to go to the farm only to catch a glimpse of one of them."

"And that's why you're always going over there then," cried Lady Bowmant. "I've caught you at last, my gentleman. No more Panty-cuckoo Farm for you. I'll take good care of that."

"Panty-cuckoo Farm! Is that where my rustic

beauty lives?" exclaimed Nora. "What a fanciful name! What does it mean? Panty-cuckoo."

"The dell of the cuckoo, or the cuckoo's dell," replied Lady Bowmant. "Yes, isn't it pretty? It's the farm just across the road, where Mr. Portland and Mr. Lennox sleep. Mrs. Llewellyn is a dear old woman. I always go to her in any perplexity. She supplies us with all the extra eggs and chickens and butter we may want. Lady Ilfracombe, you *should* see her dairy; it's a perfect picture, and everything about the farm is so quaint and old, and so faultlessly clean and neat. She and her husband are quite model tenants. I always take my friends to pay them a visit."

After luncheon, when the rest of the party had separated to pursue their own devices, Nora crept after her husband.

"Ilfracombe," she whispered, "supposing this should be one of *her* sisters?"

"Whose? What are you talking about?" he said rather curtly.

"You know. The Miss Llewellyn you have told me of."

"What will you get into your head next? What likelihood is there of such a thing? Who ever said she had any sisters, or came from Usk? Didn't you hear Sir Archibald say the place was peopled with Llewellyns? Please don't get any absurd fancies into your head.

The name is distasteful to me as it is! I wish we had not heard it. Now, I suppose there will be a grand fuss made of the service this girl rendered you, and the whole family will be paraded out for our especial benefit. You have been a good friend to me in this business, Nora. Get me out of this unnecessary annoyance, if you can."

"Of course, I will," replied his wife readily. "You sha'n't be bothered if I can help it, Ilfracombe. You were a dear, good boy to make a clean breast to me of the matter, and I'll see you don't suffer for it. I must remunerate the young woman or her parents for what she did this morning, so I'll just go to the farm this afternoon by myself and get it quietly over. How much should I offer her? What do you think? Will five pounds be enough?"

"I think so; but that is as you feel about it. But Nora, darling, you needn't mention our names, need you? We shall be gone probably before they have a chance of finding out anything about us, and though I don't suppose there is any chance of their being related to —to—*her*—yet if they should be—you understand?"

Lady Ilfracombe went up to her husband and kissed his anxious face.

"I understand," she replied, and then left the room. There was a slight summer shower that afternoon, and the rest of the Hall party had already settled them-

selves to spend it indoors. A noisy set were occupied in the billiard-room, chatting and laughing over their game, and the more respectable scandalmongers were working, reading, and taking away their neighbours' characters in the seclusion of the drawing-room. Lady Ilfracombe donned a large straw hat, and, taking an umbrella in her hand, set forth for Panty-cuckoo Farm, without observation. She soon found her way through the white gate, and down the hilly slope, and found the latched wicket that guarded the bricked pathway up to the house. As soon as she placed her hand upon the latch, Mrs. Llewellyn, as was her custom at the approach of any visitors, came quickly forward to save her the trouble of opening it, and give her a welcome to Panty-cuckoo Farm.

"Walk in, my lady," she exclaimed cordially. "This way if you please," and ushering Nora into the parlour she dusted a chair with her apron, and set it before her.

"Oh, what a lovely room," cried Nora enthusiastically, as she gazed around her. "What dear old carved oak. Why, it must be centuries old; and what beautiful china. Don't leave me here alone, pray, or I shall steal half your things. I suppose you are Mrs. Llewellyn. Well, you have the very jolliest room I ever saw in my life."

Mrs. Llewellyn was completely won over by this

praise. She was very proud, as has been said before, of her room and oak and china, and nothing pleased her better than to see them appreciated.

"Many have told me so before, ma'am; but I am glad you like them. My husband and I have been offered pounds and pounds sometimes for these very things by the ladies and gentlemen who have visited Usk; but we could never make up our minds to sell them. They belonged to our great-great-grandparents, and there they will be till our time comes to leave them behind us for the benefit of our daughters."

"Your daughters, Mrs. Llewellyn. That reminds me of the purpose of my visit to you. A young woman, whom I believe to be one of your daughters, did me a very great service this morning. She stopped a pair of runaway horses for me, and saved, perhaps, my life."

"Ay, that was my eldest girl. She told us of it; but it is nothing to make a fuss about, ma'am. Country girls are more used to do such things than town ladies. There's not a girl in Usk but what would do her best to stop a horse. I hope you weren't hurt at all yourself, ma'am."

"Not a bit; but your daughter was. I saw the blood-stain on the sleeve of her dress. I am afraid the horse touched her arm with his hoof when he threw her down."

"It can't be over much," said Mrs. Llewellyn quietly, "for she never said anything to me about it, though now you mention it, ma'am, I *did* notice a bit of blood on her sleeve too. Lor', it's nothing. I thought she got it in the henhouse maybe, or the larder. It isn't worth speaking of."

"But I am quite of a different opinion, I can assure you, Mrs. Llewellyn, and I came over expressly to tell you so. May I see your daughter? Is she in the house?"

"Certainly, ma'am, if you wish it. I'll send her to you at once, and perhaps you would do us the honour to take a cup of tea whilst you wait. Lady Bowmant, she always has a cup of tea when she comes here. She says she has quite a fancy for our cream."

"I will with pleasure, Mrs. Llewellyn. Indeed I have heard such grand accounts of your famous dairy that I am quite anxious to taste its produce."

The farmer's wife bridled under the compliment, and turned with the intention of leaving the room; but as she reached the door she said,—

"May I take the liberty of asking your name, madam?"

Nora was just about to give her maiden name, remembering her husband's injunction, when she noticed she had withdrawn the glove of her left hand, displaying her wedding-ring and jewelled keepers, so with her

quick wit, which never found her at a disadvantage, she borrowed the name of one of the ladies, who was even at that moment taking away hers in the Hall drawing-room, and answered, "Mrs. Lumley."

"Thank you, madam," said the old woman, as she curtseyed and withdrew. In another moment she was adjuring Nell to go down to the parlour and hear what the lady from the Hall had to say to her.

"Oh, mother, why did you say I was indoors?" she exclaimed fretfully. "What should she want to see me for? You know how I hate seeing strangers."

"Well, my lass, it is not my fault. The lady, Mrs. Lumley is her name, wants to thank you for what you did this morning, and for my part I think it is very pretty-mannered of her to come over herself when she might have written to express her gratitude. But here she is, and you must go down and see her whilst I make her a cup of tea. She says she heard so much of our dairy that she's quite anxious to taste our cream. She's as nice-spoken a young lady as ever I met, and I'm sure she has good intentions towards you."

"But I don't *want* to be thanked," repeated Nell in the same tone. "It was the simplest thing in the world; anyone would have done it. I only caught at the reins as the horses passed me. What does she want to make a fuss about it for? It's over and done with. Why can't she leave it alone?"

"Well, my lass, I can't stay to answer all your testy questions. I must go and see that the kettle boils for the tea. Now, go down, there's a good girl. She's one of the Hall guests, and we mustn't offend them, you know."

So Nell smoothed her rippling hair, and went down to the parlour with a bad grace, and stood just inside the door, stiff as a soldier on duty, and without speaking a word. But Nora did not seem to perceive her mood. She thought her stiffness was meant for respect."

"Oh, Miss Llewellyn," she began, "I've come over expressly to see you, and thank you better than I could this morning for the great service you rendered me. Don't stand there, pray, but come here and sit down by me, and let me tell you how brave and courageous and good I think you were to do so much for a stranger."

Nell's haughty shyness was overcome by the cordiality of her new acquaintance. She sat down as she was asked to do, but not a feature of her beautiful face relaxed. She could not forget that she was speaking to a visitor from the Hall—that place which she had so much dreaded since she knew that Mr. Portland was staying there.

"I can't see the particular courage of it, Mrs. Lumley," she replied. "I was sauntering along inside

the hedge looking for some of my mother's turkey poults that had strayed from the yard when your horses came tearing along, and I put out my hand mechanically to stop them. You are making too much of my actions —indeed you are. Tom was only a few yards further on, clipping the hedges. He would have stopped them, and better than I did, and not been rolled so ignominiously in the dust," and Nell could not help smiling at the recollection.

"Ah, and you were kicked or something!" exclaimed Nora; "I saw the blood on your arm. And yet you will say it was of no consequence."

Nell rolled up the sleeve of her print dress, exposing her white, smooth arm. There was a long graze on it, and it was beginning to get discoloured.

"That is all," she said contemptuously. "You don't call *that* anything."

"But indeed I do," said Nora; "and it was ever so good of you to incur it for my sake. Besides, you don't consider the risk you ran. Because you happened to get off with a few bruises, it doesn't follow that it was not quite as brave of you to risk getting your leg broken or your head run over. And there is no saying what you did not save me from. No, no, Miss Llewellyn, you shall not put me off that way. You must let me offer you some little remuneration for your timely help. Don't imagine I think any money can

repay you for it, but perhaps you will buy yourself some little present to remind you of this day, and how grateful I am to you."

And Nora placed the five-pound note gently in Nell's hand as she spoke. Nell never opened it. It might have been for fifty pounds for ought she knew, but she took it up, folded as it was, and replaced it on her companion's lap.

"No, thank you, Mrs. Lumley," she said quietly. "You mean it kindly, I know, and I appreciate your intention, but I cannot take money from you for so slight a thing. My father would not like it; we are not in need of it, and I shall remember you and to-day quite well without it."

Nora felt hurt and annoyed—not with Nell, but herself. She ought to have known better than to offer such a very superior sort of young woman money. It was thoughtless of her—unpardonable. She thrust the offending bank-note into her pocket, and turning, took Nell's hand.

"Forgive me," she said, just as if she had known her for years. "I have been a fool. I ought to have seen that you were above such paltry considerations. You don't look like a farmer's daughter to me. You seem as if you had been used to much better things. Have you lived in Usk all your life?"

"No, not all my life," said Nell.

"Have you been a governess, then, or anything of that sort? You seem to have had such a very superior education," remarked Nora.

"Do you think so?" replied Nell.

She certainly seemed a very difficult sort of young woman to get on with. Nora hardly knew how to proceed. But then a sudden thought struck her (for hers was a generous nature), and hastily drawing a sapphire ring off her finger, she tried to put it on one of Nell's. It was one that the earl had given her—that he had been accustomed to wear himself. It was what is called a gipsy ring—a broad band of gold, in which three unusually fine, dark-blue, flawless sapphires were sunk—the only ring which Ilfracombe had worn before his marriage. He had put it on Nora's finger at Malta as soon as he was engaged to her, as proxy for one better suited to her slender hand, and she had refused to give it up again. Now it struck her that it would be just the sort of ring to present to a young woman whose hands were rather large and used to rough work. So she tried to put it on the third finger of Nell's left hand.

"They say it is unlucky to wear a ring on your wedding-finger till you are married," she said, laughing; "but I am sure, Miss Llewellyn, you are far too sensible a girl to mind an old superstition."

"But what are you doing?" asked Nell sharply, as

she drew her hand away. There, on her finger glittered the ring she knew so well—had seen so often on the hand of her lover in the olden days. She gazed at it for a moment, fascinated as a bird by the eye of a snake; and then, with a sharp cry, she dragged the jewel off again, and it rolled under the table and along the polished oak floor.

"Oh, my poor ring," cried the countess, somewhat offended at this determined repulse.

"Whose is it? Where did you get it?" exclaimed Nell, as she rose to her feet with flashing eyes and trembling limbs.

"Where did I get it?" echoed Nora, with amazement. "Why, I bought it, of course. Where should I have got it?"

"No, you didn't!" said Nell, panting. "It was given to you!"

"What an extraordinary girl you are," replied Nora, as she stooped to recover her ring. "If it *were* given to me, you may be sure I have every right to pass it on to you if I choose. But what makes you say so?"

"*Who* gave it you?" asked Nell, without apologising for her strange behaviour.

"My husband," replied Nora, without thinking.

"Your husband? Mr. Lumley? And from whom did *he* get it then?" persisted the farmer's daughter.

"Really, I don't see what right you have to question

me after this fashion," said Nora. "I don't know whom he got it from. The jewellers, I suppose. But pray don't let us say another word upon the subject. It is evident that, instead of giving you pleasure, I have done just the other thing. All my stupidity, I suppose. I thought, as you would not take money, that the ring would have been more acceptable to you, but I was mistaken. Now, pray don't be angry. Let us drop the subject altogether. Ah, here comes your mother with the tea-tray. Mrs. Llewellyn, your daughter and I have been having quite a little quarrel over this affair. She won't take money from me, and she won't take a present, so I don't know what to do. Perhaps you will be able to make her a little more reasonable after I have gone."

"Ah, ma'am, she's very queer at times, poor lass," said Mrs. Llewellyn, for Nell had taken the occasion of her entrance to escape to the upper storey again. "She's been so pulled-down and weakened by the fever, that father and I say we hardly know her. Sometimes I think she'll never be the same girl again as she was before she left home. But you mustn't think nothing more about giving her a present, ma'am. What she did for you, you was most heartily welcome to, as her father would say, too, if he was here. Sir Archibald has been a good landlord to us for many years past; and if he hadn't taken it into his head to raise the rent,

we shouldn't have anything to say against him. But pray let me give you a cup of tea, ma'am, with cream and sugar to your liking."

And, over the discussion of Mrs. Llewellyn's excellent tea, Nell, and her abrupt behaviour were spoken of no more. But Lady Ilfracombe, though she did not like to vex the earl by mentioning the subject to him, could not banish it from her mind for some time afterwards.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILST Nora was walking thoughtfully back to the Hall, Nell was raging up and down the circumscribed limits of her bedroom, with her heart and brain in a tumult of suspicion and suspense. "The ring! the ring!" was all she could say to herself. It *was* the earl's ring, she was sure of that—she had always seen it on his finger—had so often drawn it off playfully, and placed it on her own. She recognised the very colour of the sapphires; they were so darkly blue, and yet clear as a summer sea; she remembered Lord Ilfracombe having told her the gems were flawless, and had been presented in another form by an Eastern potentate to some ancestor of his, who had been Governor-General of India. She would have sworn to them amongst a thousand! How then had this woman, this Mrs. Lumley, got hold of them? Was she a friend of Ilfracombe's, and had he given them to her? Nell thought it unlikely. The earl had never been a *cavalier des dames;* besides, he was married now, and his family heirlooms belonged to his wife. At that her thoughts flew to Mr. Portland. *He* was at the bottom

of the mystery perhaps. He had obtained the jewel from Lord Ilfracombe, either by an appeal to the latter's generosity, or by his odious habit of gambling, laid a bet with the earl about it, or won it as a stake. And then he must have given it to this lady—this Mrs. Lumley. What was she to him then? Was their combined presence at the Hall by accident or design? Nell thirsted to learn the truth of it. She felt it a desecration to have seen *his* ring on the hand of another person, and to have had it offered to herself in that careless fashion, as if it were of no intrinsic value. The ring that she had known for so long—that had been clasped in her hand by day—that she had lain with her head on by night. Poor Nell sobbed aloud in the agony of remembrance, as she recalled the fact that she had no further part nor lot in it. It was something more than mere suspicion that was worrying her. We have a sixth sense, called intuition, which, as a rule, we pay too little attention to. The influences to which we have been subject, the experiences we have passed through, all leave a subtle something behind them, which is patent to the intuition of our acquaintances, as theirs is to us. We may not recognise it, but it guides, in a great measure, our feelings and ideas, our likes and dislikes. It was intuition that drew Lady Ilfracombe to Panty-cuckoo Farm, and made her conceive such an unusual interest in Nell Llewellyn. It was in-

tuition that made Nell shrink from the friendly advances of the woman who had supplanted her in the affections of her lover, and burn to discover the reason that she was in possession of his ring. It was fate—the fate that, laugh at it or despise it as we will, still goes on silently but surely, weaving the web of all our destinies—that had drawn these actors in the tragedy of life together to one meeting-place, to fulfil the appointed end of the drama which they had written for themselves. The Countess of Ilfracombe went back to Usk Hall rather depressed than otherwise, for it is not pleasant to have an intended kindness thrown back in your face; and intuition told her that there was something more beneath the surface of Nell's manner than she chose to let her know; and Nell Llewellyn was vexed with herself as well as the stranger, because intuition told her that Nora was not at fault, however the circumstances of her life might have become entangled with her own. She wished now that she had not been so hasty, that she had asked a few questions about the ring and where it came from. By that means she might have gained what she so longed for—news of Lord Ilfracombe—without betraying her own identity. Now that the opportunity was past, Nell blamed herself, and wished it might come over again. Was it possible that she could bring about another interview with the lady?—induce her once more to speak of her

gratitude for the service rendered her—and so bring the conversation round, without direct inquiry, to her refusal of the sapphire ring. Her next thought was, how should she gain speech of Mrs. Lumley without encountering Jack Portland? Nell thought it would be pretty safe to visit the Hall in the evening. The beautiful warm nights they were having then were very likely to tempt the ladies of the party to walk about the grounds after dinner, whilst she knew from experience that that was the very time the gentlemen would commence to play billiards or baccarat. If she went that way about eight o'clock that evening she might have a chance of encountering Mrs. Lumley; at all events, some force, of which Nell knew not the name, drew her that way, and, as soon as their early supper was over, she threw a light shawl over her head and stole out, as she told her mother, "for a breath of fresh air." The Hall stood on an eminence crowned with wood. To the back of it was a copse of fir trees, which formed an admirable shelter from the north wind, and extended down either side for some distance. It was under cover of this plantation that Nell approached the house. It was not so thick but that she could see from it if anyone was walking in the open grounds that surrounded the Hall, and it was on this plantation, naturally, that the back premises, through which she gained access to Mrs. Hody's apartments,

looked. The way to it, unless one used the drive, was through some large meadows belonging to the estate, and Nell had traversed the whole length of these and gained the back of the plantation, when she was startled by seeing the figure of a man approaching her. Her first impulse was to turn and fly, forgetting in her simplicity that it was the very mode to attract attention. She had turned her back upon the stranger, and was walking rapidly the other way, when she heard him say,—

"Don't let me frighten you away. You are quite welcome to walk here."

It was the voice of Lord Ilfracombe.

She would have known it amidst the assembled multitudes of earth, and the sound of it made her forget everything but himself. She forgot that he must suppose her to be dead. She forgot that he had voluntarily given her up, that he was a married man—everything but that he was there, and she loved him. At the sound of her lover's voice, as potent as the trump at the last day to rouse her slumbering soul, Nell turned sharply round, and cried in a tone of ecstasy,—

"Vernie! Oh, my Vernie!" and flew towards him.

She was the only person in the world who had ever called him by that name. Lord Ilfracombe's

father had died before he could remember, and ever since his babyhood he had been addressed, as is usual, by his title only. Even his doting mother and proud sisters had called him nothing else. To everybody, he had been Ilfracombe, and Ilfracombe alone. But when he became intimate with Nell, and took her about occasionally with him to Paris or Rome, it became necessary to use a little discretion, and he had entered their names on the travellers' books and passports as Mr. and Mrs. Vernon, which was his Christian name. So she had come to call him "Vernie" as a pet name, and he had let her do it, because it was just as well she should not be shouting "Ilfracombe" after him wherever they went. But the circumstance had identified her with the name, and when she cried "Vernie! Oh, my Vernie!" in response to his words, Lord Ilfracombe stood still—petrified, as though he had encountered a voice from heaven.

"Who is it? What do you want?" he answered, trembling.

But Nell left him in no doubt. She came flying to his breast, and threw her arms round him, and pressed her warm mouth on his, and displayed all the passion she had been wont to do when he returned to her after an absence from home.

"Vernie, my darling, my own darling!" she reiterated, gasping for breath, "Oh, I did not know you were

here—I did not know you were here! My God, I shall die with joy!"

"Nell," he uttered in an awed tone, "Nell, is this really you?"

"Yes, yes, it is I. Who else should it be? Who has ever loved you as your poor Nell?" and she embraced him anew.

"But—" said the earl, incredulously, "*who* was drowned then? They told me you were drowned, Nell. How has this mistake arisen, or have I been deceived by design?"

"Oh, Vernie, I *did* drown myself; that is, I tried to —I wanted to—I felt I could not live, my darling, without you or your love. What was there for me to live for, Vernie, when you were gone?"

All the earl's remorse—all the hard things he had thought of himself, and all the kind thoughts he had had of her, since he had learnt how they parted, rushed back upon his mind now, and he, too, forgot everything, except that his conscience had been relieved from an intolerable burden, and that the woman he held in his arms had loved him faithfully for many years.

He laid his mouth upon hers, and kissed her as warmly in return as ever he had done in the days gone by.

"Thank God, it is not true!" he exclaimed. "Oh,

my poor Nell, I have suffered hell in thinking you had died by your own hand for my sake."

"I, too, have been in hell," she whispered, "Oh, Vernie, why did you leave me? I loved you so."

"I was a brute," replied the earl, "an ungrateful, selfish brute; but I will make you amends for it, if I die."

What amends could he make her, except by giving her back the love he had seemed to withdraw? Nell thought of no other; she would have accepted no other. She held her heaven in her arms now—and all the troubles of life had faded away.

"Your love; your love! I only want your love, Vernie," she whispered.

"You have it, darling. You always had it," replied Ilfracombe, as he gazed at the lovely face upturned to his in the moonlight. "But how thin and pale you are, Nell. You are not like the same girl. What has happened, dear, to change you so?"

"I have been ill, Vernie," answered Nell. "I have had a bad fever, and my trouble has done the rest. I have had no peace—no hope without you. I have been unable to eat or sleep. How could I, knowing you had given me up? Oh, Vernie, why didn't you kill me first? It would have been so much kinder."

Lord Ilfracombe groaned.

"God forgive me! I never saw what I had done before this night. Nell, will you ever forgive me, or forget my base ingratitude to you, who were always so good to me? How can you say you love me? A man like myself is unworthy of any woman's love. You ought by rights to loathe and execrate my very name."

"But I don't—I don't. I love you still with all my heart and soul. Oh, Vernie, I was so wretched, so miserable, when I came out to walk to-night, and now I'm as happy as the day is long. You love me still. That is all I want to know."

"But that won't rectify the great wrong I have done you, Nell. That won't replace you in the position my selfishness hurled you from. You forget—perhaps you don't know—that I am—married."

Nell drew herself a little away from him.

"Oh, yes, I know it," she said in a low voice; "but if you love me, Vernie, I have the best part of you still."

Lord Ilfracombe did not know what to answer. The great emotion—the surprise, almost the shock of finding that Nell still lived, was over now in a great measure, and he had time to remember his wife and how much he loved her (as he had never, even in the flush of his first passion, loved the poor girl before him), and what *she* would think if she could see and

hear him now. The disloyalty of which he was guilty struck him like a cold chill. Was he fated never to be true to any one woman? He relaxed the tight hold he had maintained on Nell, and putting her a little away from him, said gently,—

"I do love you, my dear; I shall always love you and remember the time we spent together; but my marriage, you see, will prevent my showing it as I used to do."

"Oh, yes, of course."

"Lady Ilfracombe is very good to me, and deserves all the respect and esteem that I can show her," (he dared not speak of his love for Nora to the poor wreck who stood so patiently hanging on his words), "and when she heard that you were drowned, Nell, she was almost as sorry as myself—"

"Never mind that," interposed Nell, "I don't want to hear about it."

"But, of course, the past must be past now. It cannot come over again. But you must let me provide for your future, Nell. I will not have—it is impossible that you, who have been so near to me, should either work for your living or live without the comforts to which you have been accustomed. It was very naughty of you to refuse the settlement I wished to make upon you—more, it was unkind to me, and when

I heard what you had said and done, I was very unhappy."

"It was no use, Vernie. I could not take it," said Nell.

"But you will accept it now, darling, won't you? if only to prove you have forgiven me all the wrong I have done you, and to make me happy too—to wipe out the bitter remorse I have felt—eh, Nell?"

She shook her head.

"I couldn't. Don't ask me. Vernie, my people know nothing of all this—of what you and I were to one another. They think I was just in service in your house, and nothing more. You wouldn't shame me before them, would you? How could I account for your giving me an allowance? They would guess the truth at once. Besides, I don't want it. I have everything that I can desire, except your love. And now I have seen you, and know you love me still, I am quite happy, and want nothing more. Oh, God bless you for your kindness to me. Say you love me best of all the world, and the other woman may have your title and your money."

He could not say what she asked him to do, but he bent down his head again and murmured in her ear,—

"I have told you so, a dozen times. Do you suppose that a few months can make such a difference to

a man as that? I could wish things had been otherwise for us, my poor Nell. I wish I had had the courage to marry you years ago. I should have been a happier man than I am ever likely to be now, with the remembrance of your disappointment haunting me like an evil spirit."

"No, no, it must not haunt you. It is gone," she exclaimed with womanly unselfishness. "I shall never fret again now I have seen you once more and heard you speak. Kiss me, my Vernie—again—again! Ah, that is sweet. How many, many weary months it is—more than a year—since I have felt your dear lips on my own. It is like a draught of new wine. It has made a strong woman of me."

"And where are you going now, Nell?" he asked, as she disengaged herself from his clasp.

"To my home—back to Panty-cuckoo Farm," she replied.

"Ah, it is you, then, who live at Panty-cuckoo Farm? Did you not stop Lady Bowmant's cobs as they were running away this morning."

"What, they have told *you* too. What an absurd fuss they make of nothing. The lady, Mrs. Lumley, was at the farm this afternoon, worrying me about it."

"*Mrs. Lumley!*" he ejaculated, for though Nora had not informed him of her visit, he knew the

real Mrs. Lumley had not been there. "What was she like?"

"A slight, willowy-looking young woman, with quick, brown eyes and pointed features. She was very kind, but she teased me so about taking a reward for doing nothing at all. Why, I didn't even stop them. They stopped of themselves. All I did was to get myself rolled over in the dust. By the way," continued Nell, as a sudden thought struck her, "are you very intimate with Mrs. Lumley, Vernie?"

"By no means. Why do you ask?"

"Because when I told her I couldn't accept money at her hands, she took a ring off her finger and tried to put it on mine. And it was *your* ring—the gipsy ring set with sapphires—I recognised it directly, and I thought I should have gone mad with puzzling my brain where she got it and if you had given it to her. Did you?"

"Given my sapphire ring to Mrs. Lumley? Most certainly not," replied the earl, who guessed at once that his sharp-witted little wife, in order to obey his injunction not to disclose her real name, had borrowed the other woman's. "By Jove, that was cool of her. I remember now she was fooling with my ring last night and put it on her own finger for a piece of fun. But to offer it to you. Well, I wish you had taken it. She would

have looked very foolish when I asked where it was gone, wouldn't she?"

"Oh, Vernie, I couldn't have touched it. It would have burned me. The dear ring I had so often played with myself. I have been crying all the afternoon for thinking of it."

"Silly girl. I must get you one as like it as I can. But now I am afraid I must return to the house, or some of the fellows may come out to look after me."

"Ah!" said Nell, with a shudder. "You have that horrid Mr. Portland there. Vernie, you will not tell him you have met me, will you?"

"Certainly not. It is the last thing I should do. But I cannot understand why all you women should seem to take a dislike to dear old Jack. He is the best fellow I know."

"Vernie, he was *never* your friend," said Nell earnestly. "You wouldn't believe it in the old days. Try to believe it now."

"No, Nell, I cannot, not till I have some better proofs than another's word. Lady Ilfracombe is always dinning the same thing into my ears, but without effect. Jack has been always true to me so far as I know, and I speak of a man as I find him."

"Vernie," said Nell, after a pause, "is she fond of you?"

He knew she alluded to his wife, and answered,—

"I think so. I hope so. If people have to pass their lives together, it is best they should be good friends, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied the girl, as she slowly moved away.

He was just going to call out "good-night" to her, when she came back rapidly.

"Oh, Vernie, she doesn't love you as *I* did. Tell me that she doesn't."

"No, dear, no," he answered gravely. "I don't think she does."

"And you don't love her as you did me?" she persisted, and again Lord Ilfracombe was able to answer with truth, "No."

She threw her arms passionately round him and inquired,—

"When shall we meet again? Where can I see you, Vernie? The minutes will seem like hours till then."

"Nellie," he said seriously, "you know it is impossible that we can meet like this in any safety. I am overjoyed—more overjoyed than I can tell you—to find you are living, whom I have mourned as dead; but I am here only for a few days, and my time is not my own. Were I to say that I would meet you here to-morrow evening, I might be prevented, and you would think me unkind. But you will know that I am thinking

of you all the same, and if we meet it will be an unexpected pleasure for us both, eh?"

He spoke kindly, but Nell, with the unerring instinct which love gives to women, read between the lines, and saw, that whatever he might say, Lord Ilfracombe would rather *not* meet her again in Usk.

"Yes, you are right," she answered slowly. "But, oh, it is so hard to see you once, and, perhaps, not again for ages—like a drop of water to a man who is dying of thirst. Oh, Vernie, I must go. This has been heaven to me, but so much too short. Good-bye. God bless you. I will pray every moment that we may meet again."

She heaved a deep sigh as she pronounced her farewell, and flitted down the grassy slope in the gloaming on her way to the farm again. And someone saw her—Hugh Owen, who had been lingering about the road in hopes of catching a glimpse of Nell, had watched more than half her interview with Lord Ilfracombe. He could not distinguish their words; he was too far off; but he had seen the two figures engaged in earnest conversation—he had seen them approach each other, and guessed the close embrace that followed—and he had seen their parting, and that Lord Ilfracombe watched the tall, graceful shape of his companion till she was out of sight; until, in fact, Nell had entered

Panty-cuckoo Farm, and left the young minister in no doubt of her identity.

And what were Ilfracombe's feelings as he strolled back to Usk Hall? Not entirely pleasurable ones, we may be sure. He could not but be thankful that his worst fears for Nell Llewellyn were allayed, that his conscience was no longer burdened with the thought that his desertion had been the means of her death—but as he became used to this relief, the old sensations regarding her returned, and he could not help acknowledging to himself that her love wearied him, that Nora's sharpness of temper and standoffishness were as *sauce piquante* after Nell's adoration—and that, though he rejoiced to see her alive, he was very sorry they should have met in such close proximity to the house which held his wife. He had had one or two doubts lately as to whether another week of Usk Hall would not suit him very well—now he had none. The sooner they were out of it, the better, and he should speak to Nora to-night about joining his mother's party at Wiesbaden. She and Nell must not meet again. He should not reveal the identity of the latter to Lady Ilfracombe, but all intercourse must be stopped between them. He was sorry for poor Nell—very, very sorry; but, hang it all, Nora was his wife, and the prospective mother of his children, and at all hazards he would keep her for the future out of the other woman's way.

This is the difference men make between their mistresses and their wives. The one may be the infinitely better woman of the two, but the law does not overshadow her, so she must stand like Hagar apart in the wilderness which she has created for herself.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Lord Ilfracombe walked into the lighted drawing-room of Usk Hall he looked so pale and thoughtful that the ladies began to rally him at once on his supposed melancholy. Dear me, what could it be? Whom could he have met during his evening ramble to make him look so grave? Had she failed to keep her appointment, or had she been unkind? The whole list of little pleasantries with which the fair sex assail men on such occasions, with the idea of being arch and witty, was recounted for his lordship's benefit; but he looked very disinclined to supply food for their banter. His worry was so pre-evident that his wife asked him if he had a headache.

"A little; nothing to speak of," he answered quietly.

"Come along, old man, and have a game at pool," said Jack Portland, in his turn; "that will soon chase the vapours away. I expect it's Sir Archibald's port that's done the job. It's the most alluring wine I've tasted for many a day."

"No, no. I won't allow it. Nothing of the kind," cried the jolly baronet; "there isn't a headache in a

dozen of it. Lord Ilfracombe hasn't had enough of it. That's what's the matter with him."

"I think the sun may have touched me," said Ilfracombe feebly; "it has been very hot to-day."

"The sun; nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Portland. "I never heard you give that excuse before, though we've been in several hot countries together. Come along to the billiard-room. You shouldn't go wandering away by yourself in this fashion, and thinking over your sins. It's enough to give any man the blues. I couldn't stand it myself. You'll forget it before the first game's over."

"No, thanks, Jack, not to-night. I don't feel fit to compete with your excellent play. I'll sit here instead and listen to Nora's singing."

And he threw himself on a sofa by his wife's side as he spoke.

"Ulysses at the feet of Penelope!" sneered Mr. Portland. "Well, Ilfracombe, long as I've known you, I never saw you turned into a carpet knight before."

"Only for this evening," said the earl lazily, as he settled himself comfortably on the sofa.

Jack Portland appeared quite aggrieved by his defalcation.

"Well, come along Sir Archibald and Lumley and the rest of you fellows. Don't let us waste our time looking at his lordship doing the lardi-dardi. He owes me my revenge for the 'fiver' he made me disgorge

last night; but I suppose it's no use trying to get it out of him now." And with a rude laugh, he left the room.

Ilfracombe lent back against the shoulder of his wife, and said—

"Sing something, darling, won't you? Something low and sweet, like 'Come to me.' My head is really painful, and I want soothing to-night."

"I will sing anything you like," replied Nora, as she rose and went to the piano.

Her voice was not powerful, but she had received a first-rate musical education in Malta, and was an accomplished drawing-room singer. She ran through about half a dozen songs, one after the other, accompanying herself with a delicacy of touch and artistic expression which was more than half the battle. Ilfracombe listened to her with a dreamy pleasure, but all the time he was cogitating which would be the best plea on which to induce Nora to leave Usk Hall. He was determined not to run the risk of her meeting Nell Llewellyn again; but she was rather a wilful little lady, and wanted to know the why and the wherefore of everything. She had asked him not to go to Wales, and he had insisted on doing so—she had begged they should not exceed the week for which they had accepted the invitation, and he had told her but the day before that he wished to remain as long as Jack

did. Now, he had to invent some excuse for leaving directly—what should it be? He was not a bright man; had he been so he would have known by this time that with Nora honesty was decidedly the best policy, because she was not easily deceived; and had he told her the truth, she would have been the first to wish to go. But he had a poor idea of women. He fancied that if his wife heard of the proximity of his former mistress there would be a "row"—that Nora would not be able to resist flaunting her triumph in the other woman's face, nor Nell of telling his wife how far he had forgotten his duty to her in the pleasure and relief of finding that she (Nell) lived. Ilfracombe was a chivalrous gentleman; but it was not in his nature to love as either of these two women (whom he so much distrusted) loved him. But he managed to lay down a plan of action, as he lounged on the sofa listening to his wife's singing, and as soon as they were alone he opened fire.

"Nora," he said abruptly, "I've made up my mind to leave the Hall. How soon can you be ready?"

As he had anticipated, Lady Ilfracombe required to know the reasons which had induced him to alter his plans.

"Do you mean to go at once?" she questioned. "Why, it was only yesterday that you promised Lady Bowmant to stay until Mr. Portland left. Has he

altered his plans also, or do you intend to leave without him?"

"What difference can that make to you?" he said fretfully. "I have always thought that you rather disliked Jack than otherwise."

"My likes or dislikes have nothing to do with the matter, Ilfracombe, or we should not be here at all," she answered. "All I want to know is, *why* we are going so suddenly, and what I am to say to our hostess."

"Say, why anything. Surely you are clever enough to invent an excuse without my assistance? Pretend to have received a letter from my mother, who desires us to join her without delay, or get a relation to die for the express purpose. Nothing can be easier to a clever girl like you."

"Oh, I can tell as many lies as you wish, Ilfracombe; and as for going I shall only be too delighted to get away. Only it is not treating me fairly to keep me so completely in the dark. Something must have happened to make you so anxious to be off. Now, do tell me," she continued, as she seated herself upon his knee "you know I'm as safe as a church. Have you a row on with Portland or any of the others? Or are Lady Bowmant's attentions becoming altogether too warm? I gave her free leave to make love to you, so you mustn't judge her too hardly."

"No, my dear, don't be ridiculous; it's nothing of that sort. But—well, to make a clean breast of it, Nora, the play is awfully hot here; enough to break the Bank of England, and I think it's gone on quite long enough. Why, I should be almost afraid to tell you how much money I have lost since coming here. We have an ample fortune; but, as you have often told me, no fortune will bear such a continual strain on it for long. And it's impossible to refuse playing with one's host. So I have decided that the sooner we are out of it the better."

"You are right," said his wife, thoughtfully. "I was afraid of this all along. It sounds dreadfully vulgar, I know, but Usk Hall is in reality no better than a private hell. But what will your *fidus achates,* Mr. Portland, say to our going so suddenly?"

"Let him say what he likes," replied the earl quickly. "I can't be always answerable to him for my actions. We'll go straight from here to Wiesbaden and join my mother. No one can reasonably find fault with that."

"No one has a right to find fault with anything you may do," said Nora, though her curiosity was aroused by hearing her husband speak so curtly of the opinion of his closest friend; "and I'm with you, Ilfracombe, for one. When do you think we *can* start? The day after to-morrow? That will be Thursday."

"Couldn't we manage it to-morrow morning?" asked the earl anxiously. "You received some letters by this afternoon's post. Say you didn't open them till bedtime, and then found this one from my mother, begging us to join her at once, as she is ill. Make Denham pack your trunks to-night, and send word of your intentions to Lady Bowmant the first thing in the morning. Can't you manage it?

"Oh, Ilfracombe, what an arch deceiver and plotter you would make," cried the countess, laughing; "but, really and truly, I don't think we can be off quite as soon as that. I'm not sure we should get a train to London to suit us. Besides, unless the dowager were dying, such extreme haste would look very suspicious".

"Well, let her die then. You know what I mean. Say the old lady is *in extremis,* and we can easily revive her as soon as we get over to Wiesbaden."

"But what is the necessity for such extraordinary haste?" demanded Nora. "It cannot only be because you have lost money over this visit. Surely the delay of a day or two cannot make much difference in comparison with running the risk of offending people who have honestly wished to give us pleasure? You know what my opinion has been all along, Ilfracombe, that Mr. Portland leads you into a great deal of folly, and I shall be but too thankful if this is the end of it, still we owe something to the hospitality of the Bowmants;

and now we *are* here, I cannot see what harm a day or two more can do us."

The earl saw that he was worsted in the argument, so he contented himself with begging his wife to make arrangements to leave Usk as soon as she could, determining inwardly not to lose sight of her if possible till she had done so. The announcement next morning of their intended departure gave general dissatisfaction. The Bowmants declared they had not seen half the beauties of the surrounding country, and that they had just made arrangements for a picnic party, and a dance, and a lot of other gaieties. Nora expressed her sorrow at the necessity of cutting their visit short; but the earl said little, and gave one the impression that the sudden determination had not originated with himself. Jack Portland, for one, took it so, and seized the first opportunity he could to speak to Nora on the subject.

"Well, my lady," he commenced, "and so this is *your* doing, is it?—your little plan for dragging Ilfracombe from the jaws of the sharks."

"I don't understand you," said Lady Ilfracombe.

"Oh, yes, you do. This sudden idea of leaving the Hall emanated from your fertile brain alone. Ilfracombe had no idea of it yesterday. He told me he was enjoying himself up to date, and should remain here as long as I did. But you got hold of him last

night and forced the poor fellow to follow your lead. I see through it all as plain as a pikestaff."

"Then you are utterly mistaken, Mr. Portland. I had nothing to do with it. My husband told me yesterday that he wished to go, and it was with some difficulty that I persuaded him not to leave this morning. But that would have seemed so rude to the Bowmants."

"But what is at the bottom of it?"

"You heard me tell Lady Bowmant that we have received a letter from Wiesbaden, to say that—"

"Oh, stop that rot, do!" exclaimed Mr. Portland elegantly. "We can put all that in our eyes and see none the worse for it. It's the *real* reason I want to know."

"I have no other to give you."

"Now, look here, Nora," said Jack Portland, turning round short to confront her, "I told you very plainly, when we talked business over at Thistlemere, that I would not brook your interference between Ilfracombe and myself. You have not taken my caution, and must be prepared for the consequences. I daresay you have not forgotten them."

"Of course not," replied Nora coolly, though her heart beat rapidly with apprehension; "but in this instance you blame me unfairly. I give you my word of honour—I swear before heaven, if that will please you

better—that I have had nothing to do with this change in our plans; indeed, I argued against it. It was entirely my husband's proposition, and if you want any other reason but the one I have given you, you must seek it from himself."

"Very well, we will drop that branch of the argument. But if you did not originate it, you must prevent it. If you choose to do it, it is in your power, and if you do not choose to do it—well."

He finished off with a shrug of his broad shoulders, the interpretation of which she knew to be, "take the consequences."

"You mean that you will produce those letters?" she said quickly.

"I do."

"And if I consent to use my influence to induce Ilfracombe to remain here, what is to be my reward?"

Mr. Portland did not immediately answer, and his silence roused her fears. Nora had often questioned herself which would be the best means by which to regain possession of her letters. She had tried force and argument and entreaty, and all three had failed. This cruel wretch kept her under his thumb by the mere retention of that little packet. She was a woman of courage and determination, and by hook or by crook she meant to have it. Had she lived in a more

barbarous time, she would have slunk after him as he went to his nightly rest, and stabbed him, without any compunction, in the back, and been pleased to watch his death struggles, and to hiss into his ear at the last that she was revenged. But, however much we may occasionally long to take the law into our own hands, the nineteenth century holds certain obstacles against it. Nora was a woman, also, of *finesse* and intrigue. She had several times argued whether, in lieu of other ways, she could bring herself to profess a lurking affection for Jack Portland that should bring him once more to her feet, as in the olden days, and make him give for a fancied love what force had no power to wrest from him. This idea flashed into her mind again as she waited for his reply, and felt she would sacrifice everything except her honour to bend him to her will.

"What is to be my reward?" she repeated, "if I do as you ask? Will you give me the packet?

Unwittingly he played into her hands.

"What is to be *my* reward if I do?" he asked.

In a moment Nora had made up her mind. If the great stake at issue, a stake the winning of which meant to secure the happiness of her whole life, was to be won by *finesse,* she would put forth all the *finesse* in her power to gain it, never mind what the consequences might be. So she looked at him coquettishly and said, like the arch actress he had once called her,—

"What reward do you want, Jack, besides the condition you have already named?"

"Come, that's better," said Mr. Portland. "I haven't seen a smile like that on your ladyship's face for many a day. What I want is, a little more affectionate interest from you, Nora, a little more cordiality to your husband's best friend, a little more familiarity with him before other people, that they may see he is *enfant gaté de la maison!* I am sure you understand me. Also, that you can comply with my wishes if you choose. Be more like what you were in Malta, and I shall feel my reward is equal to my sacrifice."

"And the sacrifice, Jack?" she continued, "that is to be delivering up the letters you hold of mine."

"Certainly, if you care to have them. Now, Nora, I will make a bargain with you, you shall have your letters as soon as ever you consent to fetch them with your own fair hands."

"To *fetch* them?" she echoed wonderingly.

"To fetch them. Did I not speak plainly? They are over at Panty-cuckoo Farm with my other things. If you will come to my room this evening, I will engage to deliver your letters to you myself."

He thought she would have repudiated the proposal as a fresh insult, but, to his surprise, she answered firmly,—

"I *will* come, if these are your only conditions,

Jack, I agree to them. It is a *risqué* thing to do, but I will do it. I trust to your honour too implicitly to be afraid of your permitting any scandal to accrue from the act. And if you fulfil your promise, Ilfracombe shall stay on at Usk Hall as long as you do. Is the bargain sealed?"

"It is," replied Mr. Portland, with the utmost surprise.

He had not entertained the faintest idea that Nora would agree to visit him at Panty-cuckoo Farm. Was it possible she still retained an inkling of affection for him, and had her constained manner since her marriage been a blind for her real feelings? Men are so conceited where the *beau sexe* is concerned, that Jack Portland, bloated and disfigured as he was by excess and dissipation, was yet quite ready to believe that the Countess of Ilfracombe had been unable to resist the feelings raised in her breast by meeting him again. He had made the proposal that she should fetch her letters herself, because he thought she would guess from that, that he had no intention of giving them up to her; but when she consented to do so, he determined to make her secret visit to him one more terror by which to force her to influence her husband as he should direct. Now, he hardly knew what he should do. She was coming, that was the extraordinary part of it. Without any pressing or entreaty, the Countess

of Ilfracombe was actually coming over to his room at night, to secure her packet of letters. Well, it was the very "rummiest go" he had ever heard of in his life before.

"You must be very careful that you are not seen to leave the Hall," he said to her.

Now that she had agreed to come, he began to wish he had never said anything about it. What if his dear friend Ilfracombe got wind of the matter? Would not that render his wife's efforts on Mr. Portland's behalf futile ever afterwards? The earl was very suave and easily led; but Jack Portland knew him too well to suppose he would ever forgive an offence against his honour. If Nora's good name were compromised by his nearest and dearest friend, that friend would have to go, if the parting broke his heart. Added to which Mr. Portland had no idea of getting into even an imaginary scrape for Lady Ilfracombe; he did not like her well enough. He regarded her only as a convenient tool in his hands which he had no intention of letting go.

"Perhaps, after all," he said cautiously, "you had better not risk it. It *would* be a risk, you know, and it would be awkward to have to give Ilfracombe an explanation of the affair, wouldn't it?"

"I shall be careful to run no risk," was her reply.

"But suppose some of the farm people should see you, what excuse could you make for being there?"

"I should make no excuse at all. I have as much right as other people, I suppose, to take a moonlight ramble. What time shall I meet you? It must not be too late, as I must go upstairs when the other ladies do."

"That is not very early, as a rule," said her companion; "let us say midnight. Ilfracombe will be safe in the card or billiard-room at that time, and not likely to notice what you are about."

"And how will you manage to leave the party without observation?"

"Oh, I shall trust to chance; but you may be sure I shall be there. And—and—if you fail me, Nora, why, I shall understand that you value your reputation more than you do—me, or your husband's good opinion, because in that case—"

"I understand. You need not recapitulate. But I shall not fail you. It will seem quite like old times having an assignation with you, Jack. Do you remember the night I met you down by the landing-place at Valetta, and that horrid man Petro followed me all the way, and only showed his ugly face just as I had reached your side? I always believed that it was Petro who betrayed us to papa, for he was sometimes very impertinent in his manner to me afterwards. Oh, and

have you forgotten the time when you took me out in a boat and we got caught in a squall, and had to put in to shore, and remained nearly the whole day away in a little *estaminet?* What a fearful row papa made about it, and I had to pretend I had been alone, though I don't think he believed me. Papa certainly did hate you, Jack, though I never could understand why. I suppose it was all the money, or, rather, the lack of it."

And here Nora heaved a most deceitful sigh.

"Do you ever regret that there was any obstacle between us?" asked Mr. Portland persuasively. "Do you think you could have been happy as Mrs. Jack Portland, if Ilfracombe had not come between us?"

"Why, of course, I told you at the time I should," said Nora.

"Ah, well, perhaps things are better as they are," replied her companion; "for I don't think you were ever cut out for a poor man's wife; you are too pretty and dainty and refined, my lady, for that. And if you had been miserable, I should have been so also. And so you really like me well enough still to meet me at the farm this evening, and fetch your dear little letters. I shall be so glad to have you for a few moments to myself. It will seem quite like the dear old times. Here, I can never say half a dozen words to you without as many old cats prying into our faces. Well,

au revoir, my dear, be punctual, as our time will be limited, twelve o'clock to-night. I had better not stand talking to you any longer now."

"I will be there," answered the countess mechanically, as she turned round and walked another way.

CHAPTER IX.

HUGH OWEN was in a burning rage. From the high road he had witnessed Nell's meeting with the Earl of Ilfracombe, and he put the worst construction upon what he saw. Because this young man was a minister, it must not be supposed that he was naturally amiable and good. On the contrary, he possessed a very high temper, and at times an ungovernable one, and it was raging now. He had perceived a marked difference in Nell lately. She was not the same girl who had confessed her grievous fault to him in Panty-cuckoo Farm, nor promised so sweetly to follow his fortunes to South Africa in the Long Meadow subsequently. For a little while after the latter event, she had been very subdued and gentle with him, as though she were contemplating the serious step to which she had conditionally pledged herself; but since the folks had returned to Usk Hall, she had declined either to walk with him or talk with him. Her old feverish, excitable manner had seemed to return, though Hugh had not liked to connect it with the fact of the Hall being occupied until the fatal moment when he was

passing by Sir Archibald's field and witnessed Nell and the earl in close conversation. Whom could she be talking with? What could she have to say to him? Why were their faces so close together? These were the questions that haunted poor Hugh for hours afterwards, and to which he could find no satisfactory solution. He could not trust himself to confront Nell as she went back to the farm—he was afraid of what he might say to her—so he resolved to sleep over it, if the restless, miserable, disturbed slumbers which followed his discovery could be called sleep. But on the next day he felt he must know the reason of what he had seen. The remembrance of it came between him and his duties. He would not be able to preach and pray with an earnest and single heart until it had been relieved of the awful doubt that assailed it. So, the day after, he set forth for the farm, and found Nell, for a wonder, alone and free to receive him. The fact is, she did not dare go out, as she had been used to do lately, for fear of encountering Lord Ilfracombe in the company of his wife or friends. She felt as if she could not bear the sight—as if she should proclaim her right to him before all the world. And that would make him angry—he, who loved her still above all other things; for so had she interpreted his words of the night before. She had been in a state of beatification ever since, and her mother knew no more what to

make of her present mood that she had done of her previous one. It would be difficult to say what Nell expected or believed would come of the interview which had made her so happy. Apparently she had given herself no time to think. She knew perfectly well that her intimacy with Ilfracombe was over and done with, and that thenceforward she could have no part nor lot in him or his affairs. She knew she should never enter his house again, nor associate with his acquaintances, nor enjoy any of his good things. Yet she felt supremely happy. To understand her feelings, one must not only be a woman—one must be a woman who has loved and lost, and found that whatever the loss, the love remained as it was. Women have greater faith than men, as a rule, in the unseen and the compensation of an after life. They think more of the heart than of the body of the creature they love, and give them the hope of a reunion in another world—of retaining the eternal affections of the man they care for; and they will try and content themselves with the thought of the future. Far better that, they say, than his companionship on earth, whilst his heart is the property of some other woman. The earl had managed to deceive Nell so well without intending to deceive her, that she was already disposed to pity Lady Ilfracombe, who could only lay claim to his worldly goods. As she had told him, "Say you love me best of all the world, and the

other woman can have your title and your money." She had sat indoors all day dreaming over the unexpected happiness that had come to her—recalling in fancy every word he had uttered, every look he had given, every kiss he had pressed upon her happy mouth. The wretched interval that lay between them had vanished like a dream. She had forgotten the abject misery with which she had received the news of his marriage, the despairing attempt at suicide that followed it, her return home, and the apathetic existence she had led since—all had disappeared under the magic touch of love. She was no longer Nell, of Panty-cuckoo Farm, as the neighbourhood called her; she was Lord Ilfracombe's housekeeper, the woman he had chosen to be the mistress of his home. She was his love, his lady, his daily companion. She looked with a kind of pathetic curiosity at the print dress she wore, at the simple arrangement of her chestnut hair, at the ringless fingers and wrists unadorned by bangles. They had all gone—the silks and satins, the golden combs and hairpins, the jewels and laces; but *he* remained, the pride and jewel of her life. "Vernie" loved her.

It was so wonderful, so delightful, so unexpected, that her head swam when she thought of it. She was just considering whether she might not venture to stroll up the long fields again that evening — whether

"Vernie" might not come out as he had done the evening before in hopes of meeting her, when Hugh Owen raised the latch of the farmhouse door and walked unceremoniously in. His entrance annoyed Nell. It disturbed her beautiful reverie, put to flight all her golden dreams, and made her fear lest his visit might be prolonged so as to interfere with her plans. The welcome he received, therefore, was not, to say the least of it, cordial.

"Neither father nor mother are at home, Hugh," she said, as she caught sight of him, "and I'm just going out. You've come at an unlucky moment."

"So I always seem to come now," he answered; "but I have a word or two to say to you, Nell, that can't be put off; so I must ask you to listen to me for a few minutes first."

"They must be very few, then, for I've got work of my own to do," she replied.

"It's the work you do that I've come to speak to you about," said the young man, "and I claim the right to do so. I was sauntering up and down the road last night, Nell, in the hope of catching sight of you, when I saw you cross the meadow over there and meet a man and talk to him for better than half an hour. Who was he?"

Nell flared up in her impetuous manner at once.

"And what business is that of yours?" she exclaimed.

"Why, every business in the world! Whose should it be but mine? Haven't you promised to be my wife?"

"No!" cried the girl boldly.

"No? What! not in the Long Meadow behind father's house?" he returned in astonishment.

"I said if my people ever emigrated—which they never will do—that I would go with them as your wife; but that was only a conditional promise, and I've altered my mind since then. I shall never be anybody's wife now."

"If I saw rightly last night, Nell, perhaps it will be as well. Who was the gentleman you met and talked with for so long? What is he to you? Where have you met him before? What had you to say to him?"

"Which of your questions will you have answered first?" asked Nell. "And what is it to you who I choose to talk to? Are you my master, or am I a child to be catechised after this fashion? I shall see and speak to whom I like, and I refuse to say anything more about it."

"Nell," said Hugh in a sorrowful voice, "when you told me your history I was truly sorry for you. I thought what a terrible thing it was that such a re-

spectable girl should lower herself to the level of the lowest of her sex; but I believed it was a misfortune—a step into which you had been led with your eyes shut—and that you regarded it with horror and loathing. I must have thought so, you know, or I should never have proposed to make you my wife."

"Well, and what is all this tirade leading to?" said Nell.

She felt sorry for Hugh, but not a bit ashamed of herself, and the impossibility of explaining the matter to him made her irritable and pert.

"To a very sorrowful conclusion, Nell. I have seen, ever since this party of gentlemen and ladies came to the Hall, that you are altered. You have become restless and uneasy; you have refused to walk out with me any more; and you have avoided my company. I can only put two and two together, and draw my conclusions from that. I have often heard it said that if once a woman is led astray to lead what people call a 'gay life' she is never contented with a quiet, domestic existence again, but I was loath to believe it of you, who seemed so truly sorry for the past and all the shame and disgrace it had brought you. But what am I to think now? I see you with my own eyes meet a man who looked to me in the gloaming like a gentleman, and talk familiarly with him, and yet you won't

tell me his name, nor what your business was with him."

"No, I won't," she replied determinedly, "because it is no concern of yours."

"But I say it *is* my concern, and the concern of everybody that has an interest in you, Nell. Where there is deceit there must be wrong. Do your father and mother know this gentleman, and of your meeting him? Did you tell them?"

"I did not, and I shall not. It is my private affair, and I shall keep it entirely to myself."

The young man rose indignantly.

"Then I'll tell you now what I didn't like to mention before, and that is that I saw him kiss you. I am sure of it from the closeness with which he held you. Oh, for shame, Nell, for shame!"

"And what if he did?" cried Nell, with crimson cheeks; "that also is my business and not yours."

"Your business, yes, and you may keep it so!" exclaimed Hugh Owen hotly, as his eyes blazed with anger. "I see you now, Nell Llewellyn, in your true colours, and would to God I had known you from the first. Your penitence was all assumed, put on to catch an unwary fool like myself, because there was no one better within reach. Your sorrow, too, for the loss of your lover was another sham, easily consoled by the

kisses of a stranger. You are not a true woman, Nell. You are unfit for the love or consideration of any honest man. You are an outcast and a wanton, and I will never willingly speak to you again."

"I will take good care you don't," cried Nell in her turn. "I have more powerful friends than you think of—friends who will not see me insulted by a common farmer's son. I know I promised conditionally to be your wife, but I did it for your sake, not my own. I should have hated the life—the very thought is distasteful to me. So never think of me in that light or any light again. I break off with you from this moment. The man I met last night is worth ten thousand of you. I value his little finger more than your whole body. I would rather beg my bread with a gentleman than sit on a throne with a clod like you. Now you have the whole truth. Make what you like of it."

"Oh, stop, stop. In mercy to yourself, stop," cried the young man, as with both hands clapped to his ears he ran out of the house.

Nell felt rather subdued when left to herself. She was not quite sure how far she had betrayed her secret, or if she had said anything in her wrath to lead to Lord Ilfracombe's identity. But on revision she thought not. Hugh did not know the name of her former lover—he had not heard those of the guests at the Hall. There

was no chance of his gaining a knowledge of the truth. And, as for the rest, it was just as well he had seen for himself that they could never be more to each other than they were at present. And then she resolved into another of the pleasing day-dreams from which his entrance had disturbed her. Her father and mother came bustling in after a little while full of complaints and anxiety. One of their best cows had shown symptoms of dangerous illness, and every remedy that the farm could boast of was set in motion at once.

"Come, my lass," cried Mrs. Llewellyn, as she entered the parlour, "you must bestir yourself and help me. Father and I are in sad trouble. Bonnie is as bad as she can be, and if we can't stop the symptoms she'll be dead before the morning. Ay, but misfortunes never seem to come single, what with the raising of the rent and other troubles. I've set Betty to put on all the hot water she can, and we must choose the oldest blankets we have for fomentations. Bring the lamp with you, Nell, I want to find the proper medicines in father's chest."

The girl snatched up the light, and followed her mother to where Mr. Llewellyn kept a chest full of veterinary drugs.

"That ain't it, and that ain't it," the old woman kept on saying as she pulled bottle after bottle to the

light. "Ah, I think this is the stuff that cured Daisy last year."

She pulled out the cork with her teeth, and tasted a little of the brown, nauseous-looking mixture, but spat it out immediately on the floor. "God save us, that's the lotion for the sheeps' backs, deadly poison. Don't you ever touch that, my girl. It'll take the skin off your tongue in no time."

"Am I likely?" remonstrated Nell seriously; "but suppose you had given it to the poor cow by mistake? Why don't you label it plainly 'Poison,' mother, and then there would be no fear of an accident?"

"Ay, my lass, that's a good thought. Don't put it back, Nell, but carry it to your bedroom and put it a-top of the wardrobe. It will be safe enough there, and when we're a bit less busy you shall write a label for it. It's arsenic, I believe. I know last year father gave a drop or two by mistake to one of the cats that was bad in its inside, and the poor beast was dead in a few minutes. *This* is the cows' mixture," said Mrs. Llewellyn, pulling out a second bottle from the recesses of the old trunk. "Not dissimilar looking, are they? but, Lor', what a difference in their effects. This is some of the finest stuff we ever had, made from a receipt of farmer Owen's. Take it down to father at once, Nell, for he's in a hurry for it, and I'll fetch

the blanket. And don't forget to put the other a-top of your wardrobe," she called out after her daughter.

The poor cow was very bad, and for some hours the whole household was occupied in providing remedies and applying them. When ten o'clock struck, and the animal was pronounced to be out of danger, Nell was regularly tired out, and hardly inclined to sit down to supper with her parents, but the farmer would not hear of her leaving them.

"Come on, lass," he said; "I've news for you, only this bothering cow put it clean out of my head. Grand news, Nelly. You'll never guess it, not if you tried for a twelvemonth."

Nell returned to the table, white and scared looking.

"News about *me,* father?" she said.

"Well, not about you exactly, but that concerns you all the same. Now, who do you suppose has come to the Hall, and is staying along of Sir Archibald?"

Then she knew he had heard of Lord Ilfracombe's arrival, and set her teeth, lest she should betray herself.

"How should I know, father?" she said tremblingly. "I haven't been near Mrs. Hody for the last week. Is it the prince whom they expected?"

"The prince be d—d!" exclaimed the farmer. "What's the value of a foreign prince beside one of

our own English noblemen? I wouldn't give you *that* for the prince," snapping his fingers. "No; it is somebody much better and higher. It's your old master, the Earl of Ilfracombe, and his lady. What do you think of that?"

"The Earl of Ilfracombe!" echoed Nell, in order to gain time. "But who told you, father?"

"Jackson, the coachman, to be sure, who drove them both home from the railway station, and who should know better than he? He says the earl is a fine-looking young man, as fair as daylight, and his lady is a nice, pretty creature too. I thought I should surprise you, Nell. You'll be wanting to go up to the Hall to see 'em both, now, won't you?"

"Oh, father, why should I go to see them? His lordship won't want to see me. Most likely he's forgotten my very name."

"Well, Nell, I *am* surprised to hear you talk so!" exclaimed her mother. "It don't look as if you knew much about the gentry, who are always glad to see servants as have behaved themselves whilst in their service. But perhaps you're afraid the earl is annoyed with you for leaving him so suddenly, and just as he was bringing home his bride. Is that it?"

"Perhaps so, mother," said the girl, looking very much confused.

"Ah, I was always doubtful if there wasn't something queer about your coming back so suddenly, and so I've told your mother," remarked Mr. Llewellyn dubiously. "But if it was so, why, you must go over to the Hall to-morrow morning and ask his lordship's pardon; and perhaps mother, here, can find some little thing as you could take up as an offering for his lady. Can you, mother?"

"Oh, I daresay," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, "she might fancy a pen of our Minorca fowls or Cochins. I suppose they've a fine farm down at Thistlemere, Nell?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But, mother, I cannot go and see them, or take Lady Ilfracombe any presents. It will seem like intrusion. They've not asked to see me, and I'm only a discharged servant, after all."

"Rubbish! Nonsense! What are you talking about?" exclaimed the old farmer angrily. "A discharged servant! Why, didn't you tell mother and me that you gave his lordship warning yourself? Haven't you told the truth about your leaving? Is there anything hid under it all as we know nothing about? Come, now, no more secrets, if you please; let us have the plain truth at once, or I will go up the first thing in the morning and see his lordship myself."

"Lor', father, don't be so hard on the lass!" exclaimed his wife. "You've turned her as white as a

lily with your noise. What should be under it, except that the maid wanted to come home? And time enough, too, after being three years away. Don't you mind him, Nell, my girl. He's just put out and cranky about the cow. If you don't want to see his lordship, why, no more you shall. Here, sup up your beer and get to bed. I don't half like the way in which you flushes on and off. It's just how my sister's girl went off in a waste. You sha'n't be worried to do anything as you don't wish to, take my word for it."

"That's how you fools of women go on together, without a thought of the business, and how it's going to the devil," grumbled her husband. "Here's Lord Ilfracombe come here, as you may say, in the very nick o' time, and Nell the very one to ask a favour of him, and you cram her head with a pack o' nonsense about not going near him. Sir Archibald is going to raise the rent, and send us all to the workhouse, when a word from his lordship might turn his mind the other way, especially if Nell put it to him, on account of her long service and good character, and you tell her not to do it. Bah! I've no patience with you."

"Oh, that's a different thing," quoth the old woman. "If Nell can get Lord Ilfracombe to plead with Sir Archibald on our account, why, of course, she'll do it, for her own sake as well as for ours; won't you, my lass?"

"Plead with Lord Ilfracombe!" cried Nell hysterically. "No, no, indeed, I cannot. What has he to do with Sir Archibald's rents? He is only a guest in the house. It would be too much to ask. It would place him in an unpleasant position. I would not presume to do such a thing."

Both her parents rounded on her at once.

"Well, of all the ungrateful hussies as I ever saw," said her father, "you're the worst. You come home to see your poor parents toiling and moiling to keep a roof above their heads, and nigh breaking their hearts over the raising of the rent and the idea of having to leave the old homestead, and you refuse even to speak a word to save them from starvation."

"Well, I never did!" cried her mother. "Here you've been home for nearly a year, and no more use than a baby, what with your London training and your illness, and your fid-fads, and the first thing as your poor father asks you to do for him you downright refuse. I didn't think it of you, Nell, and I begin to fear, like father, that there must be something under it all as you're afraid to let us know."

"But I shall know it for all that," said the farmer; "for I'll see this fine lord with the break of day, and ask him downright under what circumstances you left his service. If he's a gentleman, he'll answer the

question, and give me some sort of satisfaction. I won't put up with this sort of treatment from you no longer, my lass, and so I give you plain notice."

"Very well. Do as you like. It's all the same to me," cried Nell, as she rose from the table and rushed from the room.

Her sleeping apartment was over the lodgers' rooms, and as she reached it she locked the door and flung herself on the bed, face downwards, in an agony of apprehension. What was going to happen next? she asked herself. What was to be the next scene in her life's tragedy? Would her irate father force the truth from the earl, or would he guess it from his embarrassment? Would the story come to the ears of the countess, and make mischief between her husband and herself? There seemed to be no end to the horrors that might happen from her father having gained knowledge of the proximity of her former employer. And if he confided his doubts to Hugh Owen, or any of the Dale Farm party, might not he add his quota to the chapter of horrors by relating what he had witnessed in the field the night before?

Poor Nell could get no rest that night for thinking of these things, and wondering how she should come out of them all.

She rose after a while and bathed her burning and

swollen eyelids in cold water, and took a seat by the open casement and gazed out into the calm, peaceful night. The air was warm and balmy, but there were few stars, and the moon was in her first quarter.

How long she had sat there she did not know, till she heard the church clock chiming the hour of twelve, and thought to herself that it was time she lay down on her bed. But just as she was about to do so, her attention was arrested by the figure of a woman walking slowly and furtively over the grass beneath the window.

Nell did not know who she was, nor what she came for; but not unnaturally supposing that she would not be there at that time of night unless she needed the assistance of her mother or herself in some sudden emergency, she waited quietly until the stranger should knock or call out in order to summons her. To her surprise, however, the woman did not go round to the principal entrance to the farmhouse, but lingered about the grass-plot, walking backwards and forwards, and occasionally glancing over her shoulder in the direction of the Hall.

Nell's curiosity was now fully aroused, but she made no sign to arrest the attention of the visitor. On the contrary, she drew further back from the window, so as to be entirely concealed by the dimity curtain that shaded it. From this vantage-ground she

presently saw the woman joined by a man, whom she at once recognised as Mr. Portland. Nell's first feeling was indignation that he should presume to make her mother's house a place of assignation; but when he commenced to talk, she could only listen, spellbound.

CHAPTER X.

"AND so you have kept your word, my lady," he said nonchalantly.

"Had you any doubt that I should do so?" she answered.

"It would not have been the first time if you had broken it," was the sarcastic rejoinder.

"Now, look here, Jack," said the woman," "you have not brought me here at this time of night to upbraid me for the inevitable past, surely? You must know that I run a fearful risk in coming here. You must know also that only one object on earth would have brought me. Be merciful as you are great, and don't keep me fooling my time away in order to listen to your platitudes. Isn't the subject of our former relations with each other rather stale?"

"It will never be stale to me, Nora," replied Mr. Portland; "and the melancholy fact that you preferred Ilfracombe to myself is not likely to make me forget it."

"*Ilfracombe!*" thought Nell, from her post of observation, "can this really be the countess? Oh, how

grossly she must be deceiving him. Prefer Ilfracombe to him! Why, of course it *must* be she. I will hear every word they say now, if I die for it."

"That is nonsense," resumed Nora, "you never really cared for me; Jack, and if you did, the sentiment has died long ago. Don't let us twaddle, pray, but come to business."

"I thought the twaddle (as you call it) was part of our business, but I am willing to let it drop. What has your ladyship to say next?"

"I want to ask you something which I have been afraid to mention with so many eavesdroppers as we have round us at the Hall. You knew that *chère amie* of Ilfracombe's—Miss Llewellyn—of course."

"I did. Everyone who knew him knew her. What of it? Are you getting up a little jealousy of the dead for future use?"

"Don't talk nonsense. Am I the sort of woman to go raving mad on account of my husband's former peccadilloes? But what became of her?"

At this juncture Nell became keenly attentive. She thrust her head as far as she dared out of the window, and did not lose a single word.

"By Jove! no," laughed Portland, "I cannot imagine your ladyship being jealous of anything, or anyone who

had not the power to take your beloved coronet from you. But surely you know what became of the poor girl? She is dead. She drowned herself when Ilfracombe sent home word that he was about to marry you, and told old Sterndale to give her 'the genteel kick out.'"

"Poor child," said the countess, compassionately, "it was very terrible, if true. But what proofs were there of her doing so? Was the body ever found?"

"I believe not. But don't talk of it, please. I had a sincere regard for Miss Llewellyn, and the thought of her dreadful end makes me sad."

"*You* feeling for anyone of your fellow-creatures, Jack?" replied Nora incredulously. "You must have been very hard hit. But I really want to know if there was any doubt of her death. I have a particular reason for asking."

"I heard there was no doubt. That is all I can tell you, Lady Ilfracombe."

"What was she like, Jack?" urged Nora.

"Very handsome indeed, more than handsome, beautiful; with the most glorious golden chestnut hair imaginable, and large hazel eyes, with dark brows and lashes, and a straight nose and good mouth and chin. A lovely figure, too, tall and graceful, though with large hands and feet. A remarkable-looking young woman,

Nora, and it is a feather in your cap to have driven her memory so completely from Ilfracombe's heart."

"But I am not sure that I *have* driven it. Ilfracombe is very touchy on the subject now, and cannot bear her name to be mentioned. But I tell you what, Jack, she is no more dead than I am, for I have seen her."

"My God! Where?" exclaimed Mr. Portland excitedly.

"Why, in this very house. Don't you remember Sir Archibald telling us that the young woman who stopped Lady Bowmant's cobs must have been one of the Llewellyns? I came over here the same afternoon to see her and thank her more particularly than I had been able to do, and if the girl I saw is not Nell Llewellyn, I'll eat my hat. She answers to your description exactly."

"You don't mean to say so. It never entered into my calculations. I had made so sure that she was gone. Have you mentioned your suspicions to Ilfracombe?"

"No fear. I'm not such a fool as I look. Why should I raise up all the old feelings in him, just as he is settling down so nicely with me? But I should like to know it is true, and to know for certain. It is a dreadful thing to have a girl's death at one's door. So I thought I would tell you, and you could find out for me."

"I will make a point of doing so, but I'm afraid you are labouring under a mistake. There was so little doubt of Miss Llewellyn's death. The young woman you have seen may be a sister, or other relation. It is worth while inquiring."

"But don't compromise Ilfracombe in doing so. He particularly begged me not to mention his name when I called here, in case they might be of the same family. But I mustn't stay longer, Jack, so please let me have the letters."

"All right. But you must come and fetch them."

"Well, I am here, safe enough."

"Perhaps, but the letters are not here. They are in my dispatch-box in my room."

"Go and bring them then."

"The bargain was that *you* were to fetch them, Nora."

"But not to enter your room, Jack. I cannot do that. It is impossible. I refuse."

"Then you can't fetch the letters, my lady."

"And have you brought me here to play me such an unfair trick as that? You knew that I could not enter your room. It would be risking the happiness of my whole future life. Supposing Mr. Lennox were to return suddenly, and find me closeted there with you? You want to ruin me. I shall do no such thing."

"You know now that you are only quibbling, Nora—only fighting with the inevitable. You will not rest till you have those letters in your own hands. You have told me you would give half your fortune to get them, and yet you refuse to pass the threshold of my room. What nonsense. You must devise some others means by which to procure them then, for I will not go back from my word. I said you should have them if you would fetch them, and now that they are within your reach, you refuse to stretch out your hand and take them. Very well, it is not my fault. You must return without them."

Nora thought a minute, and then said,—

"What time is it?"

"Half past twelve," replied her companion. "They will not break up over there for another hour and a half."

She knew she was as much within this man's power as if he held the proofs of some great crime which she had committed. She did not exactly remember what her foolish letters to him contained; but she was sure there was sufficient love-sick folly in them which, aided by his inuendoes, and even falsehoods, might bring everlasting disgrace upon her, to say nothing of Ilfracombe's serious displeasure which she dreaded still more. To lose her husband's trust and confidence and respect—perhaps his love—was too terrible a con-

tingency in the young countess's eyes. She had been guilty of a fearful social error in going to the farm at all; she knew that, but now she was there, would it not be better to comply with Jack Portland's conditions, hard as they might be, than to return to the Hall, having played her *escapade* for nothing.

"Where are the letters?" was the next question she asked him.

"I have told you. In my dispatch-box."

"But where is the box?"

"On a table just within the door."

"Will you go in first and get them out, and then I will cross the threshold and take them from you."

"Are you so terribly afraid of me as all that, Nora?"

"Not afraid of you or any man," she answered haughtily, "but afraid of compromising my good name. It is too fearful a risk. Anything might happen. Mr. Lennox might return, or the people of the house come down, or—or— Oh, Jack, if you ever loved me the least little bit, don't ask me to do more than I have done."

He appeared to be satisfied with her excuse, for Nell saw him leave her side and disappear into the house. In another minute the countess, who had stood looking anxiously after him, seemed to have received

his signal, for she cautiously followed him. Then there was a silence of several minutes, during which Nell listened eagerly to hear what passed, but no sound reached her ear. The next thing she saw was the figure of Lady Ilfracombe, who left the house hurriedly, and, throwing herself down on the grass, burst into tears. It was a rare occurrence for Nora to lose command of herself, but to-night she felt utterly worsted and broken down. She had built so many fair hopes on this venture, and now she found herself as far from obtaining her wishes as ever.

"You are *a brute!*" she exclaimed, as Jack Portland joined her; "a false and merciless brute! You have lured me here under false pretences, and in order to get me only more surely in your toils. You knew you were deceiving me—you knew the letters were not there—you persuaded me to enter your room against all my better judgment, in order that I may compromise myself, and be more your slave than before. But there must be an end put to it some day. I will not go on being laughed at by you for ever. I defy you to do your worst. Show Ilfracombe those letters, as you have so often threatened, and I will take good care the day you do so is the last you ever spend under any roof of mine."

"Softly, softly, my lady," said Portland; "aren't you

going it a little too fast, and making a little too much noise over this business? I give you my word of honour that I fully believed that interesting packet of letters was in my dispatch-box."

"Your word of *honour!*" repeated Nora, disdainfully, as she rose from her despairing attitude and stood up, wiping her wet eyes; "how long have you possessed the article?"

"Now, Nora, none of your sneers, if you please," said Jack Portland; "don't be foolish, and make a regular quarrel of this matter. Let me tell you this—that so long as you insult me on every occasion I shall never give you back those letters. After all, they are legally mine, and you have no right to demand their restoration. If I return them, it will be as a favour; and people do not, as a rule, grant favours to ladies who call them liars and scoundrels and cheats for their pains. And now, had you not better go back to the Hall? I have shown you what I can do by bringing you here, and I don't mean to do anything more for you to-night. When you have learned how to coax and wheedle a little, instead of bully and storm, perhaps you may persuade me to give you back those much-longed-for letters."

The countess seemed to be perfectly subdued. To those who knew her as she generally was, and especially

to the man before her, the change in her voice and demeanour would have seemed a marvel.

"Yes, I will go," she replied in a meek tone; "but I should like to have a few words with you first, Jack. I cannot think what has changed you so; but you are not the same man you were at Malta. Still, I do not think you can have quite forgotten that time when we first met, and thought we loved each other. It was my father, Sir Richard Abinger, who separated us, as you know well, and even if he had not done so, I do not think you would have wished to marry me, for you had no income, and I should only have been a great burden to you. So, is it quite fair, do you think, to visit the fact of our parting on my head, especially now that I am married to another man? Those letters of mine—written to you when I considered we were engaged lovers—I daresay they are very silly and spooney, and full of the nonsense people generally write under such circumstances, but I cannot think there is anything compromising in them, as you would lead me to believe. I feel sure, if I were to show them to my husband, he would forgive and absolve me from all thought of wrong. But will you not spare me such an act of self-humiliation? Cannot you be man enough to forgive a girl who has never done you any harm for having caused you a little mortification? Will you not do so—for the sake

of Malta and the time when you thought you loved me?"

Nora's voice was so sorrowful, and yet so full of dignity, as she pronounced these words, that Nell's heart burned within her to listen to them, and she longed to have the power to steal those letters and restore them to her, spite of all Mr. Jack Portland's machinations. And as she sat there she clenched her hands together and said to herself that if it were to be done she would do it. She had not been unmindful of Nora's kindness when she visited her under the guise of Mrs. Lumley, though she had so ill-requited it, and now that she knew who she was, and that it was Ilfracombe's unloved wife who had had her ring and money flung back in her face, Nell's generous nature asserted itself, and she inwardly vowed that if she could do her a good turn she would.

"Why are you so very anxious to get these letters back, especially if there's nothing in them?" asked Mr. Portland. "It's not because you're so deuced fond of Ilfracombe that you tremble for his peace of mind surely? You've got your coronet out of him, and what on earth do you want more? You are not going to stuff me up with any humbug about your having fallen in love with him, because I sha'n't believe it if you do. You married him for a settlement—you never left him

alone till you had hooked him—and now you've got the poor gull fast, what harm can that little packet of letters do him, or you, even if I should take it into my head some day to bring you to order by showing them to him, eh?"

Even in the dim light of the starless sky Nell could see the countess twisting her lace handkerchief nervously about in her hands as she answered her tormentor.

"Yes, you are right. I married Ilfracombe because I thought it a fine thing to become a countess, and to be presented at Court and have a large fortune and everything that I could require. But I don't feel like that now. I—I—love him."

"*You love him!*" echoed Portland, with a coarse laugh; "that's the best joke I ever heard in my life. Do you suppose he cares for you? Why, he only married you because his people were always after him to get rid of poor Miss Llewellyn, and settle down respectably."

"Oh, no, no, don't say that!" cried the countess in a tone of unmistakable anguish.

"But I do say it, and I could bring forward dozens of fellows to corroborate my statement. Ilfracombe adored Nell Llewellyn—so did she him. Do you suppose she would have committed suicide else? Would

you risk your precious life, or still more precious coronet, for any man on earth?"

"Yes, I could — for Ilfracombe," she answered tremblingly.

"I can put all that in my eye and see none the worse," continued Portland; "but, at any rate, your devotion is thrown away. His lordship cares more for Miss Llewellyn's memory than he does for your living self. You may represent his station in life to him—perhaps, his prospective family—but *she* was his love."

"You are very cruel to me," faltered Nora, "though perhaps I have deserved your contempt and irony. But no one could live with Ilfracombe and not love him. He is so generous—so considerate—so unselfish, that a woman would be insensible to every good influence not to feel grateful to him in return. And as for poor Miss Llewellyn, you are mistaken if you imagine you have been the first to tell me of his esteem for her, and sorrow for her untimely loss. He has told me all about it himself, and I have sympathised deeply with him. My husband has no secrets from me, as I earnestly desire not to have any from him. Were it not for these unfortunate letters I should have none. But you have tortured me too far, Jack. I throw up the sponge. I shall tell Ilfracombe on the first opportunity of the boasted hold you have over me, and beg him to end it

one way or the other. Let him read the letters and do his worst. It can never be as bad as yours. You have made my married life a torment to me by your unmanly threats."

She turned away from him as she concluded, and commenced to toil up the steep acclivity that led to the gate. But Jack Portland sprang after her.

"I am not going to let you go alone," he said. "Come, Nora, let us part better friends than this. Forgive me for being a little amused at the idea of you and old Ilfracombe having a quiet 'spoon' together, and trust me that he shall never trace any annoyance that may accrue from your former little follies to my door."

The countess did nor appear to make any answer to his harangue, and Nell watched them ascend the hill together and pass out of the white gate.

"And how long is Jack Portland to be trusted?" she thought, as they disappeared. "Just as it suits him, and then he will hold his unmanly threats over that poor woman's head again. Well, I've no particular reason to love her, heaven knows, but I can do her this kindness in return for hers, and I will, if only to keep *his* name unstained by the tongue of such a scoundrel as Jack Portland. They have gone to the Hall, and he

will probably not be back for another hour. Now's the time! If I wait till daylight mother will be about, and liable to break in upon me at any moment. I will slip down at once."

She lighted a taper, and, shading it with her hand, crept softly down the stairs that led to the bricked passage, and so into the lodgers' rooms. That occupied by Mr. Portland lay to the left. The door was ajar. Nell had only to push it gently open in order to enter. She set her light down on a table and glanced around her. All was in perfect order, except the much-talked-of dispatch-box, which had been left open with its contents tumbled over. Nell did not believe that the packet of letters was not there. It was very unlikely that Jack Portland would not know what was in his box, or what was not. He had intended to hand it to the countess, but changed his mind at the last moment. She looked carefully through the contents of the box, but found no packet. She had replaced the papers carefully, and was about to search the remainder of the apartment, when, to her horror, she heard a footstep enter the narrow passage that divided the two rooms and approach the one which she occupied. It was useless to extinguish her light. The newcomer had already perceived her.

"Halloa!" he exclaimed, "and what pretty burglar have I here?"

She turned to confront him, and his tone changed to one of terror.

"My God, *Nell,*" he cried, "are you dead or living?"

She stood face to face with Jack Portland.

CHAPTER XI.

"ARE you living," he repeated, "or—or—dead?"

In the excitement of his subsequent conversation with Lady Ilfracombe he had forgotten the suspicions she had communicated to him with regard to this woman, and now stood before her, dazed and trembling. Men who are given to drinking are always terribly afraid of the supernatural.

"Don't alarm yourself," replied Nell scornfully, "I am alive."

"*Alive!* Then Lady Ilfracombe was correct when she assured me she had met you. Though she had never seen you before, your description tallied so exactly with the girl she saw here that she felt certain you must be the same person."

"She was right," said Nell quietly,

"And how did it all happen?" asked Jack Portland eagerly. "You will forgive my curiosity, when you remember that your death was not only currently reported, but, as it was supposed, proved beyond a doubt. We—that is, Ilfracombe and all your friends—felt your loss very much. It was terrible for us to think you had

come to so sad an end. You will believe so much, will you not?"

"Oh, yes."

"But you are standing, Miss Llewellyn; pray sit down. You will not be afraid to bestow a few moments on me in order to satisfy my great curiosity. Tell me first, how is it we find you here?"

"That is easily accounted for, Mr. Portland. Usk is my native place. I was born at Panty-cuckoo Farm. Mr. and Mrs. Llewellyn are my father and mother. So it was only natural, when I lost the home I thought was mine, that I should return to them."

"But how was it that the rumour of your death became so widely circulated?"

"Oh, don't talk of that," she said wearily. "I *did* throw myself into the water. I thought it would be better for all concerned, myself especially; but some well-meaning people pulled me out again, and when I found that the world believed me to be gone, I thought it just as well not to undeceive it. That is all. Of course I had no idea you would ever come here, or meet me again. As it is, all I wish is that you should leave Usk without betraying my secret to my parents."

"You may depend on me, Miss Llewellyn," said Portland. "But does Ilfracombe know of your proximity?"

A gleam of pleasure lighted up her features.

"Yes. I met him yesterday, quite by accident, and

he was as surprised to see me as you are. But he was glad—very glad."

("Hullo!" thought Jack to himself; "then this accounts for his sudden determination to go.")

But aloud he said,—

"Of course he would be, as we all are. And now, may I ask what you were doing in my room, Miss Llewellyn?"

"Yes," she answered boldly. "I came down here in your absence to see if I could find the packet of letters, which you refused to give to Lady Ilfracombe."

"The packet of letters!" he exclaimed, completely startled out of his usual prudence. "How can you know anything about her letters? Who can have told you?"

"No one has told me. My bedroom window is up there, and I overheard you talking to her to-night. I did not miss a single word of your conversation."

"By George!" cried Portland. "Well, then, there would be no use in my disguising the matter. She has been a horrid little flirt; but there's no harm about her now, understand that plainly."

"Then why did you tempt her to meet you here to-night? You must know what a rupture it would make between her and the earl if it became known?"

"I shall take good care it does not get known. But I want to pay her out for her past conduct to me. She

is the sort of lady that it is as well to keep the whip hand over."

"When you want to make money out of her husband. Yes; I understand perfectly. So you have not let poor Ilfracombe out of your clutches yet, Mr. Portland. How much longer is he to be fleeced?"

"You speak boldly, Miss Llewellyn; but if I remember rightly, you always used to do so."

"In *his* cause, yes."

"And so you meant to steal my property, eh? and restore it to her ladyship?"

"If it were possible. But I begin to be afraid you spoke the truth when you said the letters were not in the dispatch-box, at all events. Oh, Mr. Portland, if you have them, do give them to me."

"In order that your heartless little rival — the woman who has supplanted you with Ilfracombe—may go scot-free? What do you suppose she will do for you in return? What she has already done—persuaded her husband to leave Usk at once. They go to-morrow!"

Nell drew a long breath.

"To-morrow? Oh, that is soon. Nevertheless let her have back her letters, Mr. Portland, if only in return for all the kindness *he* has shown you. You could never use them against her. It would be impossible; and withholding them might urge her on to confide the

matter to her husband, which would mean a break-up of your long intimacy with him."

"By Jove! you are an eloquent pleader, Nell!" exclaimed her companion, looking at her admiringly, "and there's more good in your little finger than in her ladyship's whole body. You're doing this for Ilfracombe's sake, I can spot that fast enough; but if you believe all her protestations about loving him you are easily gulled. She cares for no one but herself; she never did; but she's in a mortal fright lest I should peach and make ructions between them. Which there would be, I can assure you, when I tell you that if it were in my power, I would not marry the woman who wrote such letters as I have in my possession. By George! you should see them. They would make your eyes open. You would not have written such epistles to save your life."

"Perhaps not," she answered quietly. "Letter-writing was never much in my line. But if what you say is true, it is all the more necessary that they should be destroyed. Give them to me, Mr. Portland, I implore you, for the old time's sake."

"Do you know what you are asking, Miss Llewellyn? To be allowed to do the best turn in your power (or the power of anyone) to the woman who inveigled Ilfracombe from you; to make a heartless, reckless girl, who is only afraid of imperilling her position in society, at her ease for evermore; to set

her free to bamboozle some other man as she bamboozled me."

"Oh, no, no. I do not believe that. She loves her husband. You might hear it in the very tone of her voice."

"*The very tone of her voice!*" echoed Jack Portland sneeringly. "What a judge of character you must be. Why, Nora Ilfracombe is a thorough actress, and can change her voice at will. How Ilfracombe can ever have been so infatuated as to make her his countess beats me. And to see him lolling on the sofa by her side, and devouring her with his eyes, is sickening. He's over head and ears in love with her, and she wants to keep him at her feet. That's the long and the short of it."

"But you told her just now that it was *I* whom he loved," cried Nell quickly.

"Did I? That was only to make her ladyship waxey. Ilfracombe has forgotten all about you long ago—"

"I—I—think you are mistaken," replied Nell in a constrained tone; "but you cannot blame the countess for wishing to keep him as much with her as possible. And—and—since it is all over for you and me, Mr. Portland—since you have lost her, and I have lost *him* —would it not be better and nobler to leave them

alone for the future, and put no obstacle in the way of their happiness?"

"And what would you do with the packet of letters if I did deliver them over to you?"

"I would take them to her at once and give them her on the promise that she would never be so foolish as to meet you secretly again."

"And you think she would thank you—that she would be grateful?"

"*He* would, if he knew it," she replied.

"Ah, it's all for *him* still, though he cast you off, like a worn-out glove. You women are inexplicable creatures. It seems to me that the worse you are treated the closer you stick."

"Never mind that. Will you give me the letters?"

"I will, on one condition."

"What is it?"

"Nell, do you remember what I said to you once in Grosvenor Square and you were so angry with me for saying? I knew then that Ilfracombe was contemplating marriage, and that you would be left without a home, and I loved you. Yes, you may stare as you like, but it is the truth. Such love as it is in my nature to feel, I have felt, and do feel, for you. I admire you—not only personally, but your courage, your pride, your determination. I admire the ease with which you accepted your equivocal position under Ilfra-

combe's roof—the humility with which you deferred to his will, even when it came to leaving you alone in London for four months whilst he gallivanted after Miss Nora Abinger."

"Oh, spare me, Mr. Portland, spare me!" cried Nell, "let the past alone, it is too painful a recollection to me. I know I was furious with you. I had a right to be, but my high spirits are all gone. If it were so, I should not stay to listen now."

"But I am not going to say one word that the most virtuous matron in England might not hear. I repeat that you are the only woman for whom I have ever experienced any genuine feeling, and if you really want to save your late friend from a very painful humiliation (which will inevitably come some day, by the exhibition of those letters), I will give them to you to do with as you will—if you will marry me."

"*What?*" she exclaimed, starting backward.

"I mean what I say. I know that my former proposal was a different one, but I have altered my mind since then. I offer to marry you—to give you my name, which is, at all events, that of a gentleman, though I'm afraid a rather shady one, and—Lady Ilfracombe's letters."

"But Mr. Portland, you do not know what you are asking. My heart is not the least changed since those days. Ilfracombe's conduct—his marriage—have made

no difference to me. I wish they had. I wish I had got over my trouble, and could go to you, or any man, with a clear conscience and say, 'I love you.' But I cannot, I never shall. My soul is bound up in that of Ilfracombe. He is *my* husband—not that woman's. I think of him every day; pray for him every night by that name. I know he has deserted me, but I have never deserted him, and there were reasons in his case that made marriage a necessity. It has not destroyed his love for me; that is as true and strong as ever. And it would be impossible to me, whilst his love lasts, to be any other man's wife."

"Who told you that Ilfracombe loves you still—that is, if he ever loved you."

"He told me so himself, only last night when we met in the meadow. He said he wished he had married me when he felt disposed to do it, years ago."

"If he said that, he's a scoundrel and a liar," cried Jack Portland.

"Mr. Portland, how dare you speak so? No one shall call Lord Ilfracombe such names in my presence. He was never dishonest or untrue. He was always the best and kindest and most generous of men to me—just as you heard his wife say this evening—and whoever speaks against him must be my enemy."

"I am not that," replied Jack Portland. "Now,

look here, Miss Llewellyn. The facts are these: Ilfracombe, whatever he may have said to you, is simply infatuated with his wife. He defers to her will—follows her about like a lamb with a blue ribbon round its neck—and obeys her in everything. No one who sees him can help observing how madly in love he is. That is my hold over her. Ilfracombe loses a great deal of money to me. I don't deny it. His money is useful to me, and it is in my power to ruin him if I choose. Indeed I have done a little that way already. Two years ago in Malta I met his wife, then Nora Abinger, and had a pretty hot flirtation with her. There was no real harm in it, but there was not much bloom left on the plum for the next comer, and she compromised herself in so many ways that no prejudiced person would think our acquaintanceship had been an innocent one. A case of circumstantial evidence, certainly, but so are most cases that end fatally for the actors in them. Well, to speak plainly, this is how I stand with the earl and countess. I could ruin them both to-morrow if I chose, and it is for you to render me harmless—draw the dragon's teeth, in fact, and transform him into a lamb."

Nell had grown very white as Portland alluded to Ilfracombe's affection for his wife, but still she shook her head and repeated,—

"I couldn't—indeed, I couldn't."

"When I spoke to you last," persisted Portland, "things were quite different. Then you expected your lover to return to you any day, and you were horrified at the idea of stepping from one equivocal position to another. Now all is changed. Ilfracombe will never live with you again. You are sure of that. He has left you unprotected, and thrown you back upon a life for which he unfitted you without any prospects for the future—a ruined woman, yet with all the instincts of a lady. And I offer you marriage—an honest position if nothing else, and a return to some of the luxuries of life to which you have been so long accustomed. Is it not worth thinking over?"

Nell looked at Jack Portland steadily. She had always hated and despised him, and never more so than at the present moment—but he held the fate of Ilfracombe in his hands. He could ruin his fortunes and destroy his domestic happiness—and he put it in her power to save him. What if she could do it? Would it be a greater sacrifice than flinging herself into the water had been? Could it be a crueller fate than that which she endured now? Could anything—even marriage with Jack Portland, prove more bitter than her present existence and the bare out-look for the future?

"What security would you give me—in case of my complying with your proposal—that my sacrifice would

not be wasted, that you would not continue to lead Ilfracombe into extravagance and folly until you had ruined him?"

"Your best security would lie in the possession of her ladyship's letters," was the reply. "She has such a wholesome dread of my producing them at present that she dares not influence her husband to give up my acquaintance. But Madam Nora hates me too genuinely to delay setting her own machinery in motion one minute after she knows she has no more to fear from me. Set your mind at ease on that score, Miss Llewellyn. The whole matter lies in a nut-shell—my possession of those letters. They are the locks of Samson—the heel of Achilles. Once take them out of my hands and I am powerless to harm—my vulnerable spot is found."

"Tell me all your conditions," continued Nell in a low voice.

Jack Portland's eyes glistened as he exclaimed eagerly,—

"They shall not be difficult ones, my dear. If you will consent to come with me and be married at the registrar's office the letters are yours."

"No, no, I will not trust you, Mr. Portland. I must have the letters first."

"I have greater faith than you have. I believe I *can* trust you. You are too noble a woman to deceive me."

"If I say I will marry you I will marry you. You may rely on that. My worst enemies never called me a liar. But I promise nothing more."

"I ask for nothing more," replied Mr. Portland. "Come, I will make a bargain with you, Nell. I will ride into Newport to-morrow morning and get the license. We must give them twenty-four hours' notice; and the next day we will be married, and as soon as the ceremony is over the letters shall be placed in your hand. Will that satisfy you?"

"No; I must be allowed to examine them first, to make sure they are the original ones, and I must have your attestation in writing that you have never received any others from Miss Abinger, and that if at any time such should crop up they will be forgeries. Else how can I be sure that it—it—might not all be in vain?"

"You know how to drive a hard bargain, Nell, but I agree. Give me yourself, and I am willing to give up everything on earth in exchange. So it is a bargain then. To-morrow, or rather to-day (for the dawn is breaking), is Thursday, and to-morrow, Friday, will be our wedding day."

"An unlucky day," said Nell, with a slight shiver. "But I have not promised yet. You must give me till this afternoon to think it over, Mr. Portland. It has been too hurried a proposal."

"Oh, come, I say, that's too bad. You've as good

as said you'd consent. I'm in downright earnest, Nell, 'pon my soul I am, and as far as in me lies I'll make you a good husband. Now don't be afraid. I know you never had a great opinion of me, but I'm going to reform now, on my word I am, and turn over a new leaf if you'll only help me. Come now, say it's a settled thing."

"Not till this afternoon," she reiterated. "Be here at two o'clock, and I will give you my final answer then. But only under the conditions I have named. I must have the letters beforehand to examine, and the assurance that you have kept none of them back, and then you shall deliver them to me in the registrar's office. On no other terms will I meet you there."

"All right, I agree to them. But now you had better go, or Lennox may come rushing in. Good-night. Are you not going to kiss me before you leave?"

Nell shook her head.

"There will be time for that afterwards," she said gravely. "And don't forget, Mr. Portland, that I have held back nothing from you to-night, and that I come to you with no disguise. You have seen into my heart. If you elect to buy an empty casket don't blame the seller."

"I shall blame no one and nothing," he replied. "I am only too pleased to get you on any terms. I see

you do not believe me when I say I love you, and have loved you all long. You think such a word from my lips a sacrilege, but still it is true, and I shall try to make you love me in return. I am a wild, reckless, perhaps dishonourable fellow, but I have one soft spot in my heart, and that is for you. I shall be here without fail at two o'clock this afternoon. Mind you have your answer ready. And mark you, Nell," he continued rather fiercely, "if it is 'No' the fate of the Ilfracombes is sealed. I shall not be able to bear the disappointment. I shall lay it at his door, and I will take my revenge without delay. You understand?"

"Yes, perfectly. And I *think* my answer will not be 'No.'"

She passed away through the narrow passage as she spoke, and Jack Portland stood and watched her disappear with a new feeling in his heart.

As for Nell, when she had reached the sanctuary of her own room, her thoughts were not of this extraordinary engagement to marry—so suddenly and unexpectedly entered into, and with all men in the world, Jack Portland—she did not think of the sacrifice she was about to make, and for her rival, Lady Ilfracombe. No, her whole mind was bent on solving one question, the only thing which affected her in the whole transaction—did Lord Ilfracombe really love his wife, as Mr. Portland said he did? What incomprehensible

animals women are! She loved this man with her whole soul. She desired his happiness and welfare above all earthly things. She had been ready to throw her life away when she heard he had deserted her. She was ready now, for his sake, and to save the honour of his name, to take upon herself a marriage the very thought of which she loathed and abhorred; but she could not bear the idea that he was happier in his love for his wife than he had been with her, that he had forgotten, in fact, the days which they had spent together, or was glad that they were gone. Her inward cry still was, "Tell me you love me best of all the world, and the other woman can have your title and your money."

To hear Jack Portland expatiating on the earl's infatuation for his countess had been the bitterest thing Nell had yet been called upon to bear—the motive which had made her consent, against her will, to become his wife. But yet she did not quite believe it. She recalled Ilfracombe's affectionate words of the evening before, his pleasure at meeting her again, his regret that he had not done the right thing by her years before, and was resolved to know the truth for herself before she finally sealed her fate by consenting to Mr. Portland's proposal. As she cogitated thus, all in a cold tremble and flutter, Nell came to the desperate resolve to seek an interview with the earl, and tell him of this proposal, and ask his advice whether she should marry

or not. Then she should see, she said to herself, by his look, his manner, his sorrow or his joy, if he loved her still. But he would not let her marry, she felt certain of that, and smiled as she thought of it; but then the letters, those fatal letters, what would become of him and the countess if she declined? She sat by the window until it was time to dress herself anew without being able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion.

CHAPTER XII.

When she descended to the parlour her father and mother were already seated at the breakfast-table. To her courteous "good-morning" they vouchsafed no reply. They were evidently still displeased with her for her rebellion of the night before. Nell went up to the farmer's side and laid her hand on his.

"Father," she said in a trembling voice, "I have been thinking over what you asked me yesterday, and I am willing to do as you say. I will go to Lord Ilfracombe and ask him to intercede with Sir Archibald Bowmant about the raising of your rent."

This avowal changed the manner of both the old people at once.

"That's my good lass!" exclaimed her mother. "I knew you wouldn't hold out against father and me for long."

"Well done, Nell!" replied Mr. Llewellyn; "and you'll succeed, my girl, for it's few men, be they lords or ploughboys, that would like to refuse anything to a face like yours."

"Lor'! father, don't go puffing the maid up on her

good looks," cried his wife. "Handsome is as handsome does; that's my motto. But I don't think his lordship will refuse her all the same; for he was rare generous to her whilst she was in service. Ah, Nell, 'twas the foolishest thing as you ever did to chuck up that place. You might find out, whilst you're about it, if there should happen to be a vacancy in her ladyship's house now."

"All right, mother," said Nell gently; and then, drawing a letter from her pocket, she continued—"I wrote this note to Lord Ilfracombe last night, father; and, if you approve it, you might send it over to the Hall by Tom."

She unfolded the paper and read,—

"My Lord,—My father wishes that I should speak to you on a matter important to himself. If it should be quite convenient, will your lordship send word by the bearer at what hour this morning I could have a few minutes' conversation with you?—Your's respectfully,

"E. Llewellyn."

"A very proper note," said her mother approvingly.

"Ay, and don't our Nell write a neat hand?" put in the farmer. "You're a rare scholar, Nell, though I don't know where you got it; for Hetty, who had the

same advantages, can't do more than manage a few words, and them not legible. It'll do rarely, my lass, and is just the thing I wanted. His lordship can't refuse so simple a request. I'll send Tom over with it at once." And he rose from the table for the purpose.

"Come now, my girl, sit down, do, and eat your breakfast," quoth Mrs. Llewellyn, seeing that her daughter still lingered by the window.

"No, thank you, mother. I don't feel like eating this morning. I wrote the letter because I don't like to cross father, but I've a faint heart about it. The earl may not like to be worried now he is out for a holiday, and I'd be loath to make him angry."

"Nonsense, Nell. He must be a cranky fellow if a little note like yours would put him out. He can but say, 'No,' lass, and then there'll be no harm done. But if you hadn't writ it, father would likely have always thought you might have saved the rent if you'd a mind to, so it's just as well to humour him. Come, take your tea, or I'll be angry."

The girl drank the cup of tea which her mother handed her, and took up her station again by the window.

If he should be angry, she thought; or if he should be engaged and unable to see her, how could she face

the other without knowing the worst, or the best? And if the best, what then? Her life seemed to have become a tangled coil which she had no power of unravelling. In about half an hour she saw the hedger, Tom, shambling down the dell with a white envelope in his hands. She rushed forward feverishly to intercept him. It was stamped with the earl's coronet. Nell tore it open and devoured its contents.

"My Dear Miss Llewellyn,—If you will be in Mrs. Hody's sitting-room at eleven o'clock, I will come to you there for a few minutes.—Yours faithfully,

"Ilfracombe."

He would see her, then; she would see him! All, for the moment, seemed bright again.

Her parents were delighted with the news.

"There, now, what did I tell ye?" said Mr. Llewellyn; "I knew no gentleman, let alone a lord, would refuse to see a servant as had done her duty by him. You've done the job now, Nell, as sure as a gun. The earl will persuade Sir Archibald to lower the rent again, and mother and me will feel we owe it all to you. Give me a buss, lass! It's summat for a man to have such a handsome daughter to boast of. They may say as Beauty's deceitful, but it beats brains any

day. You've saved the old farm to us, my girl, and I'm thankful to you for it."

"I'll do my best, dear father," said Nell; "but you mustn't make too sure. The earl, with all the goodwill in the world, may not have the power, but I'm sure he'll try to get it done."

"And when did you ever hear of a lord trying for anything that didn't succeed?" exclaimed her mother; "it isn't as if he was a nobody! But come, my lass, you mustn't go up to the Hall in that soiled dress. You've a clean print in your drawers, so go and put it on, and make your hair tidy. It looks as if you'd been up all night."

And the old woman bundled her daughter upstairs to look after her wardrobe.

"Now, where did you put that nasty poison?" she asked, as they entered the bedroom together.

"Where you told me, mother; on the top of the wardrobe," answered Nell.

"Have you written a label for it yet?"

"No; I forgot to do so."

"Well, don't you put it off another day," replied Mrs. Llewellyn; "for father was quite vexed with me for letting the bottle go out of my hands. He says a wine-glassful of that stuff would kill the strongest man in Monmouth."

"No one can get at it there," said Nell, quietly.

"That's all right then, but I shouldn't like for there to be an accident with it. Here, Nell, tie this blue silk handkerchief round your throat. You always look so nice in blue, I think."

Nell assented passively to all her mother's propositions, and, putting a straw hat on her head, walked slowly up the meadow and through the pine plantation, to the private apartments of the housekeeper at the Hall.

"Well, Nell," said Mrs. Hody when she arrived there, "and so you've come to have a private audience of his lordship. He came to tell me he would see you here at eleven o'clock, but as it was a private matter, he did not wish to have it discussed in the dining-room, so I was to send him word quietly when you arrived. And what can you have to say to the earl, I wonder, as all the world can't hear."

"I asked to speak to Lord Ilfracombe on some business connected with my father, Mrs. Hody," replied Nell, blushing; "he was my former master, you know, or father would have come himself, but he thought his lordship would rather see me."

"Ah! well, I suppose it's all right," responded the virtuous housekeeper; "but I should have thought the study or the gun-room would have been a fitter place. However, now you're here, please to sit

down, and I'll go and tell his lordship as you're come. You may have to wait a bit, I'm not sure as they've finished breakfast, but he'll be here, I suppose, before long. Bless me, but you do look dazed, Nell Llewellyn; that fever has run you down terrible. Will you have a glass of wine before I go?"

"No thank you, Mrs. Hody," replied the girl, as she sat down in a chair and leaned her aching head against the wall. Mrs. Hody bustled out of the room, and it seemed ages to Nell before any one came to join her. She heard voices and laughter proceeding from the garden, and many other sounds indicative of life and enjoyment, but all about the housekeeper's domains, the intensest quiet seemed to reign. At last it was broken by the sound of a light quick footstep which made Nell's heart leap within her bosom, coming along the stone passage, and in another moment, the door opened and closed, and Lord Ilfracombe stood before her. Nell struggled to her feet to meet him.

"Oh! Vernie," were her first words; "it is not my fault."

"Hus—h," said the earl, as he opened the door again and listened to hear if by any chance they could be overheard; "you mustn't call me by that name, Nell, lest any of the servants should have a mind for eavesdropping."

It was a small thing and a very natural thing for

him to say, but it fell on the girl's excited spirits like a cold douche.

"I forgot, forgive me," she recommenced; "it was not my fault (I was going to say) that you received that note,—my lord. I would not have sent it to the Hall on any account, but my father fancied I might have some influence with you in a certain matter, and insisted on my asking to see you."

"It is all right," he said kindly; "only we must keep to the business—you understand."

"Oh! yes," she answered, with a catch in her breath, "and it is soon told. My father has been a tenant of Sir Archibald's for many years, twenty-five, I think, or more, he has lived at Panty-cuckoo Farm all his married life, and both I and my sister were born there. Father has done a great deal for the land, and spent a lot of money on it, but Sir Archibald Bowmant keeps raising the rent until he fears it will be impossible for him to keep it on, and he thought perhaps—father thought that—*you* might be able to help him by your influence with Sir Archibald."

"Bnt I don't quite understand," said the earl; "what is it Mr. Llewellyn wants me to do, Nell?"

"He fancied you might be able to remonstrate with Sir Archibald, because it is so unfair."

Lord Ilfracombe looked grave.

"I am sorry to refuse any request of your father's, but I really don't see my way to it. I am not a friend of Sir Archibald's, you see. I am quite a new acquaintance, and I know nothing of his monetary affairs. I am afraid he would resent any interference on my part as a liberty."

"I told father so," replied Nell, whose eyes were fixed on the earl all the time. "I thought just the same myself, but he was so obstinate. I did not know how to refuse him, without—raising his suspicions."

"Ah—!" replied Ilfracombe, thoughtfully, "*now*, don't you see the imprudence of refusing to accept any settlement at my hands, Nell? You might have helped your father in this emergency."

"Not with *your* money, Lord Ilfracombe, given in such a cause. You don't know my father. He would have died sooner than have taken it."

"Like his daughter," said the earl; "well, you don't know how unhappy you have made me by refusing all assistance at my hands; and since I met you the other evening and learned that you were alive, you have occupied all my thoughts, Nell. I will tell you what I will do, if possible. I will ask Sir Archibald Bowmant if he will sell me Panty-cuckoo Farm, and if he will part with the property, and I become your father's

landlord, he need not fear my raising the rent to him, I should feel much more inclined to lower it. And then some day Nell, when you marry, as I have done, you will let me settle the old farm on you as a wedding present, and set my poor conscience at rest for evermore, won't you?"

Nell set her teeth hard together as she replied,—

"Would you like to see me married, would it make you happier?"

There was not much need for him to answer, the light that illumined his whole face at the idea was sufficient answer.

"Is there any chance of it?" he asked her, eagerly.

"There is an excellent chance if I chose to accept it. A man, a gentleman, who knows the circumstances of my life, and so cannot say afterwards that I have deceived him, has made me an offer of marriage, though I have not yet definitely accepted him."

"And do you like him, Nell? Will he be kind to you?" said Ilfracombe. He would have liked to see her respectably married, for whilst she lived as she was doing now, she was a constant reproach to him, but, like all his sex, though unwilling to accept the responsibility himself, he did not *quite* like the idea of any other man possessing what had been his. But he stamped down the

feeling. It would decidedly be for the best, he said to himself.

"Does he love you? Would he be good to you?" he repeated anxiously.

"He *says* he loves me," she answered slowly, "and I shall take good care he is not unkind to me."

"A man would be a brute who could be unkind to you," said the earl, with deep feeling in his voice, "Nell, I think that your illness has made you more beautiful than ever. It has refined your whole appearance. But this man—I am glad he is a gentleman; you are not fit to be the wife of a clown, and you can hold your own with any lady in the land."

"So you advise me to marry him?" she said, raising her large liquid eyes to his face.

Ilfracombe remembered afterwards how much they looked like the eyes of a dumb animal that regard you patiently, never mind what pain you may be putting it to, but at the time he only saw their pathetic beauty.

"My dear girl," he replied, drawing nearer to her, and taking her hand in his; "how can I do otherwise than advise you to accept this proposal, that is, if the fellow has enough to keep you in a decent position of life. It is hard for a woman to fight the world alone, Nell. You are very beautiful, and the world will look

kindly on you whilst you remain so; but beauty does not last for ever, and when the evil days of old age and perhaps penury come, it is well for a woman if she is an honoured and respected wife. You know I must feel very deeply on this subject, for the reason that *I*, in my reckless thoughtlessness, have done so much to mar your prospects of making a good marriage; but if I find that, spite of all, you *do* marry well, I shall be a very grateful and a very happy man."

"If I knew that you would have no regrets," said Nell, with white parched lips; "if I were sure that you loved your wife, and she loved you—"

"Oh, if that assurance will make your task easier, my poor Nell, let me give it you," cried Ilfracombe; "and indeed I am sure it is better in any case, since everything between us two is over, that we should understand each other perfectly on that point. I *do* love my wife with all my heart, and I hope—nay, I believe she loves me almost as well. You could hardly suppose that I should have married her else—under the circumstances. She had no money, no particular birth, and no particular good looks. What should I have married her for, except for love? But she took me completely by storm the first time I met her, and I have been at her feet ever since. So you need have no scruples on that score. And I believe, Nell—indeed, I feel sure that if you were married, and especially

to a gentleman, Nora would prove a true friend to you. She is a warm-hearted girl without any affectation about her, and I told her the history of our acquaintance, and she was genuinely sorry for your fate. You need fear nothing from Nora. She will be as glad to hear you are happily married as I shall be."

"That is enough," said Nell, in a low voice, "that settles the matter my lord, but I thought I should like to hear you say so with your own lips first. The next thing you will hear will be of my marriage."

"But when is it to be, Nell, and what is the happy man's name?" asked the earl in quite a new voice, it was so merry, and buoyant, and relieved."

"Oh, you will know all that in good time," replied the girl, trying to imitate his cheerfulness; "it is not quite a settled thing yet, but it will be soon now."

"And you will not refuse to take a wedding present from me, Nell, for the old times' sake, will you?" said Ilfracombe, insinuatingly; "perhaps it may be Panty-cuckoo Farm, who knows? if Sir Archibald consents to part with it, and then you will be your father's landlord. Wouldn't that be funny? How surprised the old people would be when you showed them the title-deeds. And you will let me have the very first intimation of the event, won't you?"

"I will, my lord," said Nell, in a dull, constrained tone.

"No, no, Nelly, not that. I was only obliged to caution you just now, because the servants are so beastly curious in this house. But we are quite alone, and you must call me "Vernie" again, just once more, and kiss me as you used to do in the old days."

She turned and caught him passionately to her breast, and murmured in his ear, "Vernie, Vernie. God bless you for ever."

"God bless you, Nell," he responded as he kissed her heartily in return.

"I am going now," she said presently with trembling lips, "and we may not meet again—not just yet. You offered to do great things for me, Vernie, but I would rather you were a friend to my old father. If —if—anything should happen to me, will you be kind to him for my sake? Give him a little help if he should need it, dear, or become his landlord if possible, which would please me better than anything."

"I will be his friend and yours, Nell, to my life's end," replied Ilfracombe; "and if I cannot purchase Panty-cuckoo Farm, and matters grow worse here, he shall have one of my own farms in Huntingdonshire, and be comfortable for the rest of his days. But why do you say 'if anything should happen to you.' What should happen, my dear? You are getting well and

strong, and shall live to a hundred years with your good man."

"Do you think so?" replied the girl, with a sad smile. "Well, if I do, my parents shall owe their comfort to no other hand than mine; and if I don't, you will not forget your promise to me."

And before he could say another word to her, she was gone. The two old people were waiting her return with the greatest anxiety, and exuberant were their rejoicings when they heard the news she had to tell. The earl had not only promised to try and purchase Panty-cuckoo Farm, but had said that in the event of his failure, he would transplant them all to one of his own farms in Huntingdonshire.

"Ay," exclaimed the old man, "though it'll be a sore wrench to leave Panty-cuckoo, it will be a fine thing to live under his lordship's tenantcy. Sir Archibald, he's only an upstart when all's said and done. His father was the first baronet, and it takes centuries to make 'em know their places. He wouldn't never have thought of sweating the tenantry for to pay his own rates and taxes, if he'd been a thorough-bred 'un, but I suppose he knows no better. But the Earl of Ilfracombe, why, of course, *he* knows how to treat those that work to make the prosperity of the country. He's a real aristocrat, born and bred, and wouldn't demean

himself to raise a man's rent to pay for his own extravagances. Whatever we might feel at leaving the old farm, lass, I don't know if we wouldn't be wiser to take his lordship's offer at once, and transplant all our goods and chattels to Huntingdonshire."

"But you mustn't do anything in a hurry, father," exclaimed his wife, alarmed by the rapidity of her good man's ideas; "you must wait till we have word from his lordship. But it's a fine thing you thought of sending our Nell over to the Hall to speak with him. It's made our fortunes. We shall all be the better for it, sha'n't us, my lass?"

"Yes, *all,*" replied her daughter in a dull tone, as if she were dreaming.

"Now I declare, girl, if you haven't got one of your muddly fits on again," said Mrs. Llewellyn. "If you spoke to his lordship in that sort of way, I wonder he ever listened to you. He must have thought you were half asleep. It all comes of your taking no breakfast. Who ever heard of a healthy young woman beginning the day on an empty stomach? It's absurd to think of such a thing."

Nell went up to her mother, and kissed her wrinkled forehead.

"Never mind, mother," she said gently; "don't grumble at me to-day, for I don't feel as if I could

bear it. You shall think better of me to-morrow, I promise you."

And she left the farmer and his wife to congratulate each other on the possession of so handsome a daughter, that no one could find it in their hearts to refuse her anything.

And Nell sat in her own room, thinking—thinking. It was nearing the hour when she had promised to give Mr. Portland her answer. He had agreed to come to that place for it, and stand under her window till she appeared to give it him. He was more eager for it than one would have given him credit for. He had lain awake the night before, wondering if Nell had really meant what she said, and what his life would feel like when she brought her gracious presence into it. He could jest and be sarcastic with her when he saw no likelihood of her consenting to marry him, but now that she had half consented, his feelings seemed already to have become somewhat purified by the very possibility of such a thing. Perhaps those few hours of anticipation formed the best part of Jack Portland's existence—the least like the years that had gone before it. He felt humbled as he looked back upon the past—fearful as he contemplated the future. For the first time, he knew himself to be utterly unworthy of the regard or the possession of a good woman. And as he stood beneath Nell Llewellyn's

window, he felt certain that she would tell him she could not consent to such a step. Fancy his relief and pleasure when she looked for a moment from the casement and said:

"Mr. Portland, I have made up my mind, and *it is to be.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE licence having been procured, the marriage ceremony before the registrar of Usk was accomplished in a very few minutes. Jack Portland had only to meet Nell at the office the following morning, and in half-an-hour they walked out again man and wife. The girl was very calm and collected over the whole affair —so calm indeed, that her new-made husband looked at her with surprise. They walked back to their respective destinations by a bye-path, so that they might converse unseen, though nobody in Usk would have been very much astonished, if they had encountered one of the gentlemen from the Hall taking a stroll with such a notorious beauty as Farmer Llewellyn's daughter.

"Well, Nell," commenced Jack Portland, "so it really is *un fait accompli,* and you are Mrs. Portland. Have you told the old people yet?"

"No! I waited until, as you say, it should be an accomplished thing."

"When shall you break the news to them? Won't

they be very much surprised? How will they take it, do you think?"

"Oh! they will only feel too honoured at my having made such a good match—at my having married a 'real gentleman,'" replied Nell, with quiet sarcasm. "What else should farmers feel?"

"You'll have to tell them before you join me at 'The Three Pilchards' this evening."

"Perhaps! It depends on what humour they may be in. At all events, you can announce the fact to them to-morrow morning."

"What a funny girl you are, to want to run away from home in so secret a manner. Is it because of Ilfracombe's vicinity? Are you afraid he will be jealous? It would be very unjust if he were. A regular dog-in-the-manger sort of business."

"No! you are quite mistaken. I am afraid of no one and nothing. I am my own mistress and free to do as I choose. It is my fad to have things as I say. But let us sit down here for a minute, whilst we decide exactly what we intend to do."

She took a seat upon a grassy bank as she spoke, and drew a packet of letters from her pocket. Jack Portland sat down beside her, and regarded them ruefully.

"There go all my hopes of making any more money out of that muff Ilfracombe. Nell, you ought to think

I valüe you very highly to have struck such a bargain with you as I have."

"Do you think so?" she rejoined. "Well, I prophecy, Mr. Portland, that a day will come when you will look back and bless me for having had the courage to buy these letters from you, at whatever cost—a day when you will regard the life you have led hitherto with loathing and abhorrence, and scorn to do a dishonourable act. A day when you will thank heaven that you are an honest man, and live by honest work alone."

"I am afraid that day is in the clouds, Nell, that is, if you call play dishonest, for I should never live to see it without."

"I am not so sure of that. There must be something better in your nature than you have discovered yet, or you would not have offered to make a ruined woman like myself your wife."

"Let us hope there is, for your sake. Now, as for our plans!"

"These are foolish Lady Ilfracombe's letters," said Nell, handling the packet, "and here is your affirmation that there are no more in your possession. Did you make the appointment with her in the meadow for this afternoon at five o'clock?"

"Yes; I wrote her a note to say I had received the packet from London, and would deliver it to her, without fail, at that hour."

"She has good reason to doubt the truth of your promise, but to see you in the meadow will not be compromising, so she will keep the appointment, and I shall be there to meet her. You will not expect to see me at 'The Three Pilchards' before nine."

"Can't you come earlier?"

"Not without exciting the suspicions of my parents, and making my mother resolve to sit up to let me in again. It will be better as I say. At nine o'clock, or a little after, I shall be there. I hope the registrar will not blab the news of our marriage through Usk before that time."

"I think not. I pledged him to secrecy with a golden tip. But to-morrow every-one must know it, both at Usk Hall and Panty-cuckoo Farm."

"Oh, yes; certainly! To-morrow everyone must know it," replied Nell, in the same impassive tone; "and now we had better think of going back, Mr. Portland."

"Not 'Mr. Portland' now, Nell, surely!" said her companion. "You must call me 'Jack.'"

"'Jack!'" repeated the girl, as if she were saying a lesson.

They rose together as she spoke, and proceeded towards the Hall. When they reached the farm gates, Nell slipped from him without any further farewell, and entered her father's house. Jack Portland looked after

her a little wistfully. He had married her, certainly, but had he gained her? Had she done it only to save Lord Ilfracombe from further disgrace and ruin—to save his countess's reputation for the sake of his hitherto unblemished name? He was not quite sure, but he had a shrewd suspicion of the truth, and as Mr. Portland turned away, he sighed.

Lady Ilfracombe was in high spirits at luncheon that afternoon. Jack had actually compromised himself to the degree of *writing* to assure her she should receive back her letters, and for the first time, perhaps, she really believed him. Her eyes were dancing, and her cheeks flushed with expectation. When her husband asked her how she intended to spend the afternoon, she actually laughed across the table at Mr. Portland, as she replied, that she had promised to take a stroll with his friend.

"Old Jack and you going botanising together;" exclaimed Ilfracombe: "that is a good joke. Well, I was going to ask him to ride over to Pontypool with me, but I suppose your sex gives you the prior claim."

"I should rather think so," said the countess; "at least, if Mr. Portland deserts me, it will be the last time I ever make an appointment with him, so mind that, Mr. Portland!"

"Don't alarm yourself, Lady Ilfracombe," replied Jack Portland, who also appeared to be in unusually

good spirits that afternoon, "my word is my bond. Besides, as you leave Usk so soon, it may be my last opportunity of enjoying a *tête-à-tête* with your ladyship for some time to come. Is the date of your departure definitely fixed?"

"Definitely!" replied the earl. "We start *en route* for Wiesbaden by the three o'clock train to-morrow afternoon. We don't expect to be on the Continent more than a few weeks, Jack, and when we return to Thistlemere for the shooting, you must join us as usual."

Mr. Portland looked important.

"Well, I'm not quite sure of that, old chap. It's awfully good of you to ask me, but we will talk of it afterwards. If you don't start till three to-morrow, I expect I shall have some news to tell you before you go."

"News!" cried Lady Ilfracombe. "Oh, Mr. Portland, what is it? Do tell us at once. What is it about? Anything to do with us, or does it only concern yourself? Is it good news, or bad? Now don't keep us in this terrible suspense."

"How like a woman," exclaimed Mr. Portland. "How much would you leave for to-morrow at this rate. No, Lady Ilfracombe, my news must really wait. It will come on you as a great surprise, but I hope it won't be a disagreeable one. Now, there is food for your curiosity to feed on for the rest of this afternoon.

Grand news, remember, and something you have never dreamt of before, the most incredible thing you could conceive."

"You're going to be married," cried Nora, with feminine audacity, which set the whole table in a roar.

"Well, you *have* drawn on your imagination, Lady Ilfracombe, this time," said Sir Archibald. "Mr. Portland, married! I should as soon think of my kestrel hawk going in for the domesticities."

"Jack married," laughed the earl. "Come, you have indeed thought of the most incredible thing you could conceive. We shall have you writing a novel after this, Nora. You have evidently a gift for imagining the infinitely impossible."

"There must be something very ridiculous about me, I fear," said Mr. Portland, "that everyone thinks it such a far-fetched idea that I should settle down."

"*You* settle down, old man," replied Ilfracombe. "Yes, when you're carried to your grave, not before. However, let us change so unprofitable a subject. You are booked then, Nora, for the day, so perhaps Lady Bowmant will permit me to be her cavalier."

"With pleasure, Lord Ilfracombe! I shall be delighted to get you to myself for a little, since you are going to be cruel enough to desert us so soon."

They all rose laughing from table after that, and dispersed to their separate apartments.

It was pleasant and cool when Nora strolled out to the meadow to meet Jack Portland. Her thoughts were pleasant too. On the next day she was going to take her husband far away from the temptation of Mr. Portland's society, and she hoped before they met him again, to have persuaded Ilfracombe to give up play altogether. Those abominable letters would be destroyed by that time. She was determined that she would burn them to ashes as soon as ever she got them in her hands, and then the coast would be clear before her and Ilfracombe for the rest of their married life. She hummed the air of a popular ditty to herself as she walked through the rich thick grass, expecting to see Mr. Portland every moment coming to meet her with the longed-for packet in his hands.

Instead of which, a young woman plainly attired, came up to her and said,—

"I beg your pardon, Lady Ilfracombe, but are you waiting for Mr. Portland?"

Nora turned round exclaiming angrily,—

"And what business is that of yours?" when she recognised the speaker, "Oh, Miss Llewellyn, is that you? I—I—did not know you at first. Yes, I am waiting for Mr. Portland, though I cannot think how you came to know it."

"Because he told me so himself, and commissioned me to deliver this packet to you?"

Lady Ilfracombe grew very red, as she took the letters.

"He commissioned you to give them to me? It is very strange. I do not understand. He said he should be here himself. What on earth made him give this packet to you?"

"Because I insisted on it; he could not help himself," replied Nell. "Lady Ilfracombe, do not be angry with me for mentioning it, but my bedroom at the farmhouse is over that occupied by Mr. Portland, and I was at my window the night you visited him there, and heard all that passed between you about those letters."

"That was eavesdropping," exclaimed the countess with crimson cheeks, "and you had no right to do it. If you made use of what you overheard you would ruin me with my husband."

"Do you think me capable of such a thing? I should not have listened to a single word, unless I had thought I could do you a service by doing so. As soon as I understood the dilemma you were in, and why you had sought that man, I resolved, if possible, to get the letters he was so meanly withholding from you."

"*You* resolved?" cried Nora in surprise.

"Yes, and as soon as you and he had left to return

to the Hall, I went down to his room and ransacked it in order to find them. I had not done so when Mr. Portland came back and found me there,—after which there was an explanation between us, and I forced him to give them up to me—with a written affirmation that he has no more in his possession."

"And he assured me that he had telegraphed to London for them, and only received them this morning."

"If he said so, you might have been sure it was untrue."

"Miss Llewellyn, you don't like Jack Portland any more than I do," said Nora, looking straight in the other's face.

"I have no reason to do so, Lady Ilfracombe."

"And you actually did this for *me*—how good and sweet of you it was. I have not been used to receive such favours from my own sex. But why did you do it? What am I to you?"

"You are *his* wife," answered Nell, in a low voice, "and he loves you. Lady Ilfracombe, I believe you know who I am."

"Yes, I think I do," said Nora with a little confusion; "I guessed it; I recognised you, when we first met, from your description. You—you—are Nell Llewellyn, are you not—who—who—"

"Don't be afraid of wounding me by saying it,"

replied Nell, gently; "and don't shrink from me, for I shall never intrude on your presence again."

At these words, so sweetly and humbly spoken, all the generosity of Lady Ilfracombe's nature was roused at once.

"Shrink from you, my dear girl, and when you have just rendered me the greatest service possible?" she exclaimed, "What a brute you must think me. Why should I? Neither you nor I are to blame, and you have been so sorely injured. We are both Ilfracombe's wives, I suppose, in God's sight, though I happen to bear his name. It is funny, isn't it, that a Christian country should make such a wide difference between a few words pronounced by the law, and God's great law of Nature? But Nell, I am sorry for you, indeed I am, and always have been."

"I believe you," replied Nell. "For I heard you say so that night. But I did not come here to speak with you of my own affairs, only to give those letters into your keeping, and to beg of you, as you value your reputation and your husband's happiness, never to have any secret dealings with Mr. Portland again."

"Indeed, you may be sure of that. He is a pitiless scoundrel, without heart or honour. I have suffered too much at his hands to trust him again. But how did you manage to get these letters from him? That is

what puzzles me. How did you bribe him, or have you got him somehow in your power?"

"It little matters," said Nell, with a shudder of remembrance; "he cannot harm me, and I shall not suffer in consequence. But you will let me speak plainly to you, Lady Ilfracombe?"

"Say anything you like," replied Nora, "for I can never thank you enough for what you have done for me."

"When I lived with Lord Ilfracombe, I saw the bad influence this man had over him—how he led him into extravagance and vice, and took the occasion of their so-called friendship to rob him of his money and make him risk his good name."

"I have seen the same, of course," said the countess; "but Ilfracombe is so infatuated with Portland, that he will believe nothing against him. But now that I have these letters, I will make my husband break with him, if I die for it."

"Yes, do—*do!*" cried Nell; "and if need be, tell him everything, so that he sees him in his true colours. Save Lord Ilfracombe from further contamination, as you value his happiness and his honour."

"And what am I to do for you, dear Nell?" asked Nora, as she took the other's hand. "How can I make you happy in return for the great happiness you have given me? Let me do something for you. Don't be

proud, as you were that day at the farm, and send me away miserable. Give me an opportunity of proving my gratitude."

"Do you mean that? Do you say it in earnest?"

"Indeed, indeed I do."

"Then love *him,* Lady Ilfracombe, love him with all your heart and soul, and never let him cast one regretful look backwards, or blame himself for things which were beyond his control. Tell him, if ever he should speak to you of me, that I acquiesced in all his decisions, and thought them for the best—that he was right to marry, and that I thanked God he had secured a wife who loved him, and whom I heard say so with her own lips."

"*You* loved him very dearly, Nell?"

Nell's answer to this question was to sit down suddenly on the grass, and burst into tears, covering her poor face with her attenuated hands, and rocking herself two and fro in her speechless misery. Nora sat down beside her, and threw her arm round her waist. She remembered nothing then but that here was—not her husband's former mistress—but another woman, as loving and as entitled to happiness as herself, who had lost by her gain.

"Nell, Nell," she whispered. "Poor, dear Nell! Don't cry. Ilfracombe remembers and loves you still. It is a cruel fate that makes our two lots so different.

Oh, poor Nell! don't sob like that or you will break my heart."

And the countess put her arms round the other's neck and kissed the tears off her cheeks. The action recalled Nell to herself.

"Thank you," she said softly. "Thank you so much. I shall not forget that you kissed me. But don't think because I cry that I am discontented, or wish things altered from what they are. I know now they are all for the best. Only love him—love him all you are able, and have no more secrets from him, and may God bless you both!"

"I *do* love him," exclaimed Lady Ilfracombe; "and now that you have given me back my peace of mind, I shall be able to show my love for him with a freer conscience. Oh! it was terrible to feel his kisses or hear his praises, and know all the time that that horrid man might carry his threats into execution at any moment, and make my husband hate and despise me. I wonder where Mr. Portland has gone? What will he find to say for himself when we next meet, I wonder?"

"Perhaps you may not meet him. Perhaps he will take good care to keep out of your way."

"What a horrid, odious man he is!" cried Nora. "I would rather be dead than married to such a man."

"So would I," said Nell; "but my task is done, and

I must go. Good-bye, Lady Ilfracombe. I am glad to think I have made you so happy."

"But I shall see you again, Nell," suggested the countess. "We leave Usk to-morrow afternoon; but I shall tell the earl that I have met you, and he will come with me to wish you good-bye."

Nell's eyes had a far-away look in them, as she answered,—

"To-morrow morning, then, Lady Ilfracombe, bring your husband over to the farm to say good-bye to me. And that will be the last, last time, remember. After that I will trouble you no more."

"You have never troubled me," cried Nora genially; "indeed I shall look back on this day in coming years, and say that you are the best friend I have ever had."

Nell turned to her quite brightly, as she replied,—

"Yes, yes, I hope you will. I should like to think that you and he thought of me sometimes as your truest, though humblest friend. For that indeed I am to both of you."

"I feel you are; I shall tell Ilfracombe so this very night," said Nora. "Kiss me once more, Nell, and thank you a thousand times. Oh, how I wish I could repay you!"

"You *will* repay me by making him happy. But — you wear a silk handkerchief, Lady Ilfracombe — if

you would give me that, in remembrance of this meeting, I should prize it more than I can say."

Nora tore it impetuously off her throat.

"Take it!" she exclaimed, as she knotted it round that of Nell. "How I wish you had asked for my jewellery case instead."

Nell smiled faintly.

"I never valued jewels," she said, "though there was a time when I had plenty to wear. But this soft, little handkerchief that has touched your neck, it shall go with me to my grave."

So they parted, the countess dancing up the meadow steep again, with her letters in her hand, as if earth held no further care for her, and Nell walking slowly down the incline that led to the road, her head bent upon her breast, and her eyes cast downwards. One going up to the greatest joy that life holds for any woman, the love and faith of an honest man; the other going downwards to all that was abhorrent and loathly. The success of the one dependent on the failure of the other; the happiness of the one due to the despair of the other; the triumph of the one built on the sacrifice of the other. Nora, who had been so self-willed and rebellious through life, saved from the effects of her escapades by Nell, who had borne her lot so patiently, and taken all her disappointments as righteous retribution. It appears unequal; but it is the way things

are worked in this world. The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. In the next world there will be dust and ashes for some of the great and fortunate ones of this earth, and crowns for the lowly and the despised. And Nell Llewellyn's crown will sparkle with jewels as heaven is studded with its stars.

CHAPTER XIV.

As the Countess of Ilfracombe returned to the Hall, with her packet of letters in her hand, her heart was very glad, but at the same time it was filled with soberer thoughts than it had indulged in for some time past. What was after all the great difference between her and Nell Llewellyn? She had not fallen, it was true—she had not openly disgraced herself—but what had her flirtation with Jack Portland been if not a lowering of her womanly dignity; a soiling of her purity; a smirching of the delicate bloom and whiteness that should have protected her maidenly life as with a veil? Nora felt terribly ashamed of herself as she remembered it. Her great fear had passed away, thanks to Nell's interest and intrepidity, and her mind had time to think of other things. This poor despised girl had saved her from all sorts of horrors; preserved her husband's faith in her; his love for her; had placed it in her hand, as it were, the whole happiness of her life. But she herself—if she destroyed these letters, as she fully intended to do, how would she be any better than before—any more deserving of Ilfracombe's affection

and confidence? She would be safe, it is true, but safety did not constitute worthiness. And Nora had begun to long to *deserve* her husband's love—to be able to accept it with an unburdened conscience—feeling that there was nothing between them, not even a shadow cast from the past. Could she, she asked herself, as she wended homewards, ever summon up the courage to tell him everything, to make him the arbiter of her destiny, to constitute him her judge and await the sentence he chose to pronounce upon her? It would be very awful she thought, terrible beyond description; she did not think she could possibly undergo such an ordeal. She pictured to herself Ilfracombe's stern face as he listened to the unfolding of a tale so dissonant to his own feelings, so unlike all he had conceived of her, so dreadful to hear of the woman of whom he thought so highly, whom he had chosen for his wife before all others. Nora shuddered when she thought thus, and told herself that it could not be. She valued his good opinion and his affection too highly. But there was another side of the question. Without telling Lord Ilfracombe her own part in the matter, how could she convince him of the treachery of Jack Portland towards them both; how induce him to break off, once and for ever, the dangerous intimacy which united them. Her husband might refuse to believe her mere word, as he had refused before. He was a loyal

friend, and a generous man. He would not judge anyone on the unproved testimony of another person. Without the proof which those letters conveyed, would she have any more influence with him than she had had before, when he pooh-poohed her warnings as the idle fears of a well-meaning but ignorant woman? And had she the courage for the sake of them both, and especially for the sake of the husband whom she was beginning to love far better than she did herself, to brave the verdict of Ilfracombe's displeasure, and tell him the whole truth? Nell had been courageous for both their sakes. From a worldly point of view she had no particular reason to care for the earl's interests, still less for those of the wife who had supplanted her; yet she had braved being called a thief, and any other hard name Mr. Portland might have thought fit in his rage to cast at her, in order to do good to those who had in a measure wronged her. Nell was worth a thousand of Nora, so the wife of Ilfracombe said inwardly as she dwelt on these things. And musing after this fashion she reached the Hall, not much happier than she had left it. It was true that she had regained possession of the letters which had made a nightmare of her married life, but they had not brought the peace with them which she had imagined they would. She was out of a certain danger, but she was still *herself,* that was what Nora thought, still a wife

who had deceived her trusting husband, and would not be cleansed in her own eyes till she had made a full confession of her sin. It was contemplating the divine forgiveness which Nell had extended to them both, the single-heartedness which she displayed, the patience and humility with which she bore her own sad lot, which was influencing Lady Ilfracombe almost unconsciously to imitate her as far as lay in her power.

Her indecision, combined with the promptings of the good angel within her, to do what was right, made Nora *distraite* and melancholy during the period of dressing for dinner, and when Lord Ilfracombe joined her he chaffed her on the bad effects of botanising with Jack.

"You had much better have come out with Lady Bowmant and myself, Nora," he said; "we have had a rousing time, but you look as dull as ditch water. What has old Jack been saying to you to quench your spirits?"

"Your dear particular friend has not been saying anything at all to me, Ilfracombe. I have not set eyes on him. He did not keep his appointment."

The earl suspended his operations of dressing, and turned round to regard her with surprise.

"Jack didn't turn up?" he ejaculated. "Why, what on earth can be the reason?"

"I don't know," replied Nora; "and what's more, I don't care."

"Ah, my lady, that sounds very much like pique," exclaimed her husband, laughing; "but for Jack not to keep an appointment with you, I cannot understand such a thing. I hope nothing's the matter with him."

"What should be the matter; Mr. Portland's like a bad halfpenny. He's bound to come back again."

"And how did you spend your afternoon then, darling?" asked the earl; "wasn't it very stupid? How I wish you had come with us instead."

"*I* don't, Ilfracombe, for I have passed a very eventful afternoon. There is no time to tell you of it now, but you shall hear all about it when we find ourselves alone again. There's the second gong; we must go down. Now we shall hear what Mr. Portland has to say for himself."

They heard it as soon as they entered the drawing-room, where their hosts were waiting for them.

"Our party will be smaller than usual to-night, I am sorry to tell you," said Lady Bowmant. "I have just had a note from Mr. Portland to say he has been called away on important business till to-morrow. Isn't it extraordinary? He doesn't say where, or by whom? When did he get the summons? That is what puzzles me. He said nothing about it at luncheon. In fact,

he settled to take a walk with you, if I am not mistaken, Lady Ilfracombe."

"Yes, but he did not come," answered Nora.

"I never knew old Jack to do such a thing in his life before," remarked the earl; "he is generally so punctual in his engagements. And as for business, why, he has no business, except pleasure. The idlest, most unpractical man I ever knew. What *can* the matter be? I am quite curious to learn."

"Well, we must manage to do without him to-night, at all events," said Lady Bowmant, who appeared to be rather offended by the breach of politeness. "I think Mr. Portland might have given us a little more notice, but it is really of no consequence."

"And he might have let my wife know he couldn't walk with her, instead of leaving her to cool her heels in the field waiting for him half the afternoon. I shall have a crow to pluck with Master Jack for this to-morrow."

"Oh, Ilfracombe! do you really think it is worth while?" exclaimed Nora. "I hope none of you will let him imagine that his absence was of the slightest consequence."

"It becomes of consequence when he treats you with so little ceremony," replied the earl, as he offered his arm to his hostess to conduct her to the dining-room.

Mr. Portland's vagaries were not mentioned again during the evening; but when Lord Ilfracombe entered his wife's room that night and found her resting on the sofa in her dressing-gown, instead of fast asleep in bed, the subject was renewed between them.

"Why, my darling, how is this?" he exclaimed, "is your book so interesting that you cannot tear yourself away from it, or are you not sleepy to-night?"

"Neither," answered Nora, gravely. "I was only waiting for my husband."

"And now you have your husband," he answered playfully, as he cast himself down beside her, "what is it?"

"I want to have a little talk with you, Ilfracombe," she said, "and I don't know how to begin."

"What is it all about, sweetheart?" he asked her with a kiss. His manner was enough to disarm any amount of fears, but it was so confident that it made Nora still more nervous.

"I wish you wouldn't kiss me," she said, almost petulantly. "I am going to tell you something about myself, that will make you very angry, and then you will think I accepted your kisses on false pretences."

"I am sorry to hear you say that, Nora," he replied; but whatever you may have done, I can assure you of my forgiveness beforehand, so you can take my kiss as an instalment in advance."

"Don't you be too sure of that," said his wife." It is something that happened before our marriage, and I wasn't too good a girl then, I can assure you. I did all sorts of awful things, and I feel sure you will wish you had never married me when you hear them."

"And why do you tell me of them now, my dear girl? We have been married a year, and you have never thought of doing such a thing before. Neither do I desire to hear anything about the past. Let it rest in peace. You know I was not a saint myself."

"But you told me all about that, Ilfracombe, and I was so silly, I was too frightened to follow your example."

"But who dared to frighten you, darling. Couldn't you trust your husband?" he said tenderly. Nora snuggled up close to his side and buried her face in his bosom as she whispered,—

"No, because I loved you so, I was afraid of losing your love and esteem, if you knew what a wild reckless girl I have been. Ilfracombe, do you remember one day after we were engaged, when you asked me if I had ever had a lover before yourself, what I replied?"

"That you had had so many you couldn't count them, I believe," said the earl, laughing.

"No, no, not that, but that there had been one

man to whom I was engaged, but papa would not hear of our marriage because he had no money."

"Yes! Well, what of him?"

"It was Mr. Portland," said Nora, with her face still hidden. But her husband, in his astonishment, sat bolt upright and put her away.

"Jack, oh! impossible! Nora, why did you not tell me of this before?"

"Because, oh, I am coming to that by and bye. But, indeed, it is true. He was at Malta, you may remember, just at that time, two years before I met you, and staying with his sister Mrs. Loveless. He told you he had met me there. He was very different in appearance then from what he is now, and I flirted and 'spooned,' with him till I fancied I was head over ears in love, and he incited me on to be far more wild than I had ever been before. When I look back and think how young and foolish I was, I see he behaved very badly to me."

"Tell me all, Nora," said the earl sternly.

"I *will* tell you all; don't be afraid, I used to creep out of my father's house after dinner, and meet Mr. Portland late at night, sometimes as late as twelve o'clock, and then sneak back again when everyone had gone to bed. We used to sit under the orange trees for hours, talking, and all that sort of folly, you know—"

"Oh, yes, I know," acquiesced the earl with a groan.

"And one day we went out in a boat and were caught in a squall and had to stay away till the morning. We were with people all the time in a little inn, and papa never found out that Mr. Portland was with me, but he was!"

"Any more pleasant stories to tell me," asked her husband.

"No, that is the worst (bad enough too, isn't it?), as far as I am concerned, but I was foolish enough during that time to write Jack a lot of letters. I used to write two and three times a day when I didn't see him, and in them I spoke very freely of all the pranks we had played together. He wrote to me as well of course, but when we parted I destroyed his letters, but he kept mine."

"Hasn't he given them up to you?" demanded Ilfracombe quickly.

"I have them now; but listen quietly to me, Ilfracombe, for a moment. You were rather vexed with me when we first came home to Thistlemere, because I did not welcome your bosom friend with the cordiality you wished me to extend to him. Why, if I had had the courage to tell you the truth, you would have kicked him out of the house. For, from the moment we met again, whenever Mr. Portland has seen my

disapproval of his influence over you in racing and gambling matters, he has held the threat over my head, that if I tried to dissuade you from throwing your money away, he would hand over those letters of mine, and make you hate and despise me as much as he did."

"The scoundrel!" said Ilfracombe between his teeth.

"He has promised over and over again to restore me those letters," continued Nora, "and again and again he has broken his word. He never meant to give them to me at all, I am convinced of that. He knew that, as soon as I got them into my own hands, I should have the courage to speak to you, and prove to you how unworthy he is."

"How did you get them at last, then, Nora."

"Now comes the hardest part of my confession, Ilfracombe, and I shall never be able to make it whilst you look at me like that."

The Earl tried to smile as he replied,—

"I am not angry with you, Nora, only utterly disgusted with Jack for turning out such a low blackguard, and with myself for being so blind as to believe him to be an honourable man."

"But you will be angry with me for this. Two nights ago he told me that if I went over to his room at the farm I should receive my letters—and I *went.*"

"You visited Portland at his sleeping apartments? Oh, Nora, I thought you had too much pride in your position as my wife—too much respect for yourself—to do such a thing!"

"I would not have gone for anything but those letters," she cried. "Oh, Ilfracombe, believe me and forgive me! I never was a liar. He said they were in his dispatch-box, and I was fool enough to believe him, and fell into the trap. And when I got there, he declared he had made a mistake, and must have left them in town—all lies, all lies!"

"Then how did you get them at last?"

"He wrote me a note this morning—here it is," said Nora, as she produced it from her blotting-case—"to say he had telegraphed for the packet, and it had arrived from town, and if I would meet him in the meadow this afternoon I should receive them. That was the secret of my taking a walk with him, you see, Ilfracombe. *I* take a walk voluntarily with the brute! I would rather be hanged, any day," cried Nora impetuously.

"But he never came, you say."

"No; but someone else did. Can you guess who it was? That Miss Llewellyn from the farm. She is really your girl; she is no more drowned than I am, and, oh, she is so sweet and nice! However did you come to give her up for me?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Nora!" said the earl. "I knew some days back that Nell is still alive, but thought it just as well not to mention the subject to you. But did she bring you your letters?"

"Yes, she did, the dear, good girl. She was at her bedroom window, which overlooks Portland's, when I went there, and heard my entreaties to him to return my letters, and his brutal, sarcastic replies; so as soon as I was gone she confronted him, and *made* him give them up to her—how, she did not tell me, only he did—and she brought them to me. Oh, I *was* glad! I kissed her a dozen times for her kindness."

"But *why* did she do it?" demanded the earl. "I cannot understand her interest in the matter, nor how she induced Portland to do what you could not. It was like Nell; she always was resolute and plucky; but what was the motive?"

"Her love for you, Ilfracombe," replied his wife gravely, "and her desire to keep your name untarnished. Oh! you have never known what was in her noble nature, that is very clear. She is twice the woman I am, or ever shall be. She ought to have been your wife, and she is fit for it."

"Nora, Nell is a good girl, and I deeply regret the part I played in soiling her life; but there is only one wife in the world for me, and she is by my side. It was very good of poor Nell, very generous, very kind,

to have done what she has done for you, and we must think of some means of repaying her. And I am glad to tell you, for her sake and my own, that she is going to be married herself. She came to see me this morning about some business of her father's, and told me the news."

"Going to be married!" repeated Nora, with womanly intuition. "Are you *sure?* She did not mention such a thing to me; and she looked so sad and spoke so sadly, she made me cry. I don't think she can be going to be married. And when I asked her what I could do to return her kindness, she said, —'Love him with all your heart and soul, and never have a secret from him again.'"

"And do you, Nora?" whispered Ilfracombe.

"What?"

"Love me with all your heart and soul."

She turned, and threw her arms about his neck.

"I do—I do! my darling, and never so much as at this moment. Neither will I ever have a secret from you again. There are the letters," she continued, as she drew the packet from her pocket and placed it in his hand. "They were written so long ago that I don't remember what is in them; but whatever it may be—good, bad or indifferent—read it all, dear, and judge me as you will. At all events, you will know the worst,

and I need not fear that I am claiming your love under false pretences for the future."

"And so this is the poor little packet that has kept us apart for so long," murmured the earl, as he regarded it, "but, thank God, has not been powerful enough to sever us from each other's confidence for ever. And you give me leave to do what I will with it —to read its contents from end to end?"

"Yes, yes. Only be quick about it; the suspense of your decision is so hard to bear. Perhaps, who knows, Ilfracombe, after you have seen the folly I have written to another man, you may not wish to have anything to do with me again."

"Yes, I should think that was very probable," remarked the earl, with quiet amusement, as he placed the packet in the empty grate and lighted a match under it. "See! Nora, that is how I read your poor little love-letters of long ago. How amusing they are! But, confound the things! they won't burn. Come, that's better. They're blazing up beautifully now; and I only wish I could see Mr. Jack Portland blazing up with them!"

Lady Ilfracombe looked up joyfully.

"Oh, darling, is that true?" she exclaimed. "Shall we never have our happiness interrupted more by looking on him again?"

"Why, rather not! What do you take me for? Do

you think I would associate with the man who has played you such a dirty trick, and nearly upset our married happiness? No, my dearest; I value you too much for that. Mr. Portland has seen the last of any house which owns me as master."

"Oh, Ilfracombe, you have made me so exquisitely happy! Oh, how I wish poor Nell were as happy as I am. I told her we were leaving Usk to-morrow, and promised that we would go over to the farm together first, and wish her farewell. You will come with me, won't you, darling?"

"Of course I will, since you wish it. You have behaved in a most generous manner regarding this young woman, Nora, and I shall never forget it. That reminds me that, according to my promise to her this morning, I have been sounding Sir Archibald as to the chance of being able to purchase Panty-cuckoo Farm, and I find he is quite ready to sell it at a reasonable price. I fancy they are getting rather hard-up on account of her ladyship's extravagance. So I intend to close with him, and make over the title deeds to Nell as a wedding present. She refused to let me make any provision for her, as I think I told you, but this I shall insist upon."

"Yes, do; it was just like her, dear thing, to refuse your money. Ilfracombe, you owe her a great deal.

She was very much attached to you. I could see that by every word she said."

"Hush, Nora dear, don't allude to it now. You women are apt to grow sentimental when you get together, talking over the same man. She cared for me well enough—so did I for her; but you see we are both going to be married, and live happy ever afterwards. That is the end of most fairy tales, whether they happen in this world or the other. Kiss me, my own darling, and tell me once more that you love me. That is the only thing that concerns us now."

CHAPTER XV.

MR. PORTLAND had two reasons for not appearing at Usk Hall on the evening of the day he married Nell Llewellyn. In the first place, he did not fancy seeing the countess again after she had heard the truth about her letters; in the second, he foresaw more difficulty in getting away, if he left it till after dinner. To have received a summons to London by telegraph or post in the afternoon, and to have been compelled to quit Usk at once, seemed more feasible to him than to announce his determination before the assembled company, to be submitted to their cross-questioning—sent to the railway station in Sir Archibald's carriage, perhaps accompanied by the genial host himself, and to have to bribe the servants to conceal the fact that he never went at all. After that evening, so he argued, when all the world must know that he had married Nell, he would not mind confessing the little ruse to which he had had recourse, and felt sure of receiving sympathy and forgiveness. So he went to "The Three Pilchards," and engaged his rooms, and ordered his dinner in a state of pleased expectancy. The accommodation was not very

grand—the *cuisine* would, doubtless, not be first-rate, but Nell had never been a *gourmande* nor a sybarite, and Mr. Portland pleased himself with thinking how well he would treat her in the future. What with the various race-meetings he had attended, he had been pretty lucky lately, and the visit to Usk Hall had not failed to recoup him still more. He would be able to take his wife abroad to Paris or Italy, if she so wished it, and show her a little life. Perhaps, though, it would be better to run over to Monte Carlo or Homburg, and so combine business with pleasure. How divinely handsome she was, "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall, and most divinely fair!" With what envious eyes he would be followed by the frequenters of the places he thought of. He had little fear that his wife would be recognised by the herd as Lord Ilfracombe's former mistress. She had kept herself too much at home for that, and had hardly ever been seen in public whilst living with the earl. It would only be a few of his intimates who would be likely to know her again. And Jack Portland would not have concerned himself about it if they had. He had married his wife for himself—not for the world, and it was welcome to think what it liked of his choice. A few old cats, whose virtue had never been attacked during the best part of a century, might turn up their noses at her; but Nell was strong enough to hold her own, and so was he. If a thought

crossed his mind that Ilfracombe, on hearing of his marriage with Nell, might insist on giving her as a wedding portion what she had refused as a peace-offering, we must do him the justice to say that it had no weight with him, excepting as it might prove the earl's good feeling towards them both, and be the precursor of a renewed intimacy. For, if something of the kind did not interfere, Jack Portland felt that the condition Nell had made regarding the packet of letters would prove the quietus to his friendship with Ilfracombe. If the countess told her husband the whole truth, he would never receive him again. Of that he was certain. But there was the chance that, for her own sake, Nora would *not* tell him the truth, and in that case, if he heard of the marriage first, he might never be told of the other little affair at all, and the countess, secure of herself, might join her husband in extending her hospitality to him. This was what Mr. Portland was dreaming of as he sat in the parlour of "The Three Pilchards" smoking, and waiting for Nell's arrival. As the time went on, and she did not appear, he grew rather fidgety. He had had his dinner at his usual hour of seven, but, as nine o'clock sounded, it struck him that Nell might expect to see supper waiting for her, so rang the bell to order it.

"What have you in the house? What can I have for supper?"

"Supper, sir?" echoed the country waiter, who though he could play a very pretty tune with a knife and fork himself, was rather taken aback at the gentleman requiring supper at nine, after a hearty dinner at seven.

"Yes. Are you deaf? I expect my wife here soon, and she may require something to eat. What can we have?"

"We have a joint of cold beef in the house, sir, and a veal and ham and pie, and—"

"None of those will do. I want something hot."

"A chicken, sir, with a cauliflower and potatoes?" suggested the waiter.

"Yes, yes. The best you have, whatever it may be. Get it ready as soon as you can. My wife may be here at any moment. Another bottle of that champagne too, which I had at dinner. Cursed bad stuff," he added to himself, as the servant left the room, "but women don't know the difference. Well, who would ever have thought I could have stood such discomfort as this, with so good a grace, for the sake of a woman. But *such* a woman! I don't believe she has her peer in England. As for that little sharp-featured, flirting, deceitful countess, she can't hold a candle to her. What fools and blind men are with regard to women! It is quite impossible to decide why one piece of femininity

should hold them as in a vice whilst they pass over or ignore the virtues of another. Now, to my mind, Nell combines all the perfections of which human nature is capable. She is beautiful, amiable (a bit of a temper, but she very seldom shows it, and a woman is worth nothing without a spice of the devil in her), dignified, sensible, and modest. She would have made a magnificent countess; beaten Lady D—— and Lady S——, and all the other Court beauties hollow. However, I'm very glad Ilfracombe didn't see it in that light, and that the crumbs from the rich man's table have fallen to my share. Hang it all! What a time she is. It's nearly ten. Surely she isn't going to play off any airs and graces on me, and pose as a blushing bride. Or is it only a womanly dodge to make her welcome more assured? She needn't fear missing it. I never felt so much for any woman in my life before. I almost think, if she thought it worth her while, that she might make a better man of me. I wonder if she will learn to love me. I know what her love for that ass Ilfracombe was, and that it is worth a man's trying for. I wonder—I wonder—by Jove! that's the half-hour striking. Whatever can be the reason of this delay? Waiter," continued Mr. Portland to the man, who now appeared with the supper, "is that half-past ten that struck just now? Surely, your clocks must be very fast."

"Don't think so, sir! I heard the missus asking the

master to put 'em on a bit just now. Do you think the lady will come to-night, sir?"

"Of course she will! What do you mean by asking me such a question?"

"Only, you see, sir, we're obliged to close at eleven, whether we like or no, so the missus told me to ask you if—"

"Here!" exclaimed Jack Portland, quickly; "get me pen and ink and paper at once. I must send a messenger up to Panty-cuckoo Farm!"

"Panty-cuckoo Farm," repeated the waiter; "Mr. Llewellyn's place. That be better than a mile and an' arf away from here, sir. It'll take a good bit of time to carry a letter there to-night."

"Never mind! I'm willing to pay for it, and for keeping you up as well, but the message must be carried by some one. Whom have you to send?"

"I expect the ostler can go, but I'll ask the missus," replied the waiter, as he went to consult the higher powers.

In a few minutes he returned to say the ostler would take the letter, and Mr. Portland dispatched his missive on its way. It contained but a very few words, only, "What is the reason of this delay? Pray come at once! Am waiting here impatiently. JACK."

He did not know into whose hands it might fall, so thought it best to be as curt as possible, and then

he sat down to get through the time as best he might till his messenger returned. How trying are the moments when we await in utter darkness the explanation of some mystery which is inexplicable to us. What a thousand and one fancies rush through our brain, as we attempt to penetrate what is impenetrable! How we "think" it may be that—or we "fancy" it must be this—or we "fear" the other. Then, tired out with conjecture, we resolve not to think at all, but wait the natural sequence of events, only to fall back upon fancy and worry ourselves to death with imagination, and, after all, it usually turns out to be nothing—a bogy conjectured up by our anxiety—due as likely as not to the selfishness of our friend, who had not sufficient feeling for us to suspect what we were suffering on his behalf. We have all, at some time or other, experienced the feeling of suspense under which Mr. Portland was suffering now, yes, actually *suffering!*

This selfish, immoral, dishonourable man had found his match at last in fate. Nell Llewellyn was the one creature who had ever awakened any better or higher feelings in his hardened heart, and he was suffering the agony of thinking that she might have repented of her bargain and meant to play him false as he had played so many other people. The ostler took his time to walk to Panty-cuckoo Farm. He was going to be paid for his trouble under any circumstances, so he

didn't see the fun of hurrying himself. Besides, the farm was more than a mile away, and one mile makes two on a dark night, so it was twelve o'clock before the waiter reappeared with Mr. Portland's own note on a salver.

"If you please, sir, the hostler, he 'ave been to Panty-cuckoo Farm, but everybody's a-bed, and he couldn't make no one hear."

"Couldn't make anybody hear!" exclaimed Jack Portland, starting to his feet; "what was the fool about? Why didn't he knock till he *did* make some one hear? What was the good of his going, when he only brings me my own note back again?"

"Well, sir; he did throw stones at the bedroom winders, but no one took no notice of 'im, so Joe, he thought, 'twas no use waiting about there any longer at this time 'o night, so he bringed the note back again, and, perhaps, you'd like me to send it up the first thing in the morning."

"No, no," replied Jack Portland, angrily; "the ostler is a d—d fool for his pains, and you may tell him I said so. Leave the note on the table and leave the room. I wish to be alone!"

"Are we to shut up, sir? Will the lady come to-night, do you think? The last train was in an hour ago!"

"Shut up! shut up! Yes! Do anything you like. I don't care so long as you leave me alone," was the reply.

"Yes, sir; certainly, and what time would you like to be called in the morning, sir?"

"Oh; go to the devil!" cried Portland furiously, as the man disappeared, repeating his usual formula of "Yes, sir;" "thank you, sir," and left him to his disappointment and conjectures.

What *could* be the matter? Where was Nell? What was she doing? What did she mean? These were the questions that repeated themselves over and over in his brain, and which received no answer till the following morning. He would have his answer then, he thought. He would go up to Panty-cuckoo Farm the very first thing and tell the Llewellyns of his marriage to their daughter, and, if need be, take his wife back with him by force. No power on earth could prevent that. But it was not the sort of honeymoon he had promised himself.

Meanwhile Lord and Lady Ilfracombe were saying to each other, as we have seen before, "We will go over to the farm to-morrow morning and say good-bye to Nell, and tell her of all the good things we mean to do for her when she is married," and so at last they all slept, the husband and wife locked in each other's arms—Jack Portland, restlessly, and starting up now and then to remember his disappointment with an oath, and Nell Llewellyn slept also, the sweetest and most peaceful sleep of them all.

She had gone straight home to her parents when she parted with Nora, and had passed a very pleasant evening with them. The old people had been particularly cheerful. Bonnie, the cow, had quite recovered, and was giving her milk as well as ever; and Sir Archibald Bowmant had met the farmer on his way home and intimated to him that he was likely to have a change of landlords.

"I do think," said Mr. Llewellyn, "as his lordship buying the old farm is the grandest thing I've ever heard on, and, if it come to pass (and Sir Archibald spoke of it as a settled thing) mother and me, we shall feel as we owe it all to you, my lass. Shan't us, mother?"

"Yes, indeed," acquiesced the old woman, "it's all due to Nell, there's no question of that. It was a fortunate day for us when you took service with the earl, Nell, though we were both set agen you going to London at the time; but there, one never knows how things will turn out."

Nell looked gratified by her parents' approval. She had been more serious and silent than usual that evening, but now she seemed to brighten up, and talked with them of all they should do and say when Lord Ilfracombe came to tell them of his kindness in person.

"Aye! but that will be a grand occasion," quoth her mother; "and you must do credit to it, my lass. I

daresay the earl will bring his lady with him, and we must all put on our Sunday best to do them honour."

"Mother," said Nell presently, "I have something to tell you. I saw Lady Ilfracombe in the fields this afternoon, and she said that she and the earl intended to call here to-morrow morning. They are going to leave Usk Hall to-morrow afternoon, and so I daresay they will take this opportunity to tell father about the farm. You mustn't go out to-morrow, father, till you have seen him."

"*I* go out," exclaimed the farmer, "on such an occasion? I should think not. Why no one in the house shall stir till they're come and gone. Has the parlour been swept to-day, for if not you and mother will have to stay up till it's done? I couldn't have his lordship sitting down in a dusty room. That wouldn't be the way to make him think us good tenants."

"A dusty room," cried the old woman indignantly. "We've been man and wife now for five-and-twenty years come Michaelmas, Griffith Llewellyn, and you can't name the day you've ever seen my parlour dusty yet. The Queen herself, God bless her, might enter it any day in the week and not soil her royal robes."

"Well, well, wife, there's enough words about that," said her husband. "I'm proud to hear his lordship's coming to Panty-cuckoo, and glad that Nell gave us warning of it. Did you find an opportunity to ask if

there's a chance of your entering the earl's service again, my girl?" he continued to his daughter.

Nell left her seat and approached her father's side, winding her arm round the old man's neck, and laying her cheek gently against his. "No, dear father," she said, "I didn't mention the subject. I don't think I shall ever go to service again, dear. I am not so strong as I was, and it would be too hard for me."

She strangled a kind of sob in her throat as she proceeded:—

"I have been a great burden on you for the last year, father; but I won't be so much longer. If I can't go to service, I will provide for myself some way, don't fear that."

"Ay, my lass, it will be as well. You're a bonny lass, there's no denying, but you don't seem to care much for marriage, and when your mother and me is gone you'll have a sore shift to provide for yourself if you have no work to do. I mentioned his lordship's service because it seems to me as if it has left you pretty well unfit for anything else. Your hands and face and your constitootion ain't fit for a farm-house, Nell, and that's the truth. They improved you and they spiled you both up in London. You're fitter for the town than the country, any one could see that with half an eye. But you're a good girl, my dear, and mother and me, we both say that."

"Thank you, father," she replied, as she kissed him several times, more times than were necessary, according to the rough old farmer's ideas — and then did the same by her mother.

"Good-night, dear, dear mother," she murmured fervently. "You've been a good mother to your poor, thoughtless, useless Nell."

"Aye, that I have," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, with the beautiful self-assurance of the poor, "but you're worth it all the same."

"Thank you, dear, God bless you," said Nell gently, as she prepared to leave the room. At the door she turned and stood regarding the two old people with her lovely hazel eyes, as if she could not gaze enough at them.

"You're a rare fool," cried her mother gaily. "There, run away to your bed, do, and get up wiser in the morning."

And then, as her daughter with a solemn smile disappeared, she remarked to her husband,—

"I'm sometimes half afeared, father, if that girl ain't a bit mazed. She do look at one so queer with them big eyes of hers. Did you notice her just now?"

"Not I," replied the farmer. "I've other things to do besides noticing a maid's eyes. So now come along to bed, wife, and forget all such rubbish, for we'll have to be up betimes to make ready to receive his lordship."

And the old couple went up to their room, laughing and cackling as they passed Nell's door.

And as they did so the clock struck nine.

She heard it as she stood in her bedroom, with her hands clasped in front of her, dazed and bewildered. The world seemed to have closed on her with her parents' good-night kisses—all the people in it appeared to have become indistinct and blurred. They were fading away before her mental vision one by one—the Earl and his Countess, Jack Portland, Hugh Owen, her father and mother, Hetty, everyone. Nell felt she had done with them all for ever. At one moment she thought of writing to Hugh Owen. He had loved her and had great hopes of her, and she had dashed them all aside. She was sorry for his disappointment and his broken faith. Should she write and tell him so. But what could she say, except that the man he saw her with was her former lover, and if he discovered him to be the earl, there would be another unpleasantness for Ilfracombe. Oh, no! Her life had been all a muddle and a mistake, it was best to leave it so. She could not unravel it, and the more she touched it the more entangled it became. Best to remain silent to the last. Not a thought of Portland entered her head. She had made a certain compact with him, and she had meant to end it like this all along. But she moved across the room with a soft lingering step, and eyes

that seemed already covered with the film of death, and gazed from the window that looked towards the house where Ilfracombe was sleeping.

"Good-bye," she murmured indistinctly, "good-bye."

And then Nell turned away, and taking hold of a chair, dragged it to the wardrobe, and mounting on it took down the bottle of poison for which her mother had told her to write a label.

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

Sold by all the principal booksellers on the Continent.

July 1894.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

Each volume 1 Mark 60 Pf. or 2 Francs.

This Collection of British Authors, Tauchnitz Edition, will contain the new works of the most admired English and American Writers, immediately on their appearance, with copyright for continental circulation.

Contents:

Latest Volumes:

The Rubicon. By the author of "Dodo," 1 vol.
The Man in Black. By *Stanley J. Weyman,* 1 vol.
A Beginner. By *Rhoda Broughton,* 1 vol.
Katharine Lauderdale. By *F. Marion Crawford,* 2 vols.
A Yellow Aster. By *"Iota,"* 1 vol.
The Anarchist. By *Richard Henry Savage,* 2 vols.
Life's Little Ironies. By *Thomas Hardy,* 1 vol.
Tom Sawyer Abroad. By *Mark Twain,* 1 vol.
Our Manifold Nature. By *Sarah Grand,* 1 vol.
The Red House Mystery. By *Mrs. Hungerford,* 1 vol.
Marcella. By *Mrs. Humphry Ward,* 3 vols.

Rev. W. Adams: Sacred Allegories 1 v.

Miss Aguilar: Home Influence 2 v. The Mother's Recompense 2 v.

H. Aïdé: Rita 1 v. Carr of Carrlyon 2 v. The Marstons 2 v. In that State of Life 1 v. Morals and Mysteries 1 v. Penruddocke 2 v. "A nine Days' Wonder" 1 v. Poet and Peer 2 v. Introduced to Society 1 v.

W. Harrison Ainsworth: Windsor Castle 1 v. Saint James's 1 v. Jack Sheppard (w. Portrait) 1 v. The Lancashire Witches 2 v. The Star-Chamber 2 v. The Flitch of Bacon 1 v. The Spendthrift 1 v. Mervyn Clitheroe 2 v. Ovingdean Grange 1 v. The Constable of the Tower 1 v. The Lord Mayor of London 2 v. Cardinal Pole 2 v. John Law 2 v. The Spanish Match 2 v. The Constable de Bourbon 2 v. Old Court 2 v. Myddleton Pomfret 2 v. The South-Sea Bubble 2 v. Hilary St. Ives 2 v. Talbot Harland 1 v. Tower Hill 1 v. Boscobel; or, The Royal Oak 2 v. The Good Old Times 2 v. Merry England 2 v. The Goldsmith's Wife 2 v. Preston Fight 2 v. Chetwynd Calverley 2 v. The Leaguer of Lathom 2 v. The Fall of Somerset 2 v. Beatrice Tyldesley 2 v. Beau Nash 2 v. Stanley Brereton 2 v.

Louisa M. Alcott: Little Women 2 v. Little Men 1 v. An Old-Fashioned Girl 1 v. Jo's Boys 1 v.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich: Marjorie Daw, etc. 1 v. The Stillwater Tragedy 1 v.

Mrs. Alexander: A Second Life 3 v. By Woman's Wit 1 v. Mona's Choice 2 v. A Life Interest 2 v. A Crooked Path 2 v. Blind Fate 2 v. A Woman's Heart 2 v. For His Sake 2 v. The Snare of the Fowler 2 v. Found Wanting 2 v. A Ward in Chancery 1 v.

Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse (with Portrait) 2 v.

Lizzie Alldridge: By Love and Law 2 v. The World she awoke in 2 v.

"All for Greed," Author of—All for Greed 1 v. Love the Avenger 2 v.

F. Anstey: The Giant's Robe 2 v. A Fallen Idol 1 v. The Pariah 3 v. The Talking Horse, etc. 1 v. Voces Populi 1 v.

Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism 2 v. Essays in Criticism, *2nd Series*, 1 v.

Sir E. Arnold: The Light of Asia (with Portrait) 1 v.

Miss Austen: Sense and Sensibility 1 v. Mansfield Park 1 v. Pride and Prejudice 1 v. Northanger Abbey 1 v. Emma 1 v.

Baring-Gould: Mehalah 1 v. John Herring 2 v. Court Royal 2 v.

Lady Barker: Station Life in New Zealand 1 v. Station Amusements in New Zealand 1 v. A Year's Housekeeping in South Africa 1 v. Letters to Guy, and A Distant Shore—Rodrigues 1 v.

F. Barrett: The Smuggler's Secret 1 v. Out of the Jaws of Death 2 v.

Miss Bayle's Romance, Author of —*vide* W. Fraser Rae.

Rev. R. H. Baynes: Lyra Anglicana, Hymns and Sacred Songs 1 v.

Beaconsfield: *vide* Disraeli.

A. Beaumont: Thornicroft's Model 2 v.

Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë): Jane Eyre 2 v. Shirley 2 v. Villette 2 v. The Professor 1 v.

Ellis & Acton Bell: Wuthering Heights, and Agnes Grey 2 v.

E. Bellamy: Looking Backward 1 v.

F. Lee Benedict: St. Simon's Niece 2 v.

E. F. Benson: Dodo 1 v. The Rubicon 1 v.

Walter Besant: The Revolt of Man 1 v. Dorothy Forster 2 v. Children of Gibeon 2 v. The World went very well then 2 v. Katharine Regina 1 v. Herr Paulus 2 v. The Inner House 1 v. The Bell of St. Paul's 2 v. For Faith and Freedom 2 v. Armorel of Lyonesse 2 v. Verbena Camellia Stephanotis 1 v.

W. Besant & James Rice: The Golden Butterfly 2 v. Ready-Money Mortiboy 2 v. By Celia's Arbour 2 v.

A. Bierce: In the Midst of Life 1 v.

E. Bisland: *vide* Miss Broughton.

William Black: A Daughter of Heth 2 v. In Silk Attire 2 v. Adventures of a Phaeton 2 v. A Princess of Thule 2 v. Kilmeny 1 v. The Maid of Killeena, etc. 1 v. Three Feathers 2 v. Lady Silverdale's Sweetheart 1 v. Madcap Violet 2 v. Green Pastures and Piccadilly 2 v. Macleod of Dare 2 v. White Wings 2 v. Sunrise 2 v. The Beautiful Wretch 1 v. Mr. Pisistratus Brown, M.P., in the Highlands 1 v. Shandon Bells (w. Portrait) 2 v. Judith Shakespeare 2 v. The Wise Women of Inverness, etc. 1 v. White Heather 2 v. Sabina Zembra 2 v. Strange Adventures of a House Boat 2 v. In Far Lochaber 2 v. The New Prince Fortunatus 2 v. Stand Fast, Craig Royston! 2 v. Donald Ross of Heimra 2 v. Magic Ink, etc. 1 v. Wolfenberg 2 v. The Handsome Humes 2 v.

The Black-Box Murder 1 v.

Richard Doddridge Blackmore: Alice Lorraine 2 v. Mary Anerley 3 v. Christowell 2 v. Tommy Upmore 2 v.

"Blackwood," Tales from — 1 v. — *Second Series* 1 v.

Isa Bladgen: The Woman I loved, and the Woman who loved me, etc. 1 v.

Lady Blessington: Meredith 1 v. Strathern 2 v. Memoirs of a Femme de Chambre 1 v. Marmaduke Herbert 2 v. Country Quarters (with Portrait) 2 v.

Baroness Bloomfield: Reminiscences of Court and Diplomatic Life (with the Portrait of Her Majesty the Queen) 2 v.

Rolf Bolderwood: Robbery under Arms 2 v. Nevermore 2 v,

Miss Braddon: Lady Audley's Secret 2 v. Aurora Floyd 2 v. Eleanor's Victory 2 v. John Marchmont's Legacy 2 v. Henry Dunbar 2 v. The Doctor's Wife 2 v. Only a Clod 2 v. Sir Jasper's Tenant 2 v. The Lady's Mile 2 v. Rupert Godwin 2 v. Dead-Sea Fruit 2 v. Run to Earth 2 v. Fenton's Quest 2 v. The Lovels of Arden 2 v. Strangers and Pilgrims 2 v. Lucius Davoren 3 v. Taken at the Flood 3 v. Lost for Love 2 v. A Strange World 2 v. Hostages to Fortune 2 v. Dead Men's Shoes 2 v. Joshua Haggard's Daughter 2 v. Weavers and Weft 1 v. In Great Waters, etc. 1 v. An Open Verdict 3 v. Vixen 3 v. The Cloven Foot 3 v. Barbara 2 v. Just as I am 2 v. Asphodel 3 v. Mount Royal 2 v. The Golden Calf 2 v. Flower and Weed 1 v. Phantom Fortune 3 v. Under the Red Flag 1 v. Ishmael 3 v. Wyllard's Weird 3 v. One Thing Needful 2 v. Cut by the County 1 v. Like and Unlike 2 v. The Fatal Three 2 v. The Day will come 2 v. One Life, One Love 2 v. Gerard; or, The World, the Flesh, and the Devil 2 v. The Venetians 2 v. All along the River 2 v.

Lady Brassey: A Voyage in the "Sunbeam" 2 v. Sunshine and Storm in the East 2 v. In the Trades, the Tropics, and the Roaring Forties 2 v.

The Bread-Winners 1 v.

Bret Harte: *vide* Harte.

Rev. W. Brock: A Biographical Sketch of Sir H. Havelock, K. C. B. 1 v.

Shirley Brooks: The Silver Cord 3 v. Sooner or Later 3 v.

Miss Rhoda Broughton: Cometh up as a Flower 1 v. Not wisely, but too well 2 v. Red as a Rose is She 2 v. Tales for Christmas Eve 1 v. Nancy 2 v. Joan 2 v. Second Thoughts 2 v. Belinda 2 v. Doctor Cupid 2 v. Alas! 2 v. Mrs. Bligh 1 v. A Beginner 1 v.

Broughton & Bisland: A Widower Indeed 1 v.

John Brown: Rab and his Friends 1 v.

E. Barrett Browning: A Selection from her Poetry (w. Port.) 1 v. Aurora Leigh 1 v.

R. Browning: Poet. Works (w. Portr.) 4 v.

Edward Bulwer (Lord Lytton): Pelham (w. Portrait) 1 v. Eugene Aram 1 v. Paul Clifford 1 v. Zanoni 1 v. The Last Days of Pompeii 1 v. The Disowned 1 v. Ernest Maltravers 1 v. Alice 1 v. Eva, and the Pilgrims of the Rhine 1 v. Devereux 1 v. Godolphin and Falkland 1 v. Rienzi 1 v. Night and Morning 1 v. The Last of the Barons 2 v. Athens 2 v. The Poems and Ballads of Schiller 1 v. Lucretia 2 v. Harold 2 v. King Arthur 2 v. The New Timon, St Stephen's 1 v. The Caxtons 2 v. My Novel 4 v. What will he do with it? 4 v. Dramatic Works 2 v. A Strange Story 2 v. Caxtoniana 2 v. The Lost Tales of Miletus 1 v. Miscellaneous Prose Works 4 v. The Odes and Epodes of Horace 2 v. Kenelm Chillingly 4 v. The Coming Race 1 v. The Parisians 4 v. Pausanias, the Spartan 1 v.

Henry Lytton Bulwer (Lord Dalling): Historical Characters 2 v. The Life of Viscount Palmerston 3 v.

J. Bunyan: The Pilgrim's Progress 1 v. "Buried Alone," 1 v.

F. Hodgson Burnett: Through one Administration 2 v. Little Lord Fauntleroy 1 v. Sara Crewe and Editha's Burglar 1 v. The Pretty Sister of José 1 v.

Miss Burney: Evelina 1 v.

R. Burns: Poetical Works (w. Port.) 1 v.

Richard F. Burton: Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina 3 v.

Mrs. B. H. Buxton: "Jennie of 'The Prince's,'" 2 v. Won! 2 v. Great Grenfell Gardens 2 v. Nell—on and off the Stage 2 v. From the Wings 2 v.

Lord Byron: Poet. Works (w. Port.) 5 v.

Hall Caine: The Bondman 2 v.

V. Lovett Cameron: Across Africa 2 v.

Mrs. Campbell-Praed: Zéro 1 v. Affinities 1 v. The Head Station 2 v.

Rosa Nouchette Carey: Not Like other Girls 2 v. "But Men must Work" 1 v. Sir Godfrey's Grand-Daughters 2 v.

Thomas Carlyle: The French Revolution 3 v. Frederick the Great 13 v. Oliver

Cromwell's Letters and Speeches 4 v. The Life of Schiller 1 v.

A. Carr: Treherne's Temptation 2 v.

Egerton Castle: Consequences 2 v. "La Bella" etc. 1 v.

Maria Louisa Charlesworth: Oliver of the Mill 1 v.

M. Cholmondeley: Diana Tempest 2 v.

"Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family," Author of—Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family 2 v. The Draytons and the Davenants 2 v. On Both Sides of the Sea 2 v. Winifred Bertram 1 v. Diary of Mrs. Kitty Trevylyan 1 v. The Victory of the Vanquished 1 v. The Cottage by the Cathedral 1 v. Against the Stream 2 v. The Bertram Family 2 v. Conquering and to Conquer 1 v. Lapsed, but not Lost 1 v.

Mrs. W. K. Clifford: Love-Letters of a Worldly Woman 1 v. Aunt Anne 2 v. The Last Touches, etc. 1 v. Mrs. Keith's Crime 1 v. A Wild Proxy 1 v.

Frances Power Cobbe: Re-Echoes 1 v.

Coleridge: The Poems 1 v.

C. R. Coleridge: An English Squire 2 v.

Charles A. Collins: A Cruise upon Wheels 2 v.

Mortimer Collins: Sweet and Twenty 2 v. A Fight with Fortune 2 v.

Wilkie Collins: After Dark 1 v. Hide and Seek 2 v. A Plot in Private Life, etc. 1 v. The Woman in White 2 v. Basil 1 v. No Name 3 v. The Dead Secret, etc. 2 v. Antonina 2 v. Armadale 3 v. The Moonstone 2 v. Man and Wife 3 v. Poor Miss Finch 2 v. Miss or Mrs.? 1 v. The New Magdalen 2 v. The Frozen Deep 1 v. The Law and the Lady 2 v. The Two Destinies 1 v. My Lady's Money, and Percy and the Prophet 1 v. The Haunted Hotel 1 v. The Fallen Leaves 2 v. Jezebel's Daughter 2 v. The Black Robe 2 v. Heart and Science 2 v. "I say No," 2 v. The Evil Genius 2 v. The Guilty River and The Ghost's Touch 1 v. The Legacy of Cain 2 v. Blind Love 2 v.

"Cometh up as a Flower," Author of—*vide* **Broughton.**

Hugh Conway: Called Back 1 v. Bound Together 2 v. Dark Days 1 v. A Family Affair 2 v. Living or Dead 2 v.

Fenimore Cooper: The Spy (with Portrait) 1 v. The Two Admirals 1 v. The Jack O'Lantern 1 v.

M. Corelli: Vendetta! 2 v. Thelma 2 v. A Romance of Two Worlds 2 v. "Ardath" 3 v. Wormwood. A Drama of Paris 2 v. The Hired Baby, etc. 1 v. Barabbas 2 v.

The County 1 v.

George L. Craik: A Manual of English Literature and Language 2 v.

Mrs. Craik (Miss Mulock): John Halifax, Gentleman 2 v. The Head of the Family 2 v. A Life for a Life 2 v. A Woman's Thoughts about Women 1 v. Agatha's Husband 1 v. Romantic Tales 1 v. Domestic Stories 1 v. Mistress and Maid 1 v. The Ogilvies 1 v. Lord Erlistoun 1 v. Christian's Mistake 1 v. Bread upon the Waters 1 v. A Noble Life 1 v. Olive 2 v. Two Marriages 1 v. Studies from Life 1 v. Poems 1 v. The Woman's Kingdom 2 v. The Unkind Word, etc. 2 v. A Brave Lady 2 v. Hannah 2 v. Fair France 1 v. My Mother and I 1 v. The Little Lame Prince 1 v. Sermons out of Church 1 v. The Laurel Bush, etc. 1 v. A Legacy 2 v. Young Mrs. Jardine 2 v. His Little Mother, etc. 1 v. Plain Speaking 1 v. Miss Tommy 1 v. King Arthur: not a Love Story 1 v.

Miss Georgiana Craik: Lost and Won 1 v. Faith Unwin's Ordeal 1 v. Leslie Tyrrell 1 v. Winifred's Wooing, etc. 1 v. Mildred 1 v. Esther Hill's Secret 2 v. Hero Trevelyan 1 v. Without Kith or Kin 2 v. Only a Butterfly, etc. 1 v. Sylvia's Choice; Theresa 2 v. Anne Warwick 1 v. Dorcas 2 v. Two Women 2 v.

G. M. Craik & M. C. Stirling: Two Tales of Married Life (Hard to Bear, by Miss Craik; A True Man, by M. C. Stirling) 2 v.

Mrs. Augustus Craven: Eliane. Translated by Lady Fullerton 2 v.

F. Marion Crawford: Mr. Isaacs 1 v. Doctor Claudius 1 v. To Leeward 1 v. A Roman Singer 1 v. An American Politician 1 v. Zoroaster 1 v. A Tale of a Lonely Parish 2 v. Saracinesca 2 v. Marzio's Crucifix 1 v. Paul Patoff 2 v. With the Immortals 1 v. Greifenstein 2 v. Sant' Ilario 2 v. A Cigarette-Maker's Romance 1 v. Khaled 1 v. The Witch of Prague 2 v. The Three Fates 2 v. Don Orsino 2 v. The Children of the King 1 v. Pietro Ghisleri 2 v. Marion Darche 1 v. Katharine Lauderdale 2 v.

J. W. Cross: *v.* **George Eliot's Life.**

Miss Cummins: The Lamplighter 1 v. Mabel Vaughan 1 v. El Fureidîs 1 v. Haunted Hearts 1 v.

P. Cushing: The Blacksmith of Voe 2 v.

"Daily News": The War Correspondence 1877 by A. Forbes, etc. 3 v.

Dark 1 v.

R. Harding Davis: Gallegher, etc. 1 v. Van Bibber and Others 1 v.

De Foe: Robinson Crusoe 1 v.

M. Deland: John Ward, Preacher 1 v.

Democracy 1 v.

Demos *vide* George Gissing.

Charles Dickens: The Pickwick Club (w. Port.) 2 v. American Notes 1 v. Oliver Twist 1 v. Nicholas Nickleby 2 v. Sketches 1 v. Martin Chuzzlewit 2 v. A Christmas Carol; The Chimes; The Cricket on the Hearth 1 v. Master Humphrey's Clock (Old Curiosity Shop; Barnaby Rudge, etc.) 3 v. Pictures from Italy 1 v. The Battle of Life; the Haunted Man 1 v. Dombey and Son 3 v. David Copperfield 3 v. Bleak House 4 v. A Child's History of England (2 v. 8° M. 2,70.) Hard Times 1 v. Little Dorrit 4 v. A Tale of two Cities 2 v. Hunted Down; The Uncommercial Traveller 1 v. Great Expectations 2 v. Christmas Stories 1 v. Our Mutual Friend 4 v. Somebody's Luggage; Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings; Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy 1 v. Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions; Mugby Junction 1 v. No Thoroughfare; The Late Miss Hollingford 1 v. The Mystery of Edwin Drood 2 v. The Mudfog Papers, etc. 1 v. *Vide* Household Words, Novels and Tales, and J. Forster.

Charles Dickens: The Letters of Charles Dickens edited by his Sister-in-law and his eldest Daughter 4 v.

B. Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield): Conings by 1 v. Sybil 1 v. Contarini Fleming (w. Port.) 1 v. Alroy 1 v. Tancred 2 v. Venetia 2 v. Vivian Grey 2 v. Henrietta Temple 1 v. Lothair 2 v. Endymion 2 v.

W. Hepworth Dixon: Personal History of Lord Bacon 1 v. The Holy Land 2 v. New America 2 v. Spiritual Wives 2 v. Her Majesty's Tower 4 v. Free Russia 2 v. History of two Queens 6 v. White Conquest 2 v. Diana, Lady Lyle 2 v.

L. Dougall: Beggars All 2 v.

Ménie Muriel Dowie: A Girl in the Karpathians 1 v.

A. C. Doyle: The Sign of Four 1 v. Micah Clarke 2 v. The Captain of the Pole-Star 1 v. The White Company 2 v. A Study in Scarlet 1 v. The Great Shadow, etc. 1 v. Sherlock Holmes 2 v. The Refugees 2 v. The Firm of Girdlestone 2 v. The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes 2 v.

Professor Henry Drummond: The Greatest Thing in the World, etc. 1 v.

The Earl and the Doctor: South Sea Bubbles 1 v.

The Earl of Dufferin: Letters from High Latitudes 1 v.

Mrs. Edwardes: Archie Lovell 2 v. Steven Lawrence, Yeoman 2 v. Ought we to Visit her? 2 v. A Vagabond Heroine 1 v. Leah: A Woman of Fashion 2 v. A Blue-Stocking 1 v. Jet: Her Face or Her Fortune? 1 v. Vivian the Beauty 1 v. A Ballroom Repentance 2 v. A Girton Girl 2 v. A Playwright's Daughter, and Bertie Griffiths 1 v. Pearl-Powder 1 v.

Miss A. B. Edwards: Barbara's History 2 v. Miss Carew 2 v. Hand and Glove 1 v. Half a Million of Money 2 v. Debenham's Vow 2 v. In the Days of my Youth 2 v. Untrodden Peaks, etc. 1 v. Monsieur Maurice 1 v. Black Forest 1 v. A Poetry-Book of Elder Poets 1 v. A Thousand Miles up the Nile 2 v. A Poetry-Book of Modern Poets 1 v. Lord Brackenbury 2 v.

Miss M. B.-Edwards: The Sylvestres 1 v. Felicia 2 v. Brother Gabriel 2 v. Forestalled 1 v. Exchange no Robbery, etc. 1 v. Disarmed 1 v. Doctor Jacob 1 v. Pearla 1 v. Next of Kin Wanted 1 v. The Parting of the Ways 1 v. For One and the World 1 v. A French Parsonage 1 v. France of To-day 1 v. Two Aunts and a Nephew 1 v. A Dream of Millions 1 v. The Curb of Honour 1 v. France of To-day (2nd Series) 1 v.

Barbara Elbon: Bethesda 2 v.

E. Eggleston: The Faith Doctor 2 v.

George Eliot: Scenes of Clerical Life 2 v. Adam Bede 2 v. The Mill on the Floss 2 v. Silas Marner 1 v. Romola 2 v. Felix Holt 2 v. Daniel Deronda 4 v. The Lifted Veil, and Brother Jacob 1 v. Impressions of Theophrastus Such 1 v Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book 1 v.

George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals. Edited by her Husband J. W. Cross 4 v.

Mrs. Elliot: Diary of an Idle Woman in Italy 2 v. Old Court Life in France 2 v. The Italians 2 v. Diary of an Idle Woman in Sicily 1 v. Pictures of Old Rome 1 v. Diary of an Idle Woman in Spain 2 v. The Red Cardinal 1 v. Sophia 1 v. Diary of an Idle Woman in Constantinople 1 v. Old Court Life in Spain 2 v.

Henry Erroll: An Ugly Duckling 1 v.

Essays and Reviews 1 v.

Estelle Russell 2 v.

D'Esterre-Keeling: *vide* Keeling.

Euthanasia 1 v.

J. H. Ewing: Jackanapes, etc. 1 v. A Flat Iron for a Farthing 1 v. The Brownies, etc. 1 v.

Expiated 2 v.

F. W. Farrar: Darkness and Dawn 3 v.

The Fate of Fenella, by 24 authors, 1 v.

Percy Fendall: *vide* F. C. Philips.

George Manville Fenn: The Parson o' Dumford 2 v. The Clerk of Portwick 2 v.

Fielding: Tom Jones 2 v.

Five Centuries of the English Language and Literature (vol. 500) 1 v.

George Fleming: Kismet. A Nile Novel 1 v. Andromeda 2 v.

A. Forbes: My Experiences of the War between France and Germany 2 v. Soldiering and Scribbling 1 v. See also "Daily News," War Correspondence.

R. E. Forrest: Eight Days 2 v.

Mrs. Forrester: Viva 2 v. Rhona 2 v. Roy and Viola 2 v. My Lord and My Lady 2 v. I have Lived and Loved 2 v. June 2 v. Omnia Vanitas 1 v. Although he was a Lord 1 v. Corisande 1 v. Once Again 2 v. Of the World, Worldly 1 v. Dearest 2 v.

J. Forster: Life of Charles Dickens 6 v. Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith 2 v.

Jessie Fothergill: The First Violin 2 v. Probation 2 v. Made or Marred, and "One of Three" 1 v. Kith and Kin 2 v. Peril 2 v. Borderland 2 v.

"Found Dead," Author of—*v.* J. Payn.

Caroline Fox: Memories of Old Friends from her Journals, edited by H. N. Pym 2 v.

Frank Fairlegh 2 v.

Edward A. Freeman: The Growth of the English Constitution 1 v. Select Historical Essays 1 v. Sketches from French Travel 1 v.

James Anthony Froude: Oceana 1 v. The Spanish Story of the Armada, etc. 1 v.

Lady G. Fullerton: Ellen Middleton 1 v. Grantley Manor 2 v. Lady Bird 2 v. Too Strange not to be True 2 v. Constance Sherwood 2 v. A stormy Life 2 v. Mrs. Gerald's Niece 2 v. The Notary's Daughter 1 v. The Lilies of the Valley, and The House of Penarvan 1 v. The Countess de Bonneval 1 v. Rose Leblanc 1 v. Seven Stories 1 v. The Life of Luisa de Carvajal 1 v. A Will and a Way, etc. 2 v. Eliane 2 v. (*vide* Craven). Laurentia 1 v.

Mrs. Gaskell: Mary Barton 1 v. Ruth 2 v. North and South 1 v. Lizzie Leigh, etc. 1 v. Charlotte Brontë 2 v. Lois the Witch, etc. 1 v. Sylvia's Lovers 2 v. A Dark Night's Work 1 v. Wives and Daughters 3 v. Cranford 1 v. Cousin Phillis, etc. 1 v.

Dorothea Gerard: Lady Baby 2 v. Recha 1 v. Orthodox 1 v.

E. Gerard: A Secret Mission 1 v.

Agnes Giberne: The Curate's Home 1 v.

G. Gissing: Demos. A Story of English Socialism 2 v. New Grub Street 2 v.

Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone: Rome and the Newest Fashions in Religion 1 v. Bulgarian Horrors, etc. 1 v. The Hellenic Factor in the Eastern Problem 1 v.

Goldsmith: The Select Works: The Vicar of Wakefield, etc. (w. Portrait) 1 v.

Edward J. Goodman: Too Curious 1 v.

J. Gordon: A Diplomat's Diary 1 v.

Major-Gen. C. G. Gordon's Journals, at Kartoum. Introduction and Notes by A. E. Hake (with eighteen Illustrations) 2 v.

Mrs. Gore: Castles in the Air 1 v. The Dean's Daughter 2 v. Progress and Prejudice 2 v. Mammon 2 v. A Life's Lessons 2 v. Two Aristocracies 2 v. Heckington 2 v.

Sarah Grand: Our Manifold Nature 1 v.

Miss Grant: Victor Lescar 2 v. The Sun-Maid 2 v. My Heart's in the Highlands 2 v. Artiste 2 v. Prince Hugo 2 v. Cara Roma 2 v.

M. Gray: The Silence of Dean Maitland 2 v. The Reproach of Annesley 2 v.

Ethel St. Clair Grimwood: My Three Years in Manipur (with Portrait) 1 v.

W. A. Baillie Grohman: Tyrol and the Tyrolese 1 v.

Archibald Clavering Gunter: Mr. Barnes of New York 1 v.

"Guy Livingstone," Author of—Guy Livingstone 1 v. Sword and Gown 1 v. Barren Honour 1 v. Border and Bastille 1 v. Maurice Dering 1 v. Sans Merci 2 v. Breaking a Butterfly 2 v. Anteros 2 v. Hagarene 2 v.

J. Habberton: Helen's Babies & Other People's Children 1 v. The Bowsham Puzzle 1 v. One Tramp: Mrs. Mayburn's Twins 1 v.

H. Rider Haggard: King Solomon's Mines 1 v. She 2 v. Jess 2 v. Allan Quatermain 2 v. The Witch's Head 2 v. Maiwa's Revenge 1 v. Mr. Meeson's Will 1 v. Colonel Quaritch, V. C. 2 v. Cleopatra 2 v. Allan's Wife 1 v. Beatrice 2 v. Dawn 2 v. Montezuma's Daughter 2 v.

H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang: The World's Desire 2 v.

Hake: *vide* "Gordon's Journals."

Mrs. S. C. Hall: Can Wrong be Right? 1 v. Marian 2 v.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton: Marmorne 1 v. French and English 2 v.

Thomas Hardy: The Hand of Ethelberta 2 v. Far from the Madding Crowd 2 v. The Return of the Native 2 v. The Trumpet-Major 2 v. A Laodicean 2 v. Two on a Tower 2 v. A Pair of Blue Eyes 2 v. A Group of Noble Dames 1 v. Tess of the D'Urbervilles 2 v. Life's Little Ironies 1 v.

Beatrice Harraden: Ships that pass in the Night 1 v.

Agnes Harrison: Martin's Vineyard 1 v.

Bret Harte: Prose and Poetry (Tales of the Argonauts; Spanish and American Legends; Condensed Novels; Civic and Character Sketches; Poems) 2 v. Idyls of the Foothills 1 v. Gabriel Conroy 2 v. Two Men of Sandy Bar 1 v. Thankful Blossom, and other Tales 1 v. The Story of a Mine 1 v. Drift from Two Shores 1 v. An Heiress of Red Dog, and other Sketches 1 v. The Twins of Table Mountain, etc. 1 v. Jeff Briggs's Love Story, etc. 1 v. Flip and other Stories 1 v. On the Frontier 1 v. By Shore and Sedge 1 v. Maruja 1 v. Snow-bound at Eagle's and Devil's Ford 1 v. The Crusade of the "Excelsior" 1 v. A Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready, etc. 1 v. Captain Jim's Friend, etc. 1 v. Cressy 1 v. The Heritage of Dedlow Marsh, etc. 1 v. A Waif of the Plains 1 v. A Ward of the Golden Gate 1 v. A Sappho of Green Springs, etc. 1 v. A First Family of Tasajara 1 v. Colonel Starbottle's Client, etc. 1 v. Susy 1 v. Sally Dows, etc. 1 v. A Protégée of Jack Hamlin's, etc. 1 v.

Sir H. Havelock: *vide* Rev. W. Brock.

G. Hawthorne: *vide* "Miss Molly."

Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter 1 v. Transformation 2 v. Passages from the English Note-Books 2 v.

"Heir of Redclyffe," Author of—*vide* Yonge.

Sir Arthur Helps: Friends in Council 2 v. Ivan de Biron 2 v.

Mrs. Hemans: Select Poet. Works 1 v.

Admiral Hobart Pasha: Sketches from my Life 1 v.

Mrs. Cashel Hoey: A Golden Sorrow 2 v. Out of Court 2 v.

Oliver Wendell Holmes: The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table 1 v. The Professor at the Breakfast-Table 1 v. The Poet at the Breakfast-Table 1 v. Over the Teacups 1 v.

A. Hope: Mr. Witt's Widow 1 v. A Change of Air 1 v.

Ernest William Hornung: A Bride from the Bush 1 v. Under Two Skies 1 v. Tiny Luttrell 1 v.

Household Words: conducted by Charles Dickens. 1851-56. 36 v. NOVELS and TALES reprinted from Household Words by Charles Dickens. 1856-59. 11 v.

How to be Happy though Married 1 v.

Miss Howard: One Summer 1 v. Aunt Serena 1 v. Guenn 2 v. Tony, the Maid, etc. 1 v. The Open Door 2 v. A Fellowe and His Wife 1 v.

W. D. Howells: A Foregone Conclusion 1 v. The Lady of the Aroostook 1 v. A Modern Instance 2 v. The Undiscovered Country 1 v. Venetian Life (w. Portrait) 1 v. Italian Journeys 1 v. A Chance Acquaintance 1 v. Their Wedding Journey 1 v. A Fearful Responsibility, and Tonelli's Marriage 1 v. A Woman's Reason 2 v. Dr. Breen's Practice 1 v. The Rise of Silas Lapham 2 v.

Thomas Hughes: Tom Brown's School Days 1 v.

Mrs. Hungerford: Molly Bawn 2 v. Mrs. Geoffrey 2 v. Faith and Unfaith 2 v. Portia 2 v. Loys, Lord Berresford, etc. 1 v. Her First Appearance, etc. 1 v. Phyllis 2 v. Rossmoyne 2 v. Doris 2 v. A Maiden all Forlorn, etc. 1 v. A Passive Crime, etc. 1 v. Green Pleasure and Grey Grief 2 v. A Mental Struggle 2 v. Her Week's Amusement; Ugly Barrington 1 v. Lady Branksmere 2 v. Lady Valworth's Diamonds 1 v. A Modern Circe 2 v. Marvel 2 v. The Hon. Mrs. Vereker 1 v. Under-Currents 2 v. In Durance Vile, etc. 1 v. A Troublesome Girl, etc. 1 v. A Life's Remorse 2 v. A Born Coquette 2 v. The Duchess 1 v. Lady Verner's Flight 1 v. A Conquering Heroine and "When in Doubt" 1 v. Nora Creina 2 v. A Mad Prank, etc. 1 v. The Hoyden 2 v. The Red House Mystery 1 v.

Jean Ingelow: Off the Skelligs 3 v. Poems 2 v. Fated to be Free 2 v. Sarah de Berenger 2 v. Don John 2 v.

The Hon. Lady Inglis: The Siege of Lucknow 1 v.

John H. Ingram: *vide* E. A. Poe.

Iota: A Yellow Aster 1 v.

Washington Irving: The Sketch Book (with Portrait) 1 v. The Life of Mahomet 1 v. Successors of Mahomet 1 v. Oliver Goldsmith 1 v. Chronicles of Wolfert's Roost 1 v. Life of Washington 5 v.

Helen Jackson (H. H.): Ramona 2 v.

Charles T. C. James: Holy Wedlock 1 v.

G. P. R. James: Morley Ernstein (with Portrait) 1 v. Forest Days 1 v. The False Heir 1 v. Arabella Stuart 1 v. Rose d'Albret 1 v. Arrah Neil 1 v. Agincourt 1 v. The Smuggler 1 v. The Step-Mother 2 v. Beauchamp 1 v. Heidelberg 1 v. The Gipsy 1 v. The Castle of Ehrenstein 1 v. Darnley 1 v. Russell 2 v. The Convict 2 v. Sir Theodore Broughton 2 v.

Henry James: The American 2 v. The Europeans 1 v. Daisy Miller, etc. 1 v. Roderick Hudson 2 v. The Madonna of the Future, etc. 1 v. Eugene Pickering, etc. 1 v. Confidence 1 v. Washington Square, etc. 2 v. The Portrait of a Lady 3 v. Foreign Parts 1 v. French Poets and Novelists 1 v. The Siege of London, etc. 1 v. Portraits of Places 1 v. A Little Tour in France 1 v.

J. Cordy Jeaffreson: A Book about Doctors 2 v. A Woman in Spite of Herself 2 v. The Real Lord Byron 3 v.

Mrs. Jenkin: "Who Breaks—Pays" 1 v. Skirmishing 1 v. Once and Again 2 v. Two French Marriages 2 v. Within an Ace 1 v. Jupiter's Daughters 1 v.

Edward Jenkins: Ginx's Baby, etc. 2 v.

"Jennie of 'the Prince's,'" Author of —*vide* B. H. Buxton.

Jerome K. Jerome: The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow 1 v. Diary of a Pilgrimage 1 v. Novel Notes 1 v.

Douglas Jerrold: History of St. Giles and St. James 2 v. Men of Character 2 v.

"John Halifax," Author of—*vide* Mrs. Craik.

"Johnny Ludlow," Author of—*vide* Mrs. Henry Wood.

Johnson: The Lives of the English Poets 2 v.

Emily Jolly: Colonel Dacre 2 v.

"Joshua Davidson," Author of—*vide* E. Lynn Linton.

Miss Kavanagh: Nathalie 2 v. Daisy Burns 2 v. Grace Lee 2 v. Rachel Gray 1 v. Adèle 3 v. The Two Sicilies 2 v. Seven Years, etc. 2 v. French Women of Letters 1 v. English Women of Letters 1 v. Queen Mab 2 v. Beatrice 2 v. Sybil's Second Love 2 v. Dora 2 v. Silvia 2 v. Bessie 2 v. John Dorrien 3 v. Two Lilies 2 v. Forget-me-nots 2 v.

A. Keary: Oldbury 2 v. Castle Daly 2 v.

Elsa D'Esterre-Keeling: Three Sisters 1 v. A Laughing Philosopher 1 v. The Professor's Wooing 1 v. In Thoughtland and in Dreamland 1 v. Orchardscroft 1 v.

Kempis: *vide* Thomas a Kempis.

R. B. Kimball: Saint Leger 1 v. Romance of Student Life abroad 1 v. Undercurrents 1 v. Was he Successful? 1 v. To-Day in New-York 1 v.

A. W. Kinglake: Eothen, a Narrative from the East 1 v. The Invasion of the Crimea 14 v.

Charles Kingsley: Yeast 1 v. Westward ho! 2 v. Two Years ago 2 v. Hypatia 2 v. Alton Locke 1 v. Hereward the Wake 2 v. At Last 2 v.

Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of his Life, ed. by his Wife 2 v.

H. Kingsley: Ravenshoe 2 v. Austin Elliot 1 v. The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn 2 v. The Hillyars and the Burtons 2 v. Leighton Court 1 v. Valentin 1 v. Oakshott Castle 1 v. Reginald Hetherege 2 v. The Grange Garden 2 v.

Rudyard Kipling: Plain Tales from the Hills 1 v.

May Laffan: Flitters, Tatters, and the Counsellor, etc. 1 v.

Charles Lamb: The Essays of Elia and Eliana 1 v.

A. Lang: *vide* H. R. Haggard.

Mary Langdon: Ida May 1 v.

"The Last of the Cavaliers," Author of—The Last of the Cavaliers 2 v. The Gain of a Loss 2 v.

The Hon. Emily Lawless: Hurrish 1 v.

Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands from 1848 to 1861 1 v. More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands from 1862 to 1882 1 v.

Holme Lee: *vide* Miss Parr.

S. Le Fanu: Uncle Silas 2 v. Guy Deverell 2 v.

Mark Lemon: Wait for the End 2 v. Loved at Last 2 v. Falkner Lyle 2 v. Leyton Hall, etc. 2 v. Golden Fetters 2 v.

Charles Lever: The O'Donoghue 1 v. The Knight of Gwynne 3 v. Arthur O'Leary 2 v. The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer 2 v. Charles O'Malley 3 v. Tom Burke of "Ours" 3 v. Jack Hinton 2 v. The Daltons 4 v. The Dodd Family Abroad 3 v. The Martins of Cro' Martin 3 v. The Fortunes of Glencore 2 v. Roland Cashel 3 v. Davenport Dunn 3 v. Confessions of Con Cregan 2 v. One of Them 2 v. Maurice Tiernay 2 v. Sir Jasper

Carew 2 v. Barrington 2 v. A Day's Ride: A Life's Romance 2 v. Luttrell of Arran 2 v. Tony Butler 2 v. Sir Brook Fossbrooke 2 v. The Bramleighs of Bishop's Folly 2 v. A Rent in a Cloud 1 v. That Boy of Norcott's 1 v. St. Patrick's Eve; Paul Gosslett's Confessions 1 v. Lord Kilgobbin 2 v.

G. H. Lewes: Ranthorpe 1 v. Physiology of Common Life 2 v. On Actors and the Art of Acting 1 v.

E. Lynn Linton: Joshua Davidson 1 v. Patricia Kemball 2 v. The Atonement of Leam Dundas 2 v. The World well Lost 2 v. Under which Lord? 2 v. With a Silken Thread, etc. 1 v. Todhunters' at Loanin' Head, etc. 1 v. "My Love!" 2 v. The Girl of the Period, etc. 1 v. Ione 2 v.

L. W. M. Lockhart: Mine is Thine 2 v.

Lord Augustus Loftus (w. Portr.) 2 v.

Longfellow: The Poetical Works (with Portrait) 3 v. The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri 3 v. The New-England Tragedies 1 v. The Divine Tragedy 1 v. Flower-de-Luce, and Three Books of Song 1 v. The Masque of Pandora 1 v.

Margaret Lonsdale: Sister Dora (with a Portrait of Sister Dora) 1 v.

A Lost Battle 2 v.

Sir J. Lubbock: The Pleasures of Life 1 v. The Beauties of Nature (w. Illust.) 1 v.

Lutfullah: Autobiography of Lutfullah, by Eastwick 1 v.

Edna Lyall: We Two 2 v. Donovan 2 v. In the Golden Days 2 v. Knight-Errant 2 v. Won by Waiting 2 v.

Lord Lytton: *vide* **Bulwer.**

Robert Lord Lytton (Owen Meredith): Poems 2 v. Fables in Song 2 v.

Maarten Maartens: The Sin of Joost Avelingh 1 v. An Old Maid's Love 2 v. God's Fool 2 v. The Greater Glory 2 v.

Lord Macaulay: The History of England (w. Port.) 10 v. Critical and Historical Essays 5 v. Lays of Ancient Rome 1 v. Speeches 2 v. Biographical Essays 1 v. William Pitt, Atterbury 1 v. (See also Trevelyan).

Justin McCarthy: The Waterdale Neighbours 2 v. Dear Lady Disdain 2 v. Miss Misanthrope 2 v. A History of our own Times 5 v. Donna Quixote 2 v. A short History of our own Times 2 v. A History of the Four Georges vols. 1 & 2.

George Mac Donald: Alec Forbes of Howglen 2 v. Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood 2 v. David Elginbrod 2 v. The Vicar's Daughter 2 v. Malcolm 2 v. St. George and St. Michael 2 v. The Marquis of Lossie 2 v. Sir Gibbie 2 v. Mary Marston 2 v. The Gifts of the Child Christ, etc. 1 v. The Princess and Curdie 1 v.

Mrs. Mackarness: Sunbeam Stories 1 v. A Peerless Wife 2 v. A Mingled Yarn 2 v.

Eric Mackay: Love Letters of a Violinist 1 v.

Chas. McKnight: Old Fort Duquesne 2 v.

Norman Macleod: The old Lieutenant and his Son 1 v.

Mrs. Macquoid: Patty 2 v. Miriam's Marriage 2 v. Pictures across the Channel 2 v. Too Soon 1 v. My Story 2 v. Diane 2 v. Beside the River 2 v. A Faithful Lover 2 v.

"Mademoiselle Mori," Author of—Mademoiselle Mori 2 v. Denise 1 v. Madame Fontenoy 1 v. On the Edge of the Storm 1 v. The Atelier du Lys 2 v. In the Olden Time 2 v.

Lord Mahon: *vide* **Stanhope.**

E. S. Maine: Scarscliff Rocks 2 v.

L. Malet: Colonel Enderby's Wife 2 v.

Lord Malmesbury: Memoirs of an Ex-Minister 3 v.

Mary E. Mann: A Winter's Tale 1 v.

R. Blachford Mansfield: The Log of the Water Lily 1 v.

Marmone: *v.* **Philip G. Hamerton.**

Capt. Marryat: Jacob Faithful (w. Port.) 1 v. Percival Keene 1 v. Peter Simple 1 v. Japhet, in Search of a Father 1 v. Monsieur Violet 1 v. The Settlers 1 v. The Mission 1 v. The Privateer's-Man 1 v. The Children of the New-Forest 1 v. Valerie 1 v. Mr. Midshipman Easy 1 v. The King's Own 1 v.

Florence Marryat: (Mrs. Francis Lean): Love's Conflict 2 v. For Ever and Ever 2 v. The Confessions of Gerald Estcourt 2 v. Nelly Brooke 2 v. Véronique 2 v. Petronel 2 v. Her Lord and Master 2 v. The Prey of the Gods 1 v. Life of Captain Marryat 1 v. Mad Dumaresq 2 v. No Intentions 2 v. Fighting the Air 2 v. A Star and a Heart 1 v. The Poison of Asps, etc. 1 v. A Lucky Disappointment, etc. 1 v. "My own Child" 2 v. Her Father's Name 2 v. A Harvest of Wild Oats 2 v. A Little Stepson 1 v. Written in Fire 2 v. Her World against a Lie 2 v. A Broken Blossom 2 v. The Root of all Evil 2 v. The Fair-haired Alda 2 v. With Cupid's Eyes 2 v. My Sister the Actress 2 v. Phyllida

2 v. How They Loved Him 2 v. Facing the Footlights (w. Portrait) 2 v. A Moment of Madness, etc. 1 v. The Ghost of Charlotte Cray, etc. 1 v. Peeress and Player 2 v. Under the Lilies and Roses 2 v. The Heart of Jane Warner 2 v. The Heir Presumptive 2 v. The Master Passion 2 v. Spiders of Society 2 v. Driven to Bay 2 v. A Daughter of the Tropics 2 v. Gentleman and Courtier 2 v. On Circumstantial Evidence 2 v. Mount Eden. A Romance 2 v. Blindfold 2 v. A Scarlet Sin 1 v.

Mrs. Marsh: Ravenscliffe 2 v. Emilia Wyndham 2 v. Castle Avon 2 v. Aubrey 2 v. The Heiress of Haughton 2 v. Evelyn Marston 2 v. The Rose of Ashurst 2 v.

Emma Marshall: Mrs. Mainwaring's Journal 1 v. Benvenuta 1 v. Lady Alice 1 v. Dayspring 1 v. Life's Aftermath 1 v. In the East Country 1 v. No. XIII; or, The Story of the Lost Vestal 1 v. In Four Reigns 1 v. On the Banks of the Ouse 1 v. In the City of Flowers 1 v. Alma 1 v. Under Salisbury Spire 1 v. The End Crowns All 1 v. Winchester Meads 1 v. Eventide Light 1 v. Winifrede's Journal 1 v. Bristol Bells 1 v. In the Service of Rachel Lady Russell 1 v. A Lily among Thorns 1 v. Penshurst Castle 1 v.

Helen Mathers (Mrs. Henry Reeves): "Cherry Ripe!" 2 v. "Land o' the Leal" 1 v. My Lady Green Sleeves 2 v. As he comes up the Stair, etc. 1 v. Sam's Sweetheart 2 v. Eyre's Acquittal 2 v. Found Out 1 v. Murder or Manslaughter? 1 v. The Fashion of this World (80 Pf.) Blind Justice, etc. 1 v. What the Glass Told and A Study of a Woman 1 v.

Colonel Maurice: The Balance of Military Power in Europe 1 v

"**Mehalah,**" Author of—*vide* Baring-Gould.

Whyte-Melville: Kate Coventry 1 v. Holmby House 2 v. Digby Grand 1 v. Good for Nothing 2 v. The Queen's Maries 2 v. The Gladiators 2 v The Brookes of Bridlemere 2 v. Cerise 2 v. The Interpreter 2 v. The White Rose 2 v. M. or N. 1 v. Contraband; or A Losing Hazard 1 v. Sarchedon 2 v Uncle John 2 v. Katerfelto 1 v. Sister Louise 1 v. Rosine 1 v. Roys' Wife 2 v. Black but Comely 2 v. Riding Recollections 1 v

George Meredith: The Ordeal of Richard Feverel 2 v. Beauchamp's Career 2 v. The Tragic Comedians 1 v.

Owen Meredith: *v.* R. Lord Lytton.

Henry Seton Merriman: Young Mistley 1 v. Prisoners and Captives 2 v. From One Generation to Another 1 v.

Milton: The Poetical Works 1 v.

"**Miss Molly,**" Author of—Geraldine Hawthorne 1 v.

"**Molly Bawn,**" Author of—*vide* Mrs. Hungerford.

Miss Montgomery: Misunderstood 1 v. Thrown Together 2 v. Thwarted 1 v. Wild Mike 1 v. Seaforth 2 v. The Blue Veil 1 v. Transformed 1 v. The Fisherman's Daughter; to which is added: A Very Simple Story 1 v.

F. F. Moore: "I forbid the Banns" 2 v.

Moore: Poet. Works (w. Portr.) 5 v.

Lady Morgan's Memoirs 3 v.

Henry Morley: Of English Literature in the Reign of Victoria. With Facsimiles of the Signatures of Authors in the Tauchnitz Edition [v. 2000].

William Morris: Poems. Edited with a Memoir by Francis Hueffer 1 v.

D. Christie Murray: Rainbow Gold 2 v.

E. C. Grenville Murray: The Member for Paris 2 v. Young Brown 2 v. The Boudoir Cabal 3 v. French Pictures in English Chalk (1st Series) 2 v. The Russians of To-day 1 v. French Pictures in English Chalk (2nd Series) 2 v. Strange Tales 1 v. That Artful Vicar 2 v. Six Months in the Ranks 1 v. People I have met 1 v.

"**My Little Lady,**" Author of—*vide* E. Frances Poynter.

The New Testament [v 1000].

Mrs. Newby: Common Sense 2 v.

Dr. J. H. Newman. Callista 1 v.

"**Nina Balatka,**" Author of—*vide* Anthony Trollope.

"**No Church,**" Author of—No Church 2 v. Owen:—a Waif 2 v.

Lady Augusta Noel: From Generation to Generation 1 v. Hithersea Mere 2 v.

W. E. Norris: My Friend Jim 1 v. A Bachelor's Blunder 2 v. Major and Minor 2 v. The Rogue 2 v. Miss Shafto 2 v. Mrs. Fenton 1 v. Misadventure 2 v. Saint Ann's 1 v.

Hon. Mrs. Norton: Stuart of Dunleath 2 v. Lost and Saved 2 v. Old Sir Douglas 2 v.

Not Easily Jealous 2 v.

Novels & Tales *v.* **Household Words.**

Laurence Oliphant: Altiora Peto 2 v. Masollam 2 v.

The price of each volume is 1 Mark 60 Pfennig.

Mrs. Oliphant: The Last of the Mortimers 2 v. Margaret Maitland 1 v. Agnes 2 v. Madonna Mary 2 v. The Minister's Wife 2 v. The Rector and the Doctor's Family 1 v. Salem Chapel 2 v. The Perpetual Curate 2 v. Miss Marjoribanks 2 v. Ombra 2 v. Memoir of Count de Montalembert 2 v. May 2 v. Innocent 2 v. For Love and Life 2 v. A Rose in June 1 v. The Story of Valentine and his Brother 2 v. Whiteladies 2 v. The Curate in Charge 1 v Phœbe, Junior 2 v. Mrs. Arthur 2 v. Carità 2 v. Young Musgrave 2 v. The Primrose Path 2 v. Within the Precincts 3 v. The greatest Heiress in England 2 v. He that will not when he may 2 v. Harry Joscelyn 2 v. In Trust 2 v. It was a Lover and his Lass 3 v. The Ladies Lindores 3 v. Hester 3 v. The Wizard's Son 3 v. A Country Gentleman and his Family 2 v. Neighbours on the Green 1 v. The Duke's Daughter 1 v. The Fugitives 1 v. Kirsteen 2 v. Life of Laurence Oliphant 2 v. The Little Pilgrim in the Unseen 1 v. The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent 2 v. The Sorceress 2 v.

Ossian: Poems 1 v.

Ouida: Idalia 2 v. Tricotrin 2 v. Puck 2 v. Chandos 2 v. Strathmore 2 v. Under two Flags 2 v. Folle-Farine 2 v. A Leaf in the Storm, and other Stories 1 v. Cecil Castlemaine's Gage, etc. 1 v. Madame la Marquise, etc. 1 v. Pascarèl 2 v. Held in Bondage 2 v. Two little Wooden Shoes 1 v. Signa (w. Portr.) 3 v. In a Winter City 1 v. Ariadnê 2 v. Friendship 2 v. Moths 3 v. Pipistrello 1 v. A Village Commune 2 v. In Maremma 3 v. Bimbi 1 v. Wanda 3 v. Frescoes, etc. 1 v. Princess Napraxine 3 v. Othmar 3 v. A Rainy June (60 Pf.). Don Gesualdo (60 Pf.). A House Party 1 v. Guilderoy 2 v. Syrlin 3 v. Ruffino, etc. 1 v. Santa Barbara, etc. 1 v. Two Offenders 1 v.

The Outcasts: *vide* Roy Tellet.

Miss Parr (Holme Lee): Basil Godfrey's Caprice 2 v. For Richer, for Poorer 2 v. The Beautiful Miss Barrington 2 v. Her Title of Honour 1 v. Echoes of a Famous Year 1 v. Katherine's Trial 1 v. Bessie Fairfax 2 v. Ben Milner's Wooing 1 v. Straightforward 2 v. Mrs. Denys of Cote 2 v. A Poor Squire 1 v.

Mrs. Parr: Dorothy Fox 1 v. The Prescotts of Pamphillon 2 v. The Gosau Smithy, etc. 1 v. Robin 2 v. Loyalty George 2 v.

"Paul Ferroll," Author of—Paul Ferroll 1 v. Year after Year 1 v. Why Paul Ferroll killed his Wife 1 v.

James Payn: Found Dead 1 v. Gwendoline's Harvest 1 v. Like Father, like Son 2 v. Not Wooed, but Won 2 v. Cecil's Tryst 1 v. A Woman's Vengeance 2 v. Murphy's Master 1 v. In the Heart of a Hill, etc. 1 v. At Her Mercy 2 v. The Best of Husbands 2 v. Walter's Word 2 v. Halves 2 v. Fallen Fortunes 2 v. What He cost Her 2 v. By Proxy 2 v. Less Black than we're Painted 2 v. Under one Roof 2 v. High Spirits 1 v. High Spirits (2nd Series) 1 v. A Confidential Agent 2 v. From Exile 2 v. A Grape from a Thorn 2 v. Some Private Views 1 v. For Cash Only 2 v. Kit: A Memory 2 v. The Canon's Ward (with Port.) 2 v. Some Literary Recollections 1 v. The Talk of the Town 1 v. The Luck of the Darrells 2 v. The Heir of the Ages 2 v. Holiday Tasks 1 v. Glow-Worm Tales (1st Series) 1 v. Glow-Worm Tales (2nd Series) 1 v. A Prince of the Blood 2 v. The Mystery of Mirbridge 2 v. The Burnt Million 2 v. The Word and the Will 2 v. Sunny Stories 1 v. A Modern Dick Whittington 2 v. A Stumble on the Threshold 2 v. A Trying Patient, etc. 1 v.

Miss Fr. M. Peard: One Year 2 v. The Rose-Garden 1 v. Unawares 1 v. Thorpe Regis 1 v. A Winter Story 1 v. A Madrigal, and other Stories 1 v. Cartouche 1 v. Mother Molly 1 v. Schloss and Town 2 v. Contradictions 2 v. Near Neighbours 1 v. Alicia Tennant 1 v. Madame's Grand-Daughter 1 v.

A Penitent Soul 1 v.

Bishop Percy: Reliques of Ancient English Poetry 3 v.

F. C. Philips: As in a Looking Glass 1 v. The Dean and his Daughter 1 v. Adventures of Lucy Smith 1 v. A Lucky Young Woman 1 v. Jack and Three Jills 1 v. Little Mrs. Murray 1 v. Young Mr. Ainslie's Courtship 1 v. Social Vicissitudes 1 v. Extenuating Circumstances, and A French Marriage 1 v. More Social Vicissitudes 1 v. Constance 2 v. That Wicked Mad'moiselle, etc. 1 v. A Doctor in Difficulties 1 v. Black and White 1 v. "One Never Knows" 2 v. Of Course 1 v. Miss Ormerod's Protégé 1 v.

The price of each volume is 1 Mark 60 Pfennig.

F. C. Philips & P. Fendall: A Daughter's Sacrifice 1 v. Margaret Byng 1 v.

F. C. Philips and C. J. Wills: The Fatal Phryne 1 v. The Scudamores 1 v. A Maiden Fair to See 1 v. Sybil Ross's Marriage 1 v.

Edgar Allan Poe: Poems and Essays, edited with a new Memoir by J. H. Ingram 1 v. Tales, edited by J. H. Ingram 1 v.

Pope: Select Poet. Works (w. Port.) 1 v.

E. Frances Poynter: My Little Lady 2 v. Ersilia 2 v. Among the Hills 1 v. Madame de Presnel 1 v.

Praed: *vide* Campbell-Praed.

Mrs. E. Prentiss: Stepping Heavenward 1 v.

The Prince Consort's Speeches and Addresses (with Portrait) 1 v.

Richard Pryce: Miss Maxwell's Affections 1 v. The Quiet Mrs. Fleming 1 v. Time and the Woman 1 v.

Horace N. Pym: *vide* Caroline Fox.

Q.: Noughts and Crosses 1 v. I Saw Three Ships 1 v. Dead Man's Rock 1 v.

W. F. Rae: Westward by Rail 1 v. Miss Bayle's Romance 2 v. The Business of Travel 1 v.

The Rajah's Heir 2 v.

Charles Reade: "It is never too late to mend" 2 v. "Love me little, love me long" 1 v. The Cloister and the Hearth 2 v. Hard Cash 3 v. Put Yourself in his Place 2 v. A Terrible Temptation 2 v. Peg Woffington 1 v. Christie Johnstone 1 v. A Simpleton 2 v. The Wandering Heir 1 v. A Woman-Hater 2 v. Readiana 1 v. Singleheart and Doubleface 1 v.

"Recommended to Mercy," Author of—Recommended to Mercy 2 v. Zoe's "Brand" 2 v.

James Rice: *vide* Walter Besant.

A. Bate Richards: So very Human 3 v.

Richardson: Clarissa Harlowe 4 v.

Mrs. Riddell (F. G. Trafford): George Geith of Fen Court 2 v. Maxwell Drewitt 2 v. The Race for Wealth 2 v. Far above Rubies 2 v. The Earl's Promise 2 v. Mortomley's Estate 2 v.

Rev. F. W. Robertson: Sermons 4 v.

Charles H. Ross: The Pretty Widow 1 v. A London Romance 2 v.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Poems 1 v. Ballads and Sonnets 1 v.

Roy Tellet: The Outcasts 1 v. A Draught of Lethe 1 v. Pastor & Prelate 2 v.

J. Ruffini: Lavinia 2 v. Doctor Antonio 1 v. Lorenzo Benoni 1 v. Vincenzo 2 v. A Quiet Nook in the Jura 1 v. The Paragreens on a Visit to Paris 1 v. Carlino, etc. 1 v.

W. Clark Russell: A Sailor's Sweetheart 2 v. The "Lady Maud" 2 v. A Sea Queen 2 v.

Sala: The Seven Sons of Mammon 2 v.

John Saunders: Israel Mort, Overman 2 v. The Shipowner's Daughter 2 v. A Noble Wife 2 v.

Katherine Saunders: Joan Merryweather, etc. 1 v. Gideon's Rock, etc. 1 v. The High Mills 2 v. Sebastian 1 v.

Col. R. H. Savage: My Official Wife 1 v. The Little Lady of Lagunitas (w. Port.) 2 v. Prince Schamyl's Wooing 1 v. The Masked Venus 2 v. Delilah of Harlem 2 v. The Anarchist 2 v.

Sir Walter Scott: Waverley (w. Port.) 1 v. The Antiquary 1 v. Ivanhoe 1 v. Kenilworth 1 v. Quentin Durward 1 v. Old Mortality 1 v. Guy Mannering 1 v. Rob Roy 1 v. The Pirate 1 v. The Fortunes of Nigel 1 v. The Black Dwarf; A Legend of Montrose 1 v. The Bride of Lammermoor 1 v. The Heart of Mid-Lothian 2 v. The Monastery 1 v. The Abbot 1 v. Peveril of the Peak 2 v. The Poetical Works 2 v. Woodstock 1 v. The Fair Maid of Perth 1 v. Anne of Geierstein 1 v.

Prof. Seeley: Life and Times of Stein (with a Portrait of Stein) 4 v. The Expansion of England 1 v. Goethe 1 v.

Miss Sewell: Amy Herbert 2 v. Ursula 2 v. A Glimpse of the World 2 v. The Journal of a Home Life 2 v. After Life 2 v. The Experience of Life 2 v.

Shakespeare: Plays and Poems (with Portrait) *(Second Edition)* compl. 7 v.

Shakespeare's Plays may also be had in 37 numbers, at *M* 0,30. each number.

Doubtful Plays 1 v.

Shelley: A Selection from his Poems 1 v.

Nathan Sheppard: Shut up in Paris *(Second Edition, enlarged)* 1 v.

Sheridan: The Dramatic Works 1 v.

J. H. Shorthouse: John Inglesant 2 v. Blanche, Lady Falaise 1 v.

Smollett: Roderick Random 1 v. Humphry Clinker 1 v. Peregrine Pickle 2 v.

Society in London. By a Foreign Resident 1 v.

Somerville & Martin Ross: Naboth's Vineyard 1 v.

The Spanish Brothers 2 v.

Earl Stanhope (Lord Mahon): The

History of England 7 v. The Reign of Queen Anne 2 v.

Sterne: Tristram Shandy 1 v. A Sentimental Journey (with Portrait) 1 v.

Robert Louis Stevenson: Treasure Island 1 v. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, etc. 1 v. Kidnapped 1 v. The Black Arrow 1 v. The Master of Ballantrae 1 v. The Merry Men, etc. 1 v. Across the Plains 1 v. Island Nights' Entertainments 1 v. Catriona. A Sequel to "Kidnapped," 1 v.

"Still Waters," Author of—Still Waters 1 v. Dorothy 1 v. De Cressy 1 v. Uncle Ralph 1 v. Maiden Sisters 1 v. Martha Brown 1 v. Vanessa 1 v.

M. C. Stirling: Two Tales of Married Life 2 v. Vol. II. A True Man, Vol. I. *vide* G. M. Craik.

Frank R. Stockton: The House of Martha 1 v.

"The Story of Elizabeth," Author of —*vide* Miss Thackeray.

Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe: Uncle Tom's Cabin (with Portrait) 2 v. A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin 2 v. Dred 2 v. The Minister's Wooing 1 v. Oldtown Folks 2 v.

"Sunbeam Stories," Author of—*vide* Mrs. Mackarness.

Swift: Gulliver's Travels 1 v.

John Addington Symonds: Sketches in Italy 1 v. New Italian Sketches 1 v.

Tasma: Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill 2 v.

Baroness Tautphoeus: Cyrilla 2 v. The Initials 2 v. Quits 2 v. At Odds 2 v.

Colonel Meadows Taylor: Tara: A Mahratta Tale 3 v.

H. Templeton: Diary and Notes 1 v.

Alfred (Lord) Tennyson: The Poetical Works of, 8 v. Queen Mary 1 v. Harold 1 v. Becket; The Cup; The Falcon 1 v. Locksley Hall, etc. 1 v.

W. M. Thackeray: Vanity Fair 3 v. Pendennis 3 v. Miscellanies 8 v. Henry Esmond 2 v. The English Humourists 1 v. The Newcomes 4 v. The Virginians 4 v. The Four Georges; Lovel the Widower 1 v. The Adventures of Philip 2 v. Denis Duval 1 v. Roundabout Papers 2 v. Catherine 1 v. The Irish Sketch Book 2 v. The Paris Sketch Book (w. Portrait) 2 v.

Miss Thackeray: The Story of Elizabeth 1 v. The Village on the Cliff 1 v. Old Kensington 2 v. Bluebeard's Keys, etc. 1 v. Five Old Friends 1 v. Miss Angel 1 v. Out of the World, etc. 1 v. Fulham Lawn, etc. 1 v. From an Island 1 v. Da Capo, etc. 1 v. Madame de Sévigné, etc. 1 v. A Book of Sibyls 1 v. Mrs. Dymond 2 v.

Thomas a Kempis: The Imitation of Christ 1 v.

A. Thomas: Denis Donne 2 v. On Guard 2 v. Walter Goring 2 v. Played Out 2 v. Called to Account 2 v. Only Herself 2 v. A Narrow Escape 2 v.

Thomson: The Poetical Works (with Portrait) 1 v.

Thoth 1 v.

Tim 1 v.

F. G. Trafford: *vide* Mrs. Riddell.

George Otto Trevelyan: The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (w. Portrait) 4 v. Selections from the Writings of Lord Macaulay 2 v.

Trois-Etoiles: *vide* Murray.

Anthony Trollope: Doctor Thorne 2 v. The Bertrams 2 v. The Warden 1 v. Barchester Towers 2 v. Castle Richmond 2 v. The West Indies 1 v. Framley Parsonage 2 v. North America 3 v. Orley Farm 3 v. Rachel Ray 2 v. The Small House at Allington 3 v. Can you forgive her? 3 v. The Belton Estate 2 v. Nina Balatka 1 v. The Last Chronicle of Barset 3 v. The Claverings 2 v. Phineas Finn 3 v. He knew he was right 3 v. The Vicar of Bullhampton 2 v. Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite 1 v. Ralph the Heir 2 v The Golden Lion of Granpere 1 v. Australia and New Zealand 3 v. Lady Anna 2 v. Harry Heathcote of Gangoil 1 v. The Way we live now 4 v. The Prime Minister 4 v. The American Senator 3 v. South Africa 2 v. Is He Popenjoy? 3 v. An Eye for an Eye 1 v. John Caldigate 3 v. Cousin Henry 1 v. The Duke's Children 3 v. Dr. Wortle's School 1 v. Ayala's Angel 3 v. The Fixed Period 1 v. Marion Fay 2 v. Kept in the Dark 1 v. Frau Frohmann, etc. 1 v. Alice Dugdale, etc. 1 v. La Mère Bauche, etc. 1 v. The Mistletoe Bough, etc. 1 v. An Autobiography 1 v. An Old Man's Love 1 v.

T. Adolphus Trollope: The Garstangs of Garstang Grange 2 v. A Siren 2 v.

Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens): The Adventures of Tom Sawyer 1 v. The Innocents Abroad; or, the New Pilgrims' Progress 2 v. A Tramp Abroad 2 v. "Roughing it" 1 v. The Innocents at Home 1 v. The Prince and the Pauper 2 v. The Stolen White Elephant, etc. 1 v.

Life on the Mississippi 2 v. Sketches (w. Portrait) 1 v. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn 2 v. Selections from American Humour 1 v. A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur 2 v. The American Claimant 1 v. The Million Pound Bank-Note, etc. 1 v. Tom Sawyer Abroad 1 v.

The Two Cosmos 1 v.

"Vèra," Author of—Vèra 1 v. The Hôtel du Petit St. Jean 1 v. Blue Roses 2 v. Within Sound of the Sea 2 v. The Maritime Alps and their Seaboard 2 v. Ninette 1 v.

Victoria R. I.: *vide* Leaves.

Virginia 1 v.

L. B. Walford: Mr. Smith 2 v. Pauline 2 v. Cousins 2 v. Troublesome Daughters 2 v.

D. Mackenzie Wallace: Russia 3 v.

Lew. Wallace: Ben-Hur 2 v.

Eliot Warburton: The Crescent and the Cross 2 v. Darien 2 v.

Mrs. Humphry Ward: Robert Elsmere 3 v. The History of David Grieve 3 v. Miss Bretherton 1 v. Marcella 3 v.

S. Warren: Passages from the Diary of a late Physician 2 v. Ten Thousand a-Year 3 v. Now and Then 1 v. The Lily and the Bee 1 v.

"The Waterdale Neighbours," Author of—*vide* Justin McCarthy.

Hugh Westbury: Acte 2 v.

Miss Wetherell: The wide, wide World 1 v. Queechy 2 v. The Hills of the Shatemuc 2 v. Say and Seal 2 v. The Old Helmet 2 v.

Stanley J. Weyman: The House of the Wolf 1 v. The Story of Francis Cludde 2 v. A Gentleman of France 2 v. The Man in Black 1 v.

A Whim and its Consequences 1 v.

Walter White: Holidays in Tyrol 1 v.

Beatrice Whitby: The Awakening of Mary Fenwick 2 v. In the Suntime of her Youth 2 v.

Richard Whiteing: The Island; or, An Adventure of a Person of Quality 1 v.

S. Whitman: Imperial Germany 1 v. The Realm of the Habsburgs 1 v.

"Who Breaks—Pays," Author of—*vide* Mrs. Jenkin.

K. D. Wiggin: Timothy's Quest 1 v. A Cathedral Courtship, etc. 1 v.

C. J. Wills: *vide* F. C. Philips.

J. S. Winter: Regimental Legends 1 v.

H. F. Wood: The Passenger from Scotland Yard 1 v.

Mrs. Henry Wood: East Lynne 3 v. The Channings 2 v. Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles 2 v. Verner's Pride 3 v. The Shadow of Ashlydyat 3 v. Trevlyn Hold 2 v. Lord Oakburn's Daughters 2 v. Oswald Cray 2 v. Mildred Arkell 2 v. St. Martin's Eve 2 v. Elster's Folly 2 v. Lady Adelaide's Oath 2 v. Orville College 1 v. A Life's Secret 1 v. The Red Court Farm 2 v. Anne Hereford 2 v. Roland Yorke 2 v. George Canterbury's Will 2 v. Bessy Rane 2 v. Dene Hollow 2 v. The foggy Night at Offord, etc. 1 v. Within the Maze 2 v. The Master of Greylands 2 v. Johnny Ludlow *(First Series)* 2 v. Told in the Twilight 2 v. Adam Grainger 1 v. Edina 2 v. Pomeroy Abbey 2 v. Lost in the Post, etc. By J. Ludlow 1 v. A Tale of Sin, etc. By J. Ludlow 1 v. Anne, etc. By J. Ludlow 1 v. Court Netherleigh 2 v. The Mystery of Jessy Page, etc. By J. Ludlow 1 v. Helen Whitney's Wedding, etc. By J. Ludlow 1 v. The Story of Dorothy Grape, etc. By J. Ludlow 1 v.

M. L. Woods: A Village Tragedy 1 v.

Wordsworth: The Poetical Works 2 v.

Lascelles Wraxall: Wild Oats 1 v.

Edm. Yates: Land at Last 2 v. Broken to Harness 2 v. The Forlorn Hope 2 v. Black Sheep 2 v. The Rock Ahead 2 v. Wrecked in Port 2 v. Dr. Wainwright's Patient 2 v. Nobody's Fortune 2 v. Castaway 2 v. A Waiting Race 2 v. The yellow Flag 2 v. The impending Sword 2 v. Two, by Tricks 1 v. A silent Witness 2 v. Recollections and Experiences 2 v.

Miss Yonge: The Heir of Redclyffe 2 v. Heartsease 2 v. The Daisy Chain 2 v. Dynevor Terrace 2 v. Hopes and Fears 2 v. The young Step-Mother 2 v. The Trial 2 v. The clever Woman 2 v. The Dove in the Eagle's Nest 2 v. The Danvers Papers, etc. 1 v. The Chaplet of Pearls 2 v. The two Guardians 1 v. The caged Lion 2 v. The Pillars of the House 5 v. Lady Hester 1 v. My young Alcides 2 v. The three Brides 2 v. Womankind 2 v. Magnum Bonum 2 v. Love and Life 1 v. Unknown to History 2 v. Stray Pearls (w. Port.) 2 v. The Armourer's Prentices 2 v. The two Sides of the Shield 2 v. Nuttie's Father 2 v. Beechcroft at Rockstone 2 v. A reputed Changeling 2 v. Two penniless Princesses 1 v. That Stick 1 v. Grisly Grisell 1 v.

"Young Mistley," Author of—*vide* Henry Seton Merriman.

The price of each volume is 1 Mark 60 Pfennig.

Collection of German Authors.

Berthold Auerbach: On the Heights, (Second Edition) 3 v. Brigitta 1 v. Spinoza 2 v.

Georg Ebers: An Egyptian Princess 2 v. Uarda 2 v. Homo Sum 2 v. The Sisters [Die Schwestern] 2 v. Joshua 2 v. Per Aspera 2 v.

Fouqué: Undine, Sintram, etc. 1 v.

Ferdinand Freiligrath: Poems (Second Edition) 1 v.

Wilhelm Görlach: Prince Bismarck (with Portrait) 1 v.

Goethe: Faust 1 v. Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship 2 v.

Karl Gutzkow: Through Night to Light 1 v.

F. W. Hackländer: Behind the Counter [Handel und Wandel] 1 v.

Wilhelm Hauff: Three Tales 1 v.

Paul Heyse: L'Arrabiata, etc. 1 v. The Dead Lake, etc. 1 v. Barbarossa, etc. 1 v.

Wilhelmine von Hillern: The Vulture Maiden [die Geier-Wally] 1 v. The Hour will come 2 v.

Salomon Kohn: Gabriel 1 v.

G. E. Lessing: Nathan the Wise and Emilia Galotti 1 v.

Fanny Lewald: Stella 2 v.

E. Marlitt: The Princess of the Moor [das Haideprinzesschen] 2 v.

Maria Nathusius: Joachim v. Kamern, and Diary of a poor young Lady 1 v.

Fritz Reuter: In the Year '13 1 v An old Story of my farming Days [Ut mine Stromtid] 3 v.

Jean Paul Friedrich Richter: Flower, Fruit and Thorn Pieces 2 v.

J. Victor Scheffel: Ekkehard. A Tale of the tenth Century 2 v.

George Taylor: Klytia 2 v.

H. Zschokke: The Princess of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, etc. 1 v.

Series for the Young.

Lady Barker: Stories about 1 v.

Louisa Charlesworth: Ministering Children 1 v.

Mrs. Craik (Miss Mulock): Our Year 1 v. Three Tales for Boys 1 v. Three Tales for Girls 1 v.

Miss G. M. Craik: Cousin Trix 1 v.

Maria Edgeworth: Moral Tales 1 v. Popular Tales 2 v.

Bridget and Julia Kavanagh: The Pearl Fountain 1 v.

Charles and Mary Lamb: Tales from Shakspeare 1 v.

Captain Marryat: Masterman Ready 1 v.

Emma Marshall: Rex and Regina 1 v.

Florence Montgomery: The Town Crier; to which is added: The Children with the Indian-Rubber Ball 1 v.

Ruth and her Friends. A Story for Girls 1 v.

Mrs. Henry Wood: William Allair 1 v.

Miss Yonge: Kenneth; or, the Rear-Guard of the Grand Army 1 v. The Little Duke. Ben Sylvester's Word 1 v. The Stokesley Secret 1 v. Countess Kate 1 v. A Book of Golden Deeds 2 v. Friarswood Post-Office 1 v. Henrietta's Wish 1 v. Kings of England 1 v. The Lances of Lynwood; the Pigeon Pie 1 v. P's and Q's 1 v. Aunt Charlotte's Stories of English History 1 v. Bye-Words 1 v. Lads and Lasses of Langley; Sowing and Sewing 1 v.

The price of each volume is 1 Mark 60 Pfennig.

Neues Handbuch der Englischen Conversationssprache von *A. Schlessing.* bound ℳ 2,25.

A new Manual of the German Language of Conversation by *A. Schlessing.* bound ℳ 2,25.

Tauchnitz Dictionaries.

Nuevo Diccionario Español-Alemán y Alemán-Español. Por D. *Luis Tolhausen*. Second Edition. In two Volumes. Royal 8vo. Sewed ℳ 15,00. Cloth ℳ 17,50. Half-morocco ℳ 20,50.

Dictionary of the English and German languages. By *W. James*. Thirty-third Edition. Re-written by C. Stoffel. English-German and German-English in one Volume. Crown 8vo. Sewed ℳ 4,50. Bound ℳ 5,00.

A complete Dictionary of the English and French languages for general use. By *W. James* and *A. Molé*. Fourteenth Stereotype Edition. Crown 8vo. Sewed ℳ 6,00.

A complete Dictionary of the English and Italian languages for general use. By *W. James* and *Gius. Grassi*. Eleventh Stereotype Edition. Crown 8vo. Sewed ℳ 5,00.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the English and German languages. By *J. E. Wessely*. Twenty-first Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the English and French languages. By *J. E. Wessely*. Twentieth Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the English and Italian languages. By *J. E. Wessely*. Fifteenth Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the English and Spanish languages. By *J. E. Wessely* and *A. Gironés*. Eighteenth Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the French and German languages. By *J. E. Wessely*. Fifth Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the Italian and German languages. By *G. Locella*. Fourth Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

A New Pocket Dictionary of the Latin and English languages. Tenth Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

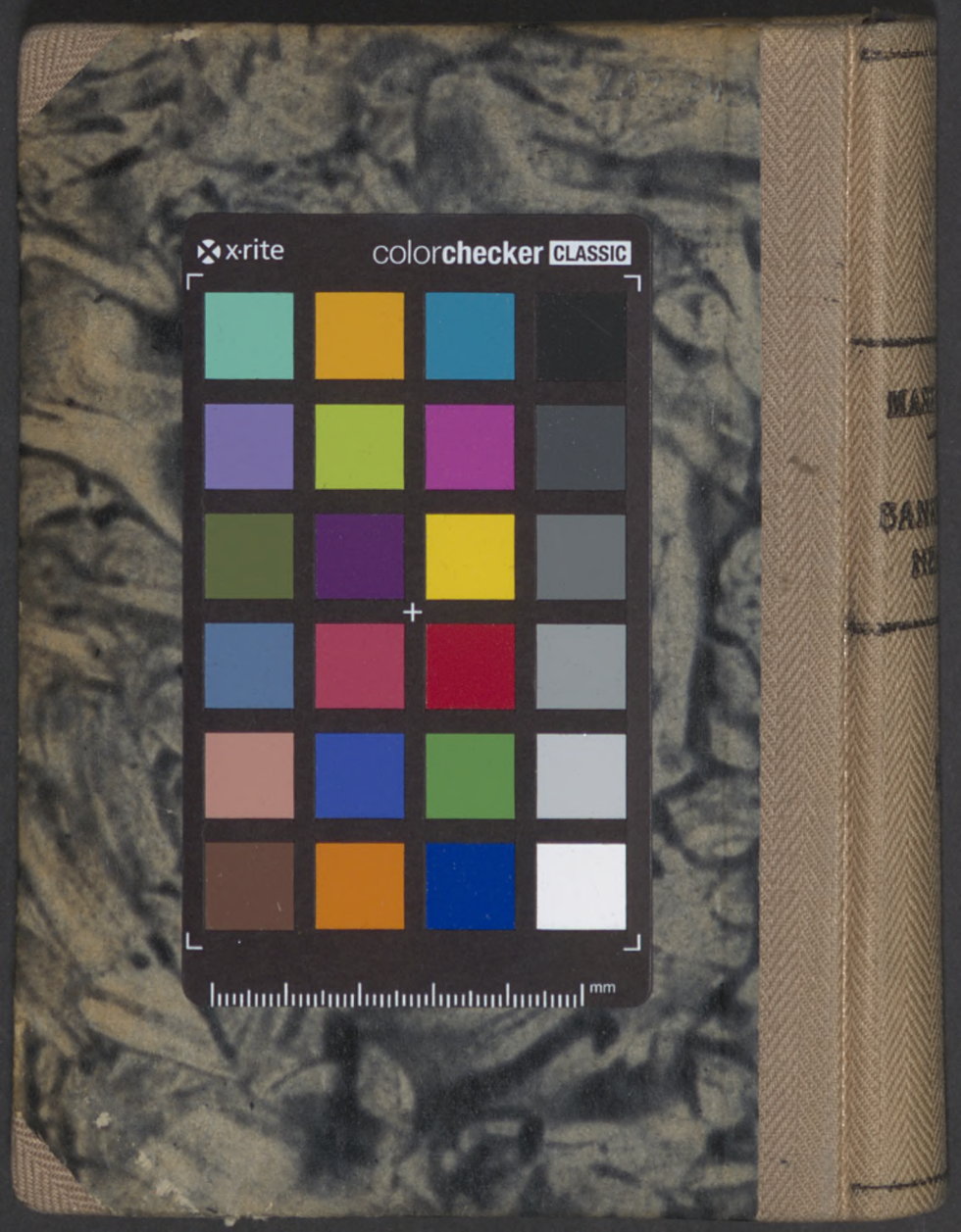
A New Pocket Dictionary of the French and Spanish languages. By *L. Tolhausen*. Second Stereotype Edition. 16mo. Sewed ℳ 1,50. Bound ℳ 2,25.

Technological Dictionary in the French, English and German languages by *A.* and *L. Tolhausen*. Complete in three Parts. Third Edition. Crown 8vo. Sewed ℳ 26,50.

A Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament. By Dr. *Julius Fürst*. Fifth Edition. Translated from the German by *Samuel Davidson*. Royal 8vo. Sewed ℳ 19,00.

No orders of private purchasers are executed by the publisher.

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ, LEIPZIG.


x-rite
colorchecker CLASSIC
mm