AN

ODD COUPLE

BY

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CHAPTER I.

HE, AND SHE.

"IN that case, perhaps, it would be better that we should part!"

These ominous words were said very steadily and precisely, but with a certain sense of nervous excitement in the utterance, by Mr. Charles Tremenheere, one morning in November, in his own drawing-room, and were, I need scarcely say, addressed to his own wife. To whom else could they have been said? He was not the kind of man who might have been expected to speak words striking at the very root of family existence, being, indeed, a very orderly and respectable personage,—anything but a revolutionary.

The amount of provocation which he had endured before he said them need not be entered into here. He had been married about ten years, and had two children, a boy of nine and a girl of seven. Mrs. Tremenheere was seated opposite to him at a small work-table knitting, with a composure which was aggravating to the last degree. Her needles met each other with tranquil regularity, and not a single dropped stich or irregular line bore witness to any excitement of feeling. They were middle-aged people, and might very well have been married twenty years instead of ten. He was standing in the favorite attitude of Englishmen, in front of the fire, a thin angular man, moving with a certain jerkiness and rapidity, slightly bald, with refined features, and hair growing gray, and looking very much what he was, a clerk in a public office, much more experienced and learned in the country's business than was in general the distinguished "chief" at the head of the department, though he was a Minister of State and probably a Grand Seigneur, Knight of the Garter, and everything that was splendid—while his instructor and referee who kept him out of mischief was only Mr. Charles

Tremenheere. Nevertheless, the injustice in this respect was more apparent than real, for Mr. Tremenheere was a man as well known in those high regions from which the country is ruled as the Queen herself, and most people whose opinion he cared about were perfectly acquainted with the real standing of which the vulgar knew nothing. "Tremenheere will keep him right," the Premier himself said when he appointed the rising man of the day Secretary of State for *that* department. Indeed, I need not tell you, dear reader, which department it was. It is in very good hands and does not require our interference, and it is enough for the purpose of the narrative that you should know who this gentleman was. He had been very much in society in his younger days, and still kept up his old friends, though his wife, whose taste was somewhat different from his own, had separated him from the tide of fashion; and he loved society, judging men and things by the standard in favor there, and making but small account of qualities which were not appreciated in these finest circles. This was a grave ground of debate between his wife and himself. They did not quarrel according to the

ordinary pattern of conjugal quarrels. She was not a scold nor he a villain; he behaved as a gentleman should and she like a well-bred woman. But they differed incessantly, continually, with the heat of people who quarrel about convictions, a thing more persistent than the light differences which arise on every-day subjects; and so at last it had come to this —"Perhaps in that case it would be better that we should part!"

Mr. Tremenheere felt when he said this that he had discharged his last volley. What more could he say or do? and he expected it to startle and appal his calm antagonist. He thought that an utterance so trenchant, so final, would penetrate through all her defences, and make her feel what it was to defy a man who was her natural head, her social representative. Almost, he expected to see the common appeal of womankind which he had read of in books, and which everybody, so far as he knew (who was not married to Mrs. Tremenheere), believed in. Mrs. Tremenheere had never yet wept to him nor pleaded for forgiveness. She had never broken down under any of his reproaches—never been melted into helpless-

ness by his appeals. Would she do it now—would she cry—would she throw herself at his feet or on his neck and ask him to take back that cruel suggestion? Inevitably it must bring her to herself.

But, indeed, the result was not as he anticipated. Mrs. Tremenheere bore the shock with wonderful composure. She scarcely raised head; she scarcely paused in her knitting. She allowed him to speak as calmly as if he had been saying, "I will dine at my club." And then there followed an interval of silence which was as if the spheres stood still to Mr. Tremenheere. His eyes were upon her, but she did not look at him. Was it that she did not dare to look at him? Was it her pride which kept her eyes on her knitting, her head bowed down? one or the other it must be.

But if she did not feel the shock, he did, when Mrs. Tremenheere, raising her head and looking at him, without any of the excitement in her eyes which blinded his, replied quietly, "I have no doubt, as things have gone so far, that it would be the best—in every way."

"Good God! Ada," he said in sudden horror. "What do you mean?"

"It is not what I mean, Mr. Tremenheere. I have not taken any initiative. We do not agree, unfortunately, or think alike in anything; but it was not I who called attention to this. I had made up my mind to go on and make the best of it. But when you see it so clearly I feel that it would be foolish to contradict you. Yes," she said with a sigh; "it is a pity, but I think you are right: and separation would be the best."

"You think so!" he said, furious. "Oh, you think so! Good heavens! and this is what it is to end in, after all that has come and gone!"

"It was not I who suggested it," she said, resuming her knitting; "but since you think so, dear——"

"Dear! dear comes in well in such a discussion," said the husband furiously. He left the fire and strode across to the window, and stood gazing out with his back to her. The sight of her composure made him wild. "If we are to arrange this let it be without any pretence of false affection. Conventional humbug may at least be put away now."

"I am never conventional that I know of," she said slightly roused. "We do not agree, Charles; but

why should we hate each other? It is this that would be conventional, not an innocent word."

"Oh, confound your innocent words," he muttered through his teeth; but this she did not hear, nor was she intended to hear it. He could hear the slight stir of her needles where he stood looking out upon the rolling of the fog which now lifted a little, now came down heavier. Nothing could be more doleful than the prospect out-of-doors. Hyde Park, which was opposite, threw up a line of spectral trees into the yellow of the atmosphere. The passengers went by slipping upon the greasy pavement, the horses surrounded themselves with a halo of white breath like the *nimbus* of a mediæval saint; the kind of day from which you shrink and turn to the cheerful fire within; but to poor Mr. Tremenheere the fog itself was more cheerful than the genial blaze near which the wife sat in her warm velvet dress, the impersonation of domestic comfort. How comfortable she looked! He saw her very well, though his back was turned. With a matronly fulness of person,—not too much, only enough to be becoming,—light brown hair, not changed or touched by time, and a great deal more

abundant than is usual nowadays. It seemed suddenly to flash upon him how changed the room would look without her, and the house and all his daily life. Was it possible that she could be so hard-hearted, so cruel, so blind to every duty? If it had not been his own suggestion he would have turned round and laughed in her face. She go away after ten years' companionship and quarrelling! Quarreling when it is continuous and familiar endears just as much as anything else. She could not think of it. It must be a bit of bravado to frighten him and make him give in on the subject they had disagreed upon. Women were bad enough; but they were not so bad, not so heartless as this. So Mr. Tremenheere considered that the wisest thing he could do was to show the impatience, but not the uneasiness he felt, and to rush off to the office, where he ought to have been some time ago, but for the disagreement which had brought matters all at once and unexpectedly to a crisis so terrible.

"I am aware that you have plenty of time to talk," he said, "but I have not. I am off to the office. You have detained me too long already with this ridicu-

lous discussion. Why should we have these continual misunderstandings? I advise you to put folly out of your head, and try to find some way by which we can get on like other people. I shall be back at seven to-night."

And he turned round and looked at her. Surely at least she would show some natural feeling now. But she did not. She bent her head a little and said. "Very well, good morning," and went on with her knitting. Good morning! Good heavens! What did she mean by that "good morning!" Was it anxiety! Was it determination? He would rather have seen her eyes, and then he might have known what she meant. But he would not resign the superior position he had assumed by waiting to see what her eyes meant. He had to go, as he said, shutting the door with some energy behind him. He stumbled over the children at the door, and, instead of stopping to kiss them, as was his wont, pushed the little things away, who were all done up in their winter gear, great coats and furs.

"Is this a day to take the children out? Go back to the nursery at once," he said, not stopping to hear

what the nurse, indignant, said about Missis. Missis! what was she that she must argue about everything, instead of taking her husband's opinion like other people?—when of course he must know best; he a man of the world. But Mr. Tremenheere went to the office that day with a heavy heart. He had "shot an arrow into the air," and he did not know where he should find that inadvertent missile. And all without meaning it! meaning nothing more than to frighten her; to show her what terrors might be if she did not mind what she was about—to warn her of possibilities which perhaps had never dawned upon her before.

Mrs. Tremenheere, however, was much more startled by her husband's suggestion than she allowed to appear; but scarcely in the way a wife might be supposed to be startled. It was not the fear of lost love or any sentimental disturbance which was in her mind. There are wives, and even some whose married life is not particularly harmonious, to whom such words would be as the rending asunder of heaven and earth; but this lady was not one of them. She did not feel the soil crumbling under her feet or the skies dividing over her head because her husband

threw out the suggestion, that probably they might be better apart. She was not wounded in this profound and poignant way, but she was startled by the sudden introduction to her of a new idea, a something previously unthought of which was evidently worthy of thought. And perhaps she was a little piqued and slightly stung in her pride that the idea had not originated with herself. Even the most philosophical woman, she who has least care to preserve the often humiliating privileges of sex, has a kind of prejudice in favor of all such suggestions originating with herself. That her husband should be able calmly to contemplate a separation did not throw her into hysterics or into despair, but yet she should have liked to have been the first to suggest the separation. When, however, she had got over this she was seriously struck by the new idea. Separation! it meant a great deal which Mrs. Tremenheere had never considered before, and which she began to consider with the seriousness which became a very important matter. Living separate was easy enough to friends who perhaps might be better friends apart than if thrown continually together. It was nothing very dreadful even for

members of the same family. Brothers and sisters separated continually, yet remained brotherly and sisterly all their lives; but a man and wife,—this was something totally different, involving a very great deal more. A separation of this sort is seldom considered in the reflective and calm spirit in which Mrs. Tremenheere regarded it. Usually it is decided upon in mere heat of passion, or under the sting of some intolerable wrong—and only when the misery of the two compelled to live together has become past bearing. All this was very different from her sentiments; she sat very still going on with her knitting, her needles perhaps moving a little more quickly than usual, and her eyes very intent upon what she was doing, until at last she dropped her work on her lap, letting fall the ball of wool with which she was knitting, and which a playful kitten from the hearthrug immediately sprang upon. The kitten thought her mistress had done it on purpose, and that this was an invitation to play, and purred loudly to show her satisfaction, arching her back and looking up into Mrs. Tremenheere's abstracted face as she put her foot upon the ball. It was a pretty Persian kitten with a

long sweeping tail, and the room was very pretty, with harmonious furniture and fine water-color drawings, a carefully selected collection, for both husband and wife prided themselves on knowing something about art. The chair upon which Mrs. Tremenheere sat was an elegant Chippendale, which she preferred to the usual luxurious articles of the drawing-room. The table by her side was spider-legged, and daintily carved in ebony. An old Italian cabinet in the same wood, inlaid with silver, stood against the wall behind. Careful thought and taste, and some amount of culture, showed in every part of the room. A bright fire blazed, throwing pleasant lights about, sparkling in the glasses of the old Venice chandelier, and doing its best to neutralize the effects of the fog without. When Mrs. Tremenheere dropped her knitting in her lap she raised her head with a sigh and turned her eyes to the window, as it is so natural to do when one is in trouble. She was not young; but she was a handsome woman, with clear high features, blue eyes, and abundant hair—not fat, though that is the usual epithet to apply to a woman of forty, which was her age, but tall and of an imposing presence. And she

was very well dressed in a dark velvet gown, which threw up her fairness, with old-fashioned ornaments such as betrayed the same prevailing taste as that which was apparent in the room. She was so entirely in keeping with the place that it may be supposed the idea of leaving it was not agreeable to her. But even this was not how the matter appeared at the present moment to Mrs. Tremenheere. She had not yet come so far as to think of leaving her home, or of any of the material consequences to follow, but was only startled into serious consideration of the idea and of what it meant, and if it really would be "best," as her husband had said.

She was asking herself this question when the nurse and children burst into the room in full walking array, as when Mr. Tremenheere had turned them back—every ribbon on nurse's bonnet (and there were a great many), and every hair on her head, though they were less abundant, was bridling with indignation. The little girl had her finger in her mouth, and was whimpering in sympathy. The boy, more indifferent, received imaginary balls upon the short hoop-stick

which he held like a cricket-bat, and let the woman talk with masculine composure.

"Please ma'am, master-has-turned-us-back," said nurse, running all her words into one. "It's-a-fog-and-we-ain't-to-go-out-in-a-fog; and a deal of exercise the dear children will get in London if we don't never go out in fogs. I said as it was you, but he said as it was me, and gave 'em a push which it isn't like a gentleman," said the nurse out of breath; while little Vera, stamping her little foot, cried, "Naughty papa!"

"And master is as unreasonable as unreasonable, as well you knows, ma'am, though you might'nt say it," nurse added, before she could be stopped.

Mrs. Tremenheere colored high, and when she flushed the color remained, as she was well aware, on the ridge of her delicate high nose much longer than was becoming or agreeable, which made her still more angry. "You are very impertinent to speak of your master so," she said. "Take the children's things off at once, and send them to me; and Vera, if you whimper you shall have a punishment. Go directly. I am very much displeased."

"It ain't us, ma'am, that you've occasion to be displeased with," nurse began. "It's Mr. ——"

"Do you wish me to send you away at an hour's notice?" said Mrs. Tremenheere in a low voice, hastily rising from her chair and putting down the knitting with some impatience on the table, as she dismissed the party peremptorily. Was this the end of it all? She had meant well, as well as ever woman meant, or so at least she thought; but this was the end. A servant who ventured to appeal to her knowledge of her husband's unreasonableness—a child who felt itself justified in saying "Naughty papa." Was this what she had done, betraying herself and betraying him, bringing down the credit and good reputation which she was bound to preserve? Then indeed he was right, and it would be best for them to part.

She had, however, little time to pursue these reflections, for soon after the door again opened, and the little pair came back, Vera in a little velvet frock like her mother's, with the hair cut square on her forehead and falling behind upon her shoulders, leading the way,—Eddy behind, still with the hoop-stick of which he made an imaginary cricket-bat. Vera had a lapful

of dolls in her pinafore—dolls without noses, without arms, with feet twisted off, with necks wrung, with hair torn from their heads, but only the dearer for all their misfortunes, as Othello was "for the dangers he had known." Vera tripped in light as a little fairy, her pretty hair streaming over her shoulders. She was one of those born actors who (up to the age of ten or so) are always consciously playing some *rôle* or other, and to-day her part was that of an anxious mother taking care of her offspring. The little creature took no notice of her own mother, who sat gazing at her with many thoughts in her heart, but seating herself on the other side of the fireplace began to arrange her family. She put her dolls round her like a class at school, setting them up to sit with their miserable legs thrust out on all the stools she could find, and then began to address them with busy gravity—now pulling a dress straight, now arranging a wig of tow. The busy little human thing among all these wooden counterfeits of herself was as curious a sight as one could wish to see. How she managed them, pulling this one roughly about, coaxing another, according to their character! and indeed there were

to the child's lively imagination distinct traces of character in the very attitude of these ungainly babes.

"Try and sit up like a lady," she said, taking up unceremoniously one of her collected family by the head and setting it down again with a shake, "is that how a lady sits? If you are all good and don't make a noise, nor spoil your pinnies, I will tell you a story. Oh you disagreeable little fright, why can't you hold your toes straight? Now listen!" Vera held up a small finger in the air to enforce attention. "There was once a little girl, and she was sometimes naughty just like you, and she had a great many little children belonging to her, and one that was called Rose, and one that was called Violet, and one that was called Lily, just the same names as you have; ain't it strange? And this little girl had a mamma, the same as you have, but she had a papa too, and you never had a papa. You hold your tongue, you naughty Rose. You want to know what a papa is like—you all want to know? Well, a papa is a very funny thing. Sometimes he is good and gives you new dolls, but I do not like any new dolls, the nicest that could be got, so much as I love you, you dear old dirty

naughty ones; so be quiet and don't interfere ever any more. But then a papa is sometimes cross. He is very funny to look at, and doesn't wear frocks like us; and some of them have beards, great hairy things like your muff stuck on to your chin, and when they kiss you it pricks. But that is not all. Now you shall hear about the little girl in the story. Once she met her papa when she was just going out for a walk, and her nurse was going to take her to the Baker Street Bazaar, and she was so happy; and what do you think this naughty, naughty, cross, unkind papa did?——"

"Vera, what are you talking about?"

"I was not talking, mamma; I was only telling Rose and Violet and the rest, a story. I often tell them stories—like what you used to tell me—that begin—'There was once a little girl.' I never liked to hear about that little girl," said Vera, shaking her head; "she was always doing silly things, and I knew she was me."

"Vera, it is very naughty either to your dolls, or any one, to talk so of your papa."

"My papa!" said Vera with well-feigned surprise. "I was only talking of the little girl's papa."

But here the boy, who had been silent, interposed with masculine reproof, "What stupids girls are with their dolls! You might come and bowl for me," said Eddy, who was still playing imaginary cricket.

Vera threw all her dolls into a heap in a corner and went with light-hearted fickleness; while the mother sat by and went on with her thoughts.

CHAPTER II.

CONJUGALITY.

MR. TREMENHEERE came home that evening at seven o'clock. It was not his custom to be quite so early. He went late in the morning, and was not unwilling to stay late, and to get all the evening's news before he went home, so that the dinners generally were very late in Hyde Park Square. Mrs. Tremenheere, who was a busy woman with many occupations of her own, did not object to this—indeed she was (as he remembered on his way home) on the whole a very easy woman to live with, and disposed to use mutual toleration in respect to a great many things which women in general are inclined to make unnecessary fusses about. Oddly enough, when he came to think of it, there were a great many things in respect to which she was very easy. It was ideas

that she fought about, but of all things that make a woman disagreeable, ideas, it must be allowed, are among the worst.

However, he dressed and made himself particularly pleasant at dinner. They were people who took pleasure in the table after a more refined fashion than that generally understood by these words. Mr. Tremenheere indeed liked a good dinner with that *naive* devotion which is common among men of his age, but Mrs. Tremenheere considered cookery one of the fine arts, and studied it in an elevated and elevating way. Mr. Tremenheere had made up his mind when he married, with a certain rueful submission, that it would be madness to expect in an imperfect and newly-constituted establishment under the charge of a lady whom he knew to be much too enlightened on other subjects, and consequently expected little from on this, the carefully-regulated cuisine, the excellent cookery which to a man of many clubs, with a tolerable income, had become second nature. He had even had jokes made upon him on the subject, and had made jokes of a melancholy nature in return. But to his great and delightful surprise he had been able to

turn the tables upon his sympathizers by giving them dinners which the best *chef* could not have surpassed. "I don't suppose you want banquets," Mrs. Tremenheere had said, "but I think we are capable of dinners of eight—or even of ten, if you please;" and she had kept her word in the most noble way. To such a philosophical artist as she had proved herself, it need not be said that a dinner for two—a delicate composition which answers to a copy of verses from a poet, or a short story from a novelist—was a special triumph of art; but on this particular evening, when Mr. Tremenheere came home, trembling with suppressed anxiety, from his office, and not very sure as to whether Fate and his offended wife would allow him any dinner at all, the *ménu* of the little repast was unusually exquisite. He took this, deluded man, for a good sign. He thought if she had been going to take those idle words of his at their full value and act upon them, that it was not female nature (of which, like many men, he thought he knew much) to have taken so much trouble about what he ate. He believed that she would have been spiteful, and refused him such a meal as he could sit down to with any pleasure. But

on the contrary—! Mr. Tremenheere's courage rose. It is impossible to describe how genial he was. He praised every dish; the fish was a wonder of freshness —the *entrées* were perfect—the birds were cooked as one scarcely ever saw them out of Scotland. He glowed and beamed over the well-spread table. Was it not a promise, a foretaste of years of good dinners and friendly conjugalities—all the better, perhaps, for this sudden and alarming cloud—to come?

And he was equally genial to the children, whose introduction at dessert did not always please him. To-night he was the politest and most amiable of fathers. Vera, taking advantage of the opportunity, though most inopportunely, so far as his feelings were concerned, plunged immediately into comment upon the transactions of the morning.

"We have never been out all day, not one little bit," she said. "Why mustn't we go out when its a fog? We have been ever so often before, and no one found fault. Papa, you know it was because you were cross you turned us back; and we were going to the Bazaar to see all the things for Christmas. Naughty papa!"

"Vera, I must send you to bed," said Mrs. Tremenheere.

"Let her talk—let her talk," said the conciliating father. "Going to the Bazaar, were you! I will take you myself when it is a fine day and buy you something."

"You!" Vera's delight was great. "Do you hear, Eddy? Papa himself! But you never did it before."

"I am always so busy, my dear."

"Are you busy? I should like to go with you; shouldn't you, Eddy? better than with nurse—better than with mamma."

"Vera, that is very ungrateful," said Mr. Tremenheere, secretly flattered by the preference, "and, besides, I don't believe it. You would rather go with mamma."

"No; she would come any time. I should like you because you never, never did it before. I like everything that is new," cried Vera, clapping her hands; "and then you would be stupid—you would not know where to go, or anything. You would not know which was the place for the dolls, nor where

those funny Japan things are. Will you come to-morrow, papa?"

"That is abrupt," he said. "Yes, perhaps, Vera, if nothing happens to interfere I will go to-morrow. Will that please you? and then I shall be made, I suppose, to buy half the dolls in the Bazaar."

"Vera, it is your hour for bed," said her mother; and the remonstrances which were on the child's lips were hushed by the fact that just then nurse came in solemnly and took her place at the door. As is usual in well-regulated families, mothers and fathers may yield, but nurse is inexorable. The children did not even attempt by any unnecessary blandishments to work upon the feelings of that Rhadamantha. They yielded at once. Eddy rose from his oranges without much reluctance, and Vera slid down unwillingly from her father's knee. At the same moment Mrs. Tremenheere rose. "You will find me in the drawing-room if you want me, Charles," she said quietly. Alas, he felt there was more in these words than met the ear.

And then an interval ensued which was not delightful for either of them. Mr. Tremenheere was long of

making his appearance that night—which was not even to be explained by the fact that he took a glass of wine more than usual to strengthen him for the evening trial—not even that; he did it on purpose, poor man, thinking that her courage would ooze out at her fingers' end, when she saw how late it was and how little time there was for talk. He strolled in at length in a careless way.

"Give me a cup of tea, my dear," he said, with ostentatious friendliness. "I have brought some work home with me from the office, and I want to have all my wits about me. In such cases there is nothing so good as a cup of your tea——"

"I am sorry, Charles, that you have work to-night."

"Yes?—well, so am I. I don't like it much, I assure you—but the country's business must be attended to," he said, rubbing his hands with premature delight over the success of his scheme.

"I don't doubt it; still our own life is sometimes more important to us than even the country's business—though I have never, that I know of, interfered with that."

"Never, Ada, never," he answered, briskly,—of

course, you are a sensible woman and know the importance of it as well as I do."

"And I have never wasted your time or kept you from your work for my own pleasure——"

"Never, my dear, never!" He interrupted her more nervously this time, feeling that so strenuous a self-defence must mean something more.

"Then I need the less excuse for now occupying your time, Charles. I must speak to you. Things are involved of more consequence to us than there can be in your office papers for the country. The country is not in mortal peril, that I know of, but our house is——"

"My dear, you astonish me——"

"No indeed, I don't astonish you. You know very well what I mean. You cannot have passed the day without thinking of it. I do not think it is worthy of you to suppose that we can get over this by simply ignoring the whole matter. Something was said this morning——"

"Yes, yes! I knew you would come back to that," he said, pettishly. "Well, it was a foolish speech on my part. I said it in the heat of discussion, not

meaning it. Will that satisfy you? When a man is very much provoked he is not always master of what he says. There, Ada! I did think that to ignore the whole business was the best—but since you insist upon it, I apologize, and I hope now you are content."

"The view you take of this is not the same as mine," said Mrs. Tremenheere. "You laugh: you are accustomed to hear such words from me. But don't laugh, I beg of you, for this is far more serious than any disagreement we have ever had. Charles, you said it would be best for us to separate. I have thought of little else since."

"Nor I, for that matter,—if that will be any consolation to you," he muttered between his teeth.

"Why should it be a consolation to me? It is not that I want to get the better of you, to be apologized to, or think myself the wiser. Again," cried Mrs. Tremenheere, "it is the old difficulty. You will not go to the heart of the matter. You will think only of the outside."

"It has no heart that I know of," he said, with a sullen acceptance of the new controversy, placing

himself once more in that citadel of argument, the front of the fire. "The whole affair lies in a nutshell. In one of our continual and apparently inevitable quarrels, I said some inadvertent words which I am sorry for. They were struck out of me in the heat of quarrel, and I tell you I am sorry for them; what more is to be done? I have said all a man can say."

"But yet you have not touched the heart of the subject. If, indeed, our quarrels are continual and apparently inevitable, that gives double force to your words. Charles, I have been thinking it over all day, and I think perhaps you are right. It will make a wonderful change in our lives, and it is not a thing to be done lightly—but yet I think you are right. We do quarrel a great deal. I don't know whose fault it is, but it is very undignified and unseemly. We will do our duty better and fill our place in the world better—apart."

"Apart?"

She said the last word so low that he stooped to hear what it was.

"Yes—apart!" Mrs. Tremenheere spoke tremulously, but firmly. Never was woman stronger in her

own opinion, and, perhaps, in all her life she had never formed a more decided opinion than now.

"You speak like a fool, Ada," he said, with a rudeness quite unusual to him. "This is carrying matters ridiculously far. And yet you are not a silly woman to leap to conclusions. You know, as well as I do, that there is a great deal more involved than mere agreement or disagreement. We can always wash our dirty linen at home, at all events. If we quarrel, there is no occasion to publish it to all the world. And this must be done if we separate; nonsense; separate! for one ill-advised and hasty word! Expose ourselves, break up our house, put a stigma on our children! You cannot think of such a thing. One can surely trust to your good sense to see that."

"I have thought of it all," said Mrs. Tremenheere, "and painfully enough. That is the outside view of the question — but the other aspect of it is this. Which is best? To undergo what you have described once for all: or to go on quarrelling, never taking the same view of anything, bringing up our children without any feeling of household sanctity, to see their father and mother in a perpetual struggle, to take

sides, perhaps, and fight too, after our fashion, and think of us as of antagonistic powers? Apparently, so far as I can make out, one or the other of these must be."

"Folly! utterly far-fetched, and unlike your good sense. Why should either of them be?"

"Do not you see why? Charles, Vera came to me this morning, quite ready to enter on the fray. You had turned them back when they were ready to go out, unreasonably. Yes, I cannot deny it was unreasonably. You were angry, and you made them turn back, saying it was the fog, and they came to me to complain. Of course, I had to maintain your authority; but I did so simply as a matter of duty. And children are very quick to notice this, Mr. Tremenheere."

"Oh! confound the children!" he cried. "This question surely may be allowed to be between us; it does not affect the children. Why should they be brought into it? Surely nothing can be more distinctly between you and me."

"It was you who brought in the children first, not I," she said.

"So! so!" cried Mr. Tremenheere, rubbing his hands together with growing rage, "and thus the whole old business commences again. It was not I but you—it is not one incidental question or another, but the entire matter between us, how we are to get on at all, what is to become of the family! I take heaven to witness it is not my fault. I said a few hasty unintentional words. I have withdrawn them—I have begged you pardon, which is a great deal for a man in my circumstances to do. If you are determined to go on, well! do it on your own responsibility. It is true," he continued, growing in excitement as he went on, "that this house is a perfect hell upon earth, that one is never safe from argument even at the moment one is least inclined for it. That is what comes of your educated women," cried the unlucky man. "This is the Attic salt they season their husband's daily fare with! Give me the old domestic drudge, the one that suckled fools, and gave her family a little peace. —This new edition of a wife is not the thing for me."

Mrs. Tremenheere grew red and then pale, but with that ridge of color on her nose of which she was always so unpleasantly conscious. She could bear

(she thought) a great deal of individual abuse, but general abuse addressed to her as a woman cut her to the heart. But she did not show anger as he did. She waited until he came to a pause, and then said, deliberately:

"It is unnecessary, Mr. Tremenheere, to assail all women on my account. There are women enough in the world of the kind you like, who might have married you perhaps had you asked them, so in that matter at least you have only yourself to blame. The question is strictly between individuals, not between the sexes—and I must remind you that you yourself said it lay in a nutshell. We cannot agree. Therefore you think it is best we should separate—and so do I."

"That is putting it in a nutshell, indeed," he cried. "I never made any such cut-and-dry statement. I spoke inadvertently in a moment of excitement.—No doubt it was true enough, if you come to that—but I have withdrawn it. I do withdraw it——"

"How can you withdraw it," she said, quietly, "if still it is true?"

"Ada, you will drive me mad!" he exclaimed, wip-

ing his forehead violently. She looked at him with a slight shrug of her shoulders, and no visible sign of her corresponding excitement except that red line down the high ridge of her handsome nose.

"Mr. Tremenheere," she said, "you withdraw everything and then you repeat it. Be logical. If I drive you mad—if our house is hell upon earth—why then it is unquestionable that to separate is the only possible thing for us to do——"

CHAPTER III.

A MEDIATOR.

MR. TREMENHEERE took a very strange step on the morning after this discussion. He went to call on his wife's chief friend, Miss Elinor Meadows, a single woman of fortune and advanced opinions, his aversion hitherto, and the very impersonation of everything he disliked—and put the case into her hands. And in less than an hour after, Miss Meadows burst into the drawing-room at Hyde Park Square. She was a handsome woman, with a wind of motion always about her, a "tempestuous petticoat," and hair somewhat wild at the best of times. Her hair was gray, curly, and frizzy, and full of life, running into curls and eddies, even when the most decorous attempts had been made to get it into order. On this occasion, when she had walked, and walked quickly, in the teeth of a breeze which had dragged it

out from under her bonnet, and twisted it up in her veil, her broad white forehead shone out among the unruly locks with greater solidity and breadth than ever. She had an eager heartiness of manner which corresponded with her wind-tossed aspect. Her clear brown eyes shone with the excitement of her mission. When she came into the orderly room it was as if a fresh breeze had been let loose there. She rushed up to Mrs. Tremenheere, put her hands on her shoulders, and gave her a kiss upon either cheek.

"Why, Ada," she said, "what is this? What have you been doing? Do you mean it, or are you only frightening this poor man?"

"What poor man? Of course it is you, Nelly. No one else comes in like a gale."

"I have come to puff the cobwebs away," said Miss Meadows. "I have had a penitent husband with me this morning. Fancy! you may imagine how very droll I found it that he should appeal to me."

"Before you go further, let us understand each other," said her friend, steadily. "The poor man and the penitent husband do not of course mean Mr. Tre-

menheere. Any one else you please you can speak of so, but not him."

"Ada, he has been making me his confidant. It is very strange, I allow, but still he has done it. Are you both out of your senses, or what on earth do you mean?"

"We mean, my dear Nelly, as he has taken you into his confidence, to do the wisest thing we have done for a long time—to withdraw amicably from each other's society. I don't know what he may have said to you, but this is really how it is. We differ very much in sentiment and opinion. We have different ways of regarding things. He considers all subjects by their bearing on society,—I for what they are in themselves. This makes frequent dissensions between us. We don't seem able to modify our views, or rather, our way of looking at life, and we cannot allow the children to grow up in constant presence of that which, while it is only reasonable controversy to us, will look like strife and discord to them. There! you have the whole affair in a nutshell, as Mr. Tremenheere says."

Mrs. Tremenheere warmed unconsciously as she

spoke, and her voice quivered till it ended in a little outburst. She was perfectly self-possessed, but not unmoved or callous. In the little tremblings of her dress, in the slight vibration of her head when she ceased speaking, in the movements of her hand, she betrayed excitement which was almost passionate, though so powerfully restrained.

"Ada, I don't know what you have been quarrelling about," said the intercessor, with deprecating meekness of speech, "but I could see he is very sorry. If he has provoked you badly, as I suppose, I could almost promise he will never do it again. Come, Ada——"

"Is it Mr. Tremenheere you are speaking of, as if he was a child who had gone wrong? I cannot allow it—this is taking an entirely false view of the subject."

"Upon my word! and so because he is *your* husband no one is to say a word about him. You will quarrel with him yourself, but to others he shall be a demigod!" said Miss Meadows. "*I* don't care for the man. I never did, as you know. I don't care for men generally. There is not good enough in them,

to make amends for the trouble they give. It is just like you. At all times everything that was yours was better than anybody else's. But I am not going to be put down; I have a mission, and I must do my duty to my principal. Come, Ada, be reasonable. Fight it out and be done with it. After all, I don't suppose he is any worse than other people. He likes his own way, and so do you, and I, and all of us. That is why I never understood your marriage at all, for any one more determined to be in the right than you are I never saw. Give in a little, and things will come round."

At this moment the door slowly opened, and the small figure of Vera, fully equipped, appeared, framed in by the doorway. The child stood in her little velvet coat and furs, her little hat, with its long feather pushed off her forehead, everything perfect and carefully arranged about her, an example of luxury and warmth and comfort. But Vera, though she loved her best hat as a little woman ought, was not thinking of it for the moment. She stood on the threshhold of the room and searched it with widening eyes of wonder and anxiety and dismay. The changes

on her little countenance amused the visitor, who had stopped short in her speech to look at the child. All expectation, pleasure and brightness, just clouded with the suspense of a moment, was the little face when it first appeared; then the blue eyes grew bigger and searched with a slight shade of fear in them; then the corners of her mouth began to droop. "Perhaps he is in the library," said Vera, slowly. "It is not possible that he can have forgotten;" and then the little mouth quivered, and a shower of quick tears came down in a moment. "But no, no; Aunt Elinor is there, and he does not like her, and she has frightened him away."

"I am much obliged to you, Vera," said Miss Meadows, laughing; "but on the contrary, my dear, your father likes me very well, and it is he who has sent me——"

"To take us to meet him," cried the child, with a sudden recovery of sunshine, despising all probabilities; upon which a gruffer voice arose behind her, and Eddy said curtly, himself unseen: "He never intended it. I told you so. Vera, come along and don't cry!"

"Your papa is very busy; he was obliged to go out early. I will remind him when he comes home," said Mrs. Tremenheere.

Vera rushed into the room and pulled off her best hat violently, pulling off along with it the pretty ribbon that tied her hair. She clenched her fists like a little fury, looking out through a mist of shiny locks with tears and rage in her eyes, and stamped her little foot on the carpet. "Eddy said so," she cried, "but I could not believe him. I would not believe him. Oh, isn't it dreadful; isn't it shameful! To break his word: You would kill me for it if it was me."

"Vera, you forget yourself," said her mother.

"But I don't forget my promises!" cried the child, "and why should big people be let do things which children musn't! No, I shan't come, Eddy. I'll stay here. I don't want to go out. I don't care for anything. I have had a disappointment;" and Vera marched to a corner of the room and sat down, gloomily turning her face to the wall.

The two women looked on with more interest than the situation warranted. Vera ought to have been whipped, I allow; but the circumstances gave a

certain changed character to her childish petulance. Elinor Meadows went up to her friend and stood over her chair, stooping to whisper that the child might not hear. "If you carry out your intentions," she said, feeling herself to be delivering a stroke against which no woman could have any defence, "what is to be done about *them?* Are they to be divided and separated like your other goods? Ada, Ada, you can never have thought of that."

"I have thought of little else," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with a twitching about her lips. "Of course it is the chief thing to think of. It has been my thought night and day. In the ordinary way of arranging such matters Vera would go with me, and Eddy with his father; but——"

"But——?"

"If you only knew how long and how much I have thought of it! Yes—if I had Vera I should bring her up to be like myself—and I am not such a great success as I might have been, Nelly; while his father would chill Eddy into a nobody, and leave him to grow up as he pleased, or as his schoolmaster pleased. But Mr. Tremenheere is proud of *the child.*" Here

Mrs. Tremenheere's voice grew choked, and for the moment she broke down.

"Ada," cried her friend, "for heaven's sake don't be obstinate. Why should you bring all this pain upon yourself?"

"I do it for the best," said Mrs. Tremenheere, faintly; then she recovered her tone of authority. "There is, I believe a principle in human nature which makes men kinder to women (in the abstract) and women kinder to men than either are to their own sex—at least such is the general opinion. Bringing up Vera would be to me a matter of course; one knows all about it—it is a thing of routine; as we were trained ourselves—or exactly the reverse—we train our daughters; but a boy—that requires thought. Therefore, Nelly, it is my opinion that I could do most justice to Eddy."

"And Vera?" said Miss Meadows, "she whom you call *the child?* I know she is the apple of your eye, however you may choose to deny it; is Mr. Tremenheere, do you think, likely to do the most justice to her?"

Vera's mother bore her friend's satirical gaze for a

moment, then she put up her hands and covered her face. Vera, who was sitting somewhat sullen on a stool in the corner after her outbreak, her pretty hair dishevelled, and her pretty face stained with crying, had begun to wake up from the monotony of a fit of ill-temper, which had lasted two whole minutes, and as her eyes began to wander round the room in search of some excitement, she suddenly perceived this group, which surprised her. Elinor Meadows, with her finger elevated in the air, scolding—as Vera thought—and mamma crying. Such an extraordinary concatenation of circumstances had never happened to her knowledge before. She started up from her seat, and threw herself between them.

"Aunt Elinor!" cried Vera, thrusting her small person in front of her mother. "You can tell *me* what it is if you want to scold—but you shan't make mamma cry."

Upon this Elinor, strong-minded woman as she was, began to whimper too.

"Child, you are a darling!" she cried, making a sudden attempt to kiss her; which Vera repulsed,

standing up like a little lioness, at her mother's knee.

Then Mrs. Tremenheere raised her head, and putting an arm round her little defender, drew Vera to her side. Vera deserved that whipping all the same, I do not deny, and her mother knew it; but it was not in human courage to administer it now. She took the little impatient hand which had been raised in her defence, and held it between her own and kissed it. Though she had so much self-command it took her some time to clear her voice.

"Mr. Tremenheere is a good man," she said, still faltering. "He will do as I mean to do myself. He will feel that it is a new thing, and that he does not understand it, and he will study what is best."

"But for a girl! A man, without any experience or understanding, left in charge of a girl!"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Tremenheere.

Vera turned round from one to the other, her eyes widening once more with curiosity and eagerness. "Something is going to happen," she said. "Mamma, tell me what it is?"

"I cannot tell you yet, dear, for I don't know. Go,

Vera, Eddy is calling you.—Who has taught her that something is going to happen?" she said, with a sigh, when they had watched the child's unwilling departure. She herself looked so melancholy and depressed that Elinor saw her opportunity. She was of an oratorical turn, and, indeed had given some attention to the art of public speaking. She withdrew a step for the greater effect, and shaking her curly gray locks off her broad fair forehead, began:

"Ada! What kind of a woman are you? flesh and blood or rock and stone, to look at that child and leave her, and make up your mind in cold blood to give her up! I say nothing about your boy. He won't talk to me; I don't understand him. Mothers have weaknesses for their boys which are inexplicable; the most uninteresting, speechless, stolid beings! (I don't mean Eddy) and yet women will stand by them—for no reason but an accident of birth—while a child like that!——If she was mine, they should cut me in little pieces before I parted with her. They should take everything else I possess. Ada! I tell you, if she was mine I should not care for all the men in the world. I should take her, whatever they did—

steal her, if it was necessary; run away, hide myself; but part with her!—never—not for the world!"

"I see what you mean," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with a trembling voice; "don't take the devil's part and tempt me. I must be just. There are two of us, and two of them, father and mother, boy and girl. He has a right to his share as well as I. We must be just. If it is barbarous to give all to the father, it would be equally barbarous to give all to the mother. Nelly, say no more! that would be a crime."

"Then I should risk the crime," cried Elinor. "I should care nothing for justice in comparison with Vera. Bah! abstract justice! who minds it? It is a thing to frighten babies with. Do you think Mr. Tremenheere would mind about justice, if he could get the better of you?"

"You are talking of my husband," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with dignity, "besides, if he were to do wrong a hundred times (which he would not) that would be no excuse for me. I will do him no injustice, whatever happens."

"Then put up with him, Ada! It is your only alternative. Good heavens! what does it matter?

An argument more or less, a discussion here or there. You have always been fond of argument. Make it up! For my part, I'd almost marry him myself," cried Elinor, in a burst of energy, "to have that child —and you have married him, and got all the worst over. Make it up, Ada; don't be foolish—make up!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BREACH ACCOMPLISHED.

BEFORE Christmas it was all over. Christmas! Perhaps we make a good deal of unnecessary fuss about this festival—not that the associations about it, the traditions of universal kindness and good-will which, fortunately for us, are so English, and still more fortunately are more or less so honestly carried out, can ever be exaggerated. Yet it is no doubt true that the universal jollity, the rude fun and sometimes mawkish sentiment which have got to be associated with the name, just as often disgust and sadden as delight those who have learned by time or trouble that Christmas does not always bring the reunion and happiness which are supposed to be its particular privilege. Alas! on the contrary, how sharply it reminds some of us of gaps not to be filled again, of empty places, of life diminished and wearing

out! But whether we do rightly or not in making a saturnalia of its homely delights, certain it is that of all times to choose for a parting, Christmas is the least appropriate. I don't think Mrs. Tremenheere thought of this; she had so many things to think about, how should she remember dates? It was the morning of the 24th of December, but she had forgotten, so full was her mind of other things, that the 24th of December was Christmas eve. She went away in the afternoon in a cab to the railway station, with Eddy by her side, dull and lowering and miserable, not knowing why she was so unhappy. No explanations had been entered into with the children. Mrs. Tremenheere was in reality so miserable that she desired to avoid dramatic effect as far as this was possible, and her husband, naturally, as a man and an Englishman, hated scenes. So the curious boy and girl, full of secret interest in the something going on which was not confided to them, were put off with the intimation that mamma was going away for a time, taking Eddy with her, while Vera was to stay at home to "take care of papa." Eddy for one was never taken in by this false explanation, but Vera in the

delight of her own importance, contrived to stave off her vague inquietude on the subject, and accepted it. The boy's inquietude was equally vague, but it was stronger. He felt himself a very forlorn waif and stray as the dreary cab traversed the streets, where all the shops were decked for Christmas, and where so many holiday parties were wandering about, looking in at the shop windows for their Christmas presents. "Mamma," he said at last, when his heart was too full to bear the pressure longer, "isn't it very odd to leave home to-day when to-morrow is Christmas?" A big tear was forming in the corner of his eye. He did not like to look up at her, lest she should see it, or lest—still more terrible possibility—it should fall.

Mrs. Tremenheere put her arm round him. I will not say that she was in much better plight than Eddy was, though a strong sense of duty held her up. Something was choking in her throat which was not exactly the fog, and her heart was wrung with a sterner pang. She paused a moment, to be quite firm and collected, and drew him close to her. "Yes," she said, "it is very odd, very odd; but I can't help it, Eddy." There was a kind of apology, a kind of

appeal in her voice, and it went to Eddy's heart, who vaguely comprehended, though it would have been utterly impossible for him to put in words what it was he felt and understood. He crouched himself up close against his mother, and caressed the hand that was round him, and allowed those two tears with which his eyes were big to drop upon it; and thus the pain in both was a little softened and sweetened, though the child was as far from understanding intellectually what the woman had in her mind as if they had been creatures of different species. But to go away to a hotel in Brighton through the cold, through the wintry dimness and brightness, through the crowds of travellers that encumbered every railway, the clusters of happy holiday people, and all the hampers and all the presents—one must have done it to know what it is. Mrs. Tremenheere bought some Christmas numbers of various periodicals at the station to amuse the boy. They were all about meetings, dances, mistletoe, wanderers returning and hard hearts relenting, and every kind of revolution made in every kind of life by the simple agency of Christmas carols, snow, church-bells and sentiment. "Merry Christ-

mas!" the very shops flaunted at them in big print. "Merry Christmas!" the porter said when he got his sixpence. And so the strong-minded woman and her boy went off into the yellow misty distance which led to Brighton, if you please, but which was the cold outside world,—outside of home.

Elinor Meadows joined them next day, in the strange hotel looking out upon the quay, which Mrs. Tremenheere had chosen as the first step in her self-banishment. It was not that Miss Meadows had not many cheerful houses to which to go for Christmas, but being a kind-hearted soul, as well as a strong-minded woman, she preferred to come to Brighton, and spend the festival in the dismallest way, over the fire in a sitting-room of a big vulgar inn, with her depressed and somewhat irritable friend. Never was a work more worthy of a good Samaritan. She came in the middle of the day, after church, which was the only cheerful portion of the Christmas to poor Eddy. The holly-berries and the wreaths pleased the child, and the Christmas hymns which he could sing, and which did him good, till they came out of church into the dreary world again. To be sure, Eddy wanted a

hundred times during the service to nudge Vera, and call her attention to a bit of decoration that pleased him, or to the little girl in the next pew who fell asleep, or to the clergyman curtesying to the altar in his long cassock and surplice, or some one of the other anythings, nothings, that caught his childish eyes; but still church is church, wherever you are, and not so terribly dull as a strange place far from home. And then it was a hopeless sort of Christmas day, with neither sunshine nor frost, such as are orthodox and befitting, but a drizzling dull rain, and skies so low, so leaden, and so cloudy that they seemed to Eddy to be coming down upon him, threatening to crush him every minute. After Elinor came (whom the children called Aunt Elinor, for friendship's sake, though there was no relationship between them), it grew duller and duller for Eddy. He had not anything to do with the conversation of his mother and her friend, which was carried on in subdued tones, and with occasional warning glances from one to the other at himself, which showed him that he was in the way—upon which, being proud, Eddy gathered together the Christmas papers his

mother had bought him, and drew a chair to the window, in front of which he placed himself, shutting out half of the gray and stifled daylight there was, and pored over first one and then another of his stories, wondering to himself rather why all those tales were of people who came back, and not one of people who went away just at Christmas. He read and read, hearing behind him the murmur of the two voices, the sound of the sparkling, crackling fire, and seeing, when by chance he lifted his eyes, the gray sea breaking in a muddy soiled rim of white upon the gray pebbles, and the street, which looked like a very dismal Sunday street—"only rather more so," Eddy thought. But he did not often raise his eyes. He read on and on, one tale after another, scarcely quite sure where one ended and another began, till the monotony of his reading and of the lapping waves outside, and the murmuring voices within, lulled the lonely boy into a kind of dream.

The ladies had drawn their chairs to the fire; they had eaten their luncheon, they had done their best to be cheerful; and now the floods of remark and criticism and question which were in Elinor's mind could

be contained no longer. She began even before poor Eddy withdrew, leaving them at liberty; and showed her sympathy, as so many friends do, by taunt and sudden reproach.

"Well," she said, "you have done it now. It is all over, and every place of repentance comfortably cut off. How do you like it? You have given up your husband to confusion and remorse. You have left your child——"

"Mr. Tremenheere has nothing to be remorseful about," said his wife, with a slight shiver, turning away from the last suggestion. "You mistake the matter altogether, Elinor. You do not understand either me or him. I blame him for nothing. He has no need to be remorseful on my account."

"Then why, in the name of heaven, did you go away? I never believed you would carry it out. I expected you to threaten and frighten him, and then to relent."

"That is to say," cried Mrs. Tremenheere, "that you expected me to do exactly what the woman does whom you find fault with in books, and are indignant about as a man's idea of women. You expect me to

say things I don't mean, and do the reverse of what I say, and act like a creature without conscience, or honor, or moral responsibility."

"Ada! No, I don't do anything of the sort. Don't please come down upon an unoffending person in that way. I don't quite see why, in a case where the feelings are concerned, you should not act as a great many other people act, who are not without honor or conscience."

"I may be wrong," said Mrs. Tremenheere. "No one is free from the risk of taking a wrong view, but to threaten anything without meaning to do it is not possible to me. This seemed to me right——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Elinor. "We need not discuss it over again. Isn't there a book which is called 'He Knew He was Right?' We must put it the other way now. You are right and you are satisfied. And now what are you going to do? You can't stay always here."

"No, I am going—to devote myself to *his* education."

She would not say Eddy's name to attract his attention. Was he not happily unconscious, ab-

sorbed in his Christmas stories? so, at least, she thought.

"That too is abstract, Ada. Don't tell me where you mean to go unless you like—but give me some idea of your plans."

"I have not any yet. I must find out what is best."

"Put him to school, Ada. That is always best for boys. Put him to some good school, and then when you are free of responsibility, come abroad with me. I have been thinking of it all the morning. You want change, you want refreshment. You have been worried and tired. Get the boy comfortably disposed of, so that you need have no anxiety about him, and come with me."

"Get him comfortably disposed of, where I shall have no anxiety about him!" Mrs. Tremenheere repeated slowly, with a smile.

"Yes," said Elinor, suspecting no sarcasm in her tone, "it would be the very thing to do. That is the chief good of children at his age; you can dispose of them in so satisfactory a way. Vera under the

care of her father, Eddy at school; and then you and I——"

"Can go and enjoy ourselves?" Said Mrs. Tremenheere with a forced laugh.

"Why not? Of course we should enjoy ourselves. Don't you recollect, before you were married, that trip we took? I was not much more than a girl, and how I did enjoy it! I never thought there would be such luck for me again. Come, Ada, now you are free, with only the boy to dispose of, this is the very thing to do. We might start almost at once; stay at Nice or Cannes, to rest ourselves a little, and then on to Rome."

Mrs. Tremenheere rose before eager Elinor had got this length, and began to walk about the room in an agitated way. Then she went across to where Eddy, in front of the window, had dropped half asleep over the stories, with the monotony and the misery and the stillness. She woke him up bending over him, taking his curly head between her hands and kissing his forehead, a caress which the drowsy, confused child responded to by stumbling from his chair with a sudden start, and all but knocking her down.

"Mamma!" cried Eddy, overpowered, and beginning in spite of his manhood, to cry without knowing it.

"Yes, my darling," she said, with quivering lips, soothing him. Elinor sat still, turning round in her chair, gazing eagerly at her, not knowing what it all meant. What had this sudden demonstration to do with what she had been saying—with that plan of hers which would be so pleasant and so easily carried out?

While Eddy and his mother got through this dreary Christmas afternoon a great many things had happened to Vera. She had managed to keep herself going all the previous day. A lively, vivacious, independent disposition, and a great sense of importance were as wings to the little heroine. She gave herself a great many airs, to the pitying wonder and admiration of the servants, who, I need not say, were indignant beyond the power of utterance at Mrs. Tremenheere. Vera walked about over the house to see that everything was ready for her father when it came to be time for his return. She interfered with the butler in laying out his things in his dressing-room. She interfered with the cook, requesting to know what was

ordered for dinner, and suggesting an additional pudding "out of her own head." She went to the dining-room and insisted upon helping to arrange the dessert. Her mind was full of a lofty determination to make her father so comfortable that "he should not miss mamma!" Accordingly she took care to remove his claret from the fire where it had been carefully placed, and let fall the bottle, which was warm, from her small fingers.

"If it hadn't a been for the hearthrug, miss, you'd have broke it, and spilt the wine all over the floor," said Jervis.

"But why do you put it there? Gentlemen take ice in their wine, they don't like it hot!" cried Vera, stamping her foot, as she saw it put back again. "Take it away, take it away!"

Then when Mr. Tremenheere came in, Vera placed herself at the table beside him, and pressed him to eat of every dish, especially the pudding she had ordered.

"I told cook to make it myself, papa."

"Then you had better have some of it," he said, and Vera was nothing loth. She sat with him while he took his wine, chattering without pause or inter-

mission, and she led him upstairs and made tea for him, her little heart beating with a mingled pain and pleasure which she did not analyze, poor child, but which excited her as either sensation unmingled seldom does.

"When mamma comes back you can tell her how I took care of you," she cried in triumph. "I do love to pour out your tea, papa!"

All this touched him beyond description with a strange little flavor of sharp sweetness amid a great deal of pain. Mr. Tremenheere felt the world's comments hanging over him, felt that already the servants were all "sitting upon" himself and his private affairs, and that ere a day had passed "everybody" in the narrow sense that belongs to that word in society, would be aware of what had happened, and would discuss them to. How was he to face their remarks, what account was he to give even to his best friends? "Incompatibility of temper;" but how few people would believe that there was not something else below that well-worn plea? Some *faux pas* on her part, some atrocity on his—which was being veiled on one side or the other. As it was, he was very irritable to

the servants, and launched out upon poor Jervis about that very claret which he had saved from Vera's meddling little hands.

"But, Lord bless you, to see her there a setting beside him, comforting of him, I hadn't the heart to say as it was Miss Vera's fault," that dignitary said, when he went down-stairs; "and though he's in the devil's own temper, I could'nt stand up to him, not to-night. Poor beggar, it ain't very nice for him, whatever you may say." Nobody, however, down-stairs took up this challenge, or had a word to say in favor of Mrs. Tremenheere. She was universally condemned.

"A woman as thinks of herself first didn't ought to have children," said cook, who was a great domestic authority.

"And how any woman as hadn't a heart of stone could go and leave my little Duckie!" whimpered the nurse.

In short the house was in a state of moral indignation. But Vera went to bed, straight from the drawing-room, after tea, supported by her own elation; and only wept two or three tears when she

remembered that mamma would not come to kiss after she was asleep.

Next morning, however, it was different. Mr. Tremenheere did not go to church, but he stayed at home with a sullen respect for the festival which was so far from being a festival to him. What a day it was! A drizzling dull Christmas, with scarcely anybody about the streets, the shops shut, the houses either shut up or turned outside in, as it were, everything cheerful being concentrated in doors. Vera came down full of prattle to breakfast, but her father replied to her with an effort. He was very kind, and kissed her, and gave her a little locket which he had bought for her for Christmas, and which made her quite happy for five minutes; but after that he let the child run on without any reply, and got impatient when she clamored for an answer. "Hush child, I am busy," he said. As soon as he had finished his breakfast he went off to the library to write letters; and Vera went up-stairs, her heart sinking more and more, and sat down on the carpet close to one of the long drawing-room windows. She leaned her poor little head against the pane, looking out. There were only

a few people passing under dripping umbrellas. Everybody who was not out of town was at church, or else preparing for the festivities of the evening. The house was very still; there were no preparations going on in Hyde Park Square. Vera's little heart sank lower and lower—all the world seemed to ebb away from her,—mother, brother, even nurse and cook; only herself and her father remained, two forlorn and shipwrecked people. There came into Vera's mind a picture of the Flood, which she had seen somewhere, in which two people perched on the smallest point of rock were holding by each other. "Like me and poor papa!" she said to herself, with a rising sob in her lonely little bosom. Just at that moment, however, she heard her father's voice downstairs.

"I am going out," Mr. Tremenheere was saying. "Probably I shall dine out. You needn't prepare anything; and tell nurse to look after Miss Vera." When nurse did go, very ill-tempered to have her holiday thus interfered with, she found Vera lying on the floor, crying her little heart out. The loneliness had swallowed up all her little bravery, her resolution

and courage. She put her hand to the locket round her neck to try and console herself; but even that did not reanimate her failing spirit. Poor little Vera! It was she now who was on that peak alone, with the hurrying muddy waters sweeping round her, and nobody to lay hold of. She sank down like a weak little unfledged bird. Was mamma in that cruel ark, floating, floating away, taking no thought for her? Love and help and kindness seemed to have abandoned the child. Her pretty hair was ruffled, her eyes blind with tears; she laid down her head and thought she would die. And it was Christmas day!

CHAPTER V.

EDUCATION.

WHETHER Mrs. Tremenheere had any foundation of justice in the theory which made her take her boy's education in hand instead of her girl's, I cannot venture to say; but in the meantime the poor children had a troubled interval to go through. She devoted herself to Eddy, walking with him, superintending his lessons, doing everything the most anxious care could do. The toys she bought him, the books she accumulated, the common people with children whose acquaintance she permitted herself to make on her boy's account, that he might have some one to play with, are not to be described. And she had a tutor for him, who came daily and drove him quickly along the stony ways of learning, and took him out for walks upon the Downs, and told his

mother he was one of the brightest of boys, not convincing her much, though he pleased her by so saying. She had settled herself in Brighton with the express idea that it would be good for him and cheerful, and I cannot tell with what anxiety, poor soul, she watched over him, straining every faculty to amuse and cheer him. But the more she devoted herself to Eddy the paler and quieter he grew. He became as mild as a little invalid, and weak, though there was nothing the matter with him. He clung to his mother, as sick children do, stealing his hand into her's when he walked with her, pressing close up to her when she talked to any one, never leaving her when he could help it, he who had been so little amenable to female government in those old days at home. She perceived it and yet she did not perceive it, as people do who resolutely shut their eyes and will not see; and it was again her friend Elinor who first really called her attention to the state of affairs, which had then lasted more than a year.

"Do you remember telling me your ideas about men training girls and women boys?" said Elinor. Eddy was in the room with them as usual. It was a

warm day in the early spring, and the boy sat half out in the balcony, with a book over which he pored. He heard what they were saying, and yet did not hear, in his abstracted way.

"Yes," said Mrs. Tremenheere, raising herself up. "What then? You have seen my Vera, Elinor!"

"I have seen her; but that is not what I was thinking of."

"What were you thinking of? Her letters are full of bright spirits, and amusing, as she always was. Is her father not doing his duty to her? Tell me, tell me, Nelly!"

"She is very well—quite well. I was not thinking of anything so far off."

Mrs. Tremenheere sat upright on her chair, very upright, grasping as it were instinctively for her weapons of defence. "You are thinking of me?"

Elinor stretched out her oratorical right hand. "Look at that child, Ada! is that a good specimen of a woman's training? You are bringing him up entirely as you would bring up a girl. Look at the color of his hands—are these like a boy's hands? Look at his quiet timid way. You are ruining him, both

health and spirit. I don't know what you mean by it; while Vera, whom you could have managed——"

"Nelly, you have heard something about my child."

She began to tremble, she who was so firm and steady. Somehow any mistakes she herself might have made seemed so trivial, so easily rectified, in comparison with the mistakes that might be made on the other side.

"It is not Vera," said Elinor. "Vera is running wild; she is growing a romp and a tomboy; but that is less harm. Her health will not suffer, nor her mind much, at her age. But, Ada, look there! Is that pale, still child, poring over his book, the sort of creature you wish your son to be? You are bringing him up like a girl, not like a boy."

"I thought you and your friends maintained that there should be no difference between girls and boys," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with a faint smile. She had received the arrow into her very heart; but she did not mean to show it now, however it might affect her afterwards. She was too proud all at once to own herself in the wrong.

"You need not sneer about my friends," said Miss Meadows, warmly. "I thought, too, that you had been one of them, that you had yourself shown some interest in such questions. I don't care whether I am consistent or not, any more than I care whether you are angry or not. Girls and boys may be the same in the abstract, and it may be good for girls perhaps to have more of a boy's training; but for a boy to be thrown back into the domestic bondage which I hope we shall break for girls, is monstrous—it is a disgrace—it is against nature."

"Do you wish me to quarrel with you, Nelly?"

"I don't care whether you quarrel or not," cried the orator, with a large gesture of indifference. "Quarrel as you like, so long as you open your eyes and see what you are doing to that boy."

After this there was a long pause. Elinor, somewhat agitated by her own boldness, sat still and began to work with great but fatal ardor at a piece of embroidery she found on the table, and to which she did untold damage. She was so carried away by her feelings that she did not perceive that her friend had left the room. But when Mrs. Tremenheere came

down-stairs again, though there were traces of emotion about her face she was as friendly as ever. She had put on her hat, and invited Elinor to come out for a walk.

"Eddy, I see the Troutbeck boys going out to play cricket," she said, "could not you join them?"

A flash of boyish triumph came into Eddy's still eyes.

"Cricket, mamma! What can you be thinking of? There is no cricket at this time of the year."

"What does it matter for the name? They are going to play at something."

"Jumping, perhaps, or football. Some people still play football at this season; or hare and hounds."

"What does it matter which it is? but it does matter that you should play and get a little color in your cheeks."

"They are jumping," said Eddy, from the window, with a sparkle of energy, "but then there is a lot of them," he added, falling back, "they won't want me."

"Nonsense—go!" said his mother, peremptorily.

He got up from his book with reluctance. He did

care for the jumping, but was it worth while to disturb himself for that, or anything else? He was quite comfortable and interested in his story. The two ladies stood still and watched him creeping away, languid and indifferent. For the first time Mrs. Tremenheere noticed the change in the boy. A great wrinkle of anxiety came into her forehead. "Nelly, I am very much obliged to you," she cried. "What shall I do?"

Miss Meadows glowed and expanded with the sense of victory. "Ada," she said, "it is not many people who have the sense to see where they have been wrong. I always said you were no ordinary woman. Send him to school, my dear—send him to school; let him be among other boys; try him with wholesome neglect; and come off to Italy with me."

Mrs. Tremenheere listened very seriously till Elinor came to her last clause, then she laughed, though her face was still clouded. "Come and walk," she said.

In the meantime things were going on very differently, and yet with much the same result, at Hyde Park Square. Mr. Tremenheere was very kind to

Vera when she came immediately under his notice. He still allowed her to pour out his tea for him in the morning while he read his newspaper, and had her down-stairs to amuse him after dinner, when now and then he dined at home. But in a very short time after his wife left him, this ceased to be his ordinary custom. He got over the scandal much better than he had hoped. It had taken place when Society was out of town, and therefore had passed comparatively without notice; and without much difficulty he fell back into his bachelor habits. He had suffered more at the moment than she did, but he did not suffer very much after it was over, and when the secondary consequences he feared proved in great part illusory. He had liked his old life, with all its varieties and comforts, and now, notwithstanding the interval of ten years which he had spent in trying to learn how to be happy otherwise, he took it up again with unfeigned pleasure. Now and then a few men dined with him at home, and then Vera would come down in her best frock, and chatter to them, and do the honors with childish excitement, her eyes blazing with the novelty and pride of her position. Mr. Tre-

menheere had been considerably startled, it is not to be denied, by her talk on several of these occasions, and one morning he remonstrated gently.

"When there is company, as the servants say, a little girl of your age should be very quiet, Vera. It is not to you, my dear, that my friends look for amusement. You must be quiet and good, and answer when people speak to you."

"Why, papa, they all like to talk to me best," said Vera, tossing her little head. "They all laugh and say I am clever. Why shouldn't I talk? I am very fond of talking. I talk to everybody, and that is why people like me, and say I am not at all proud."

"What sort of people do you talk to?" said her father, half alarmed, half amused.

"Oh, all sorts of people; not only gentlemen, papa. When Nurse goes to see her friends I go with her, and they all say it is nice of me not to be proud. They are going to have a party in the kitchen to-night. It is such fun. They have tea, and then they dance, and then they have supper, and Nurse says if I am good I may stay to supper this time."

"This time!" said Mr. Tremenheere, with horror; "have you gone to anything of the sort before?"

"Oh yes, papa, several! I went with Nurse to the servants' party next door; but oh," said Vera, suddenly, "I am afraid I ought not have talked of it. I don't think they like the masters to know."

Mr. Tremenheere rose and walked about the room in great agitation. Here was an unlooked-for disclosure. For a moment he was quite appalled by the discovery he had made. "Vera," he said in a voice which trembled, "you must promise not to go to this affair to-night."

"Papa! not to go!" cried Vera, the corners of her mouth dropping; "oh, you can't mean it! you can't mean it! It is such a nice party, papa, and they take such care of me. I sit next to Nurse or the cook always, and I dance with the nicest people only. There was once somebody quite as nicely dressed as you, and with beautiful diamond studs, and who could speak French and do all sorts of things. Papa, you can't mean it. Nurse says it is the only party I ever have, and that it would be cruel to send me to bed."

"The only party you ever have! I thought you went out a great deal, and had a great many parties?"

"Yes, baby parties; I don't care for them," said Vera, with serene fatuity, looking her father in the face, and holding up her little head.

After this a storm arose. Mr. Tremenheere sent for his three principal functionaries, Jervis, the cook, and the nurse, and demanded to know how they dared to take Miss Vera to their d—— parties. He was not a man who interfered much in his household, and when he did so he was usually calm and polite, a thing which the domestics understood much less and resented much more deeply than the chance blasphemy, which they forgave easily. Jervis stammered out excuses, and apologies, and protestations. "As I was always against it, and knew it wasn't no place for Miss Vera." Nurse retired in floods of tears, which threatened every moment to become hysterics, and cook, who was hot-tempered, threw up her place. Vera, very red and very angry, darted in front of the accused to defend them. "Papa! when it was I who told you! They will never trust me any more; they

will think I am a traitor and betrayed them! Papa, you are not to scold them, when it is all my fault!"

"Take Miss Vera up-stairs," said Mr. Tremenheere to the housemaid, who, stood by. "Go at once without a word," he cried, and very reluctantly the child, still hot and red with excitement, was forced to obey. Vera was shut up all day, and overwhelmed by reproaches from the nurse. "You see what comes of it with your tongue, Miss," cried this weeping sufferer. "Can't you never hold your tongue, as I'm a telling of you, night and day? Them as can't hold their tongues should never be let into secrets, and it's all over Miss Vera, I can tell you, between you and me. No more parties in this house, nor no other house; no more cakes as I asked cook to make for you—no more nice suppers. After this you'll go to bed at eight o'clock regular, as you used to in your mamma's time, and when you feel to want something nice you needn't look to me. And here's poor cook losing her good place along of your chatter!" she added, discharging this last arrow with full confidence in its effect. There was no party in the house that night, but nobody informed Vera of this fact, which might

have been partially consolatory. She was put to bed, and left there in solitude to cry her eyes out, no one coming near her. "Oh, mamma, mamma!" cried poor little Vera, forlorn in the darkness. Her mother was miles off, and could not hear; her father was at his club; the servants were having an indignation supper down-stairs, four stories off, and there was nobody to say a word of consolation to the poor little abandoned girl.

However, after these very different scenes, both husband and wife set themselves to think on the subject, as Mrs. Tremenheere had predicted. "He shall not say that the boy is ruined by a woman's training," she said to herself; and "She shall not taunt me that I have not been able to look after the girl," said Mr. Tremenheere. This delightful spirit of opposition worked strongly in concert with other feelings more laudable, for indeed both parents were fond of their children, in their different ways. Mrs. Tremenheere's part was the easiest of the two, and she took her steps promptly. The very next day after that revelation had been made to her, she went off to one of the great public schools and put Eddy's name down, and

began herself to look for a house in the neighborhood, for she did not mean to throw the boy off entirely, as her childless friend thought right and expedient. Before Easter, at which time Eddy began his school-life, she had found the house she wanted, a villa on a hillside, which was not high indeed, but which had all the advantages of much greater height, since it looked over a great plain of rich cultivated country, fields, and hedges, and fine trees, and red farmhouses, with here and there a great mansion gleaming away into the far distance, till it got indistinct like the sea, and almost as suggestive. Here she settled and furnished her house, which was agreeable work, and tossed the pale boy into the sea of life and youth close by—where he soon ceased to be pale.

Mr. Tremenheere, poor man, had a more difficult task. The first thing he did was to reflect bitterly upon his wife's abandonment of her natural duty. "It is just like a woman," he said to himself through his teeth. "They profess to love their children beyond everything, and yet they will give up their children rather than give in or own themselves

wrong." But this reflection, though it was in its way satisfactory, did not help him to the solution of his problem. How was he to bring up his daughter? In his perplexity he betook himself wisely to a friend who was a clergyman, and had to do with all kind of educational and benevolent institutions. "I suppose I want a governess," he said. "She must be old to avoid scandal, and well educated and so forth, but chiefly she must be a dragon—recollect this. She must never relax, night or day. I will have my girl well looked after; that is one thing I am determined on. A woman who will suspect everything, believe nothing, and keep an eye upon her for ever."

"Surely this is going too far. It is against the spirit of the time. Everything tends to emancipate women, Tremenheere, not to make slaves of them."

"I hate the spirit of the time," he said. "I hate your enlightened women, that know the world as well as we do. I want my girl to be of the old type. I want her to be seen and not heard, like our grandmothers. And therefore I want a dragon for her governess—a woman that will allow nothing out of the regulation in point of propriety—an iceberg, a

machine, whatever you please, but one that will guard the child, and watch her and make her incapable of mischief. Now, if you have any regard for me, bestir yourself and find out what I want."

"I have her," said the clergyman, sighing. "So few people want dragons nowadays that I feared she would have to fall back upon the Home, poor lady. But, as that is what you want—only I don't think you'll find it successful with a high-spirited child like Vera."

"Vera's high spirits must come down," said her father. "I want a soft, submissive, yielding girl, and not a self-opinionated being that will set up for a mind of her own. What do they want with minds of their own?"

"Tremenheere, you speak like a Turk."

"Perhaps I feel life one," he said, dismissing the subject with a forced laugh. And this was how he found his way out of the dilemma. Miss Campbell arrived at the end of the week, a tall, severe Scotswoman, with a large nose and high cheekbones. She was over fifty, and she had been trained in the belief that young ladies ought to be kept in absolute subjec-

tion. A girl who had no will but that of her parents, and who consulted her mother with her eyes before she took a piece of bread and butter, was Miss Campbell's ideal; she was exactly the kind of person to satisfy Mr. Tremenheere.

Thus father and mother entered at the same time into the right way, or into what they thought to be the right way; and the two experiments of education began.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN.

A BRIGHT July day, early in the month, with London still full, and all the world weary yet toiling on, more or less, in the treadmill work of society; such a day as revives the toilers in that everlasting round, and breathes into hundreds of worn-out minds an air of freshness, waking them up from the fatigue of their pleasures and of their disgust. Stands all round, with ladies ranged one row above another like banks of flowers, carriages thronging twenty deep, and crowds standing in a deep inner ring. But it is not a race-course, like Ascot or Epsom. It is in the heart of London; and all these thousands of fine people surround a green smooth lawn, on which a set of lads are playing—no such great matter, one would suppose, and little compre-

hensible to a foreigner. Yet surely this is one of the most innocent, the kindliest of all freaks of fashion. The fine ladies are turned as by magic into mothers and sisters. They have their parasols and their dresses and their horses' heads trimmed with symbolical ribbons. Many of the younger ones watch the game with an anxiety as great as if the welfare of the kingdom depended upon it; and the men, world-worn men from all sorts of unlikely places, men from the clubs and the public offices, and Parliament, and business, carry their ensigns too, if not so openly, in some snip of blue somewhere about them, a forget-me-not in a button-hole, a tassel to an umbrella. And this is all, need I say, for Eton against Harrow, the Public Schools Match. Not to a hundredth part of these crowds is it given to have a personal interest in the sublime band on either side. But as every smallest imp, with his knot of blue ribbon, feels himself Eton or Harrow impersonated against all the world, so all the elder people stand by the school to which they are vaguely attached in the person of that smallest of schoolboys, with as much fervor as if they belonged to the Captain of the Eleven. But those

who do belong to the Captain of the Eleven—those who can with exultant yet anxious eyes follow the apparition of that demigod, as he comes and goes—who can describe the feelings that agitate their bosoms? Such feelings had full sway on the special occasion to which we refer, in a certain modest carriage, holding two ladies, which occupied one of the places in the front rank at Lord's, carefully placed there before daylight to make sure of a good view. The elder lady in it took but little interest in what was going on, but then, though the elder, she was the least important, and her young companion was entirely absorbed in the scene. She was but sixteen, dressed in the simplest demure costume of white, and sometimes whiter still than her dress with agitation, sometimes all flushed and rose-red with excitement. Her eyes, her whole soul, her whole heart were fixed on the game and the players. Her young bosom gave a great throb whenever there was a good hit on her own side. Her heart sank when the good hit was on the other. She had neither sight, nor hearing, nor understanding for anything else. And who will wonder? She was the sister of the Captain of

the Eleven. It is unnecessary to say which of the blues that captain wore. Tremenheere had played once before for his school, but as this was almost by an accident, and not known until the last moment, "his people" did not have the glory of it as they ought; but with full announcement and preparation the once backward Eddy, the boy whom his mother had spoilt, burst suddenly upon the world now. And everything else was dwarfed to Vera by this event. All other honors and delights grew dim before it. She watched her brother (whom she scarcely knew) with a strange enthusiasm, and eagerness, and anxiety which it is impossible to describe. How could she bear to see him beaten? If life and death had been on it she could not have taken it more seriously. Her hand was on the door of the carriage, sometimes trembling, sometimes holding it tight with agony when the other side seemed to be making progress; the pretty girlish figure bent a little forward, her eyes intent, never losing a movement, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, unaware who came near her, who passed, even who spoke to her,—and all this for a cricket match! But then it was much more than a cricket

match for Vera. Her brother seemed to her the very foremost young man in England. Had not he and his comrades eclipsed all other incidents in busy London on this hot day? Parliament itself was diminished. There was nobody in the Row; afternoon teas were as good as done away with; telegrams from hour to hour appeared in all the papers; the streets were full of the two different blues. What wonder that Vera, only sixteen, should think her brother the very greatest personage that ever girl belonged to? She looked at the card in her hand now and then when Edward was not playing, to read his name with a thrill of fresh excitement. "Tremenheere, captain." If he had come to this honor and glory when he was only eighteen, what prizes must not life hold for such a hero?

"Vera, my dear, I think you should put down your veil? People are remarking you. I don't think it is nice to be so absorbed in anything. You forget yourself altogether, my dear."

"Why should I remember myself?—there is nothing in me to remember," she said, in her excitement. Then coming to herself, "Oh please, Miss Campbell,

I do so hate a veil. It gets in one's eyes, and one can't see."

"Dear, how often must I tell you that a well-bred girl expresses herself much more quietly. Take the opera-glass, then, that conceals the face."

"But I can see very well without it. I can see Eddy quite plain. Look, Miss Campbell! I can always make him out. There! four for us!"

"I don't understand the interest you all take in this game," said Miss Campbell. "In Scotland the gentlemen play golf, which they tell me is much finer exercise. All this I think is very bad for the boys. All London coming out to look at them hitting a ball with a stick. And bad for you too, Vera. If you get so very much excited I think I must take you away."

Vera knew that this could not be done, and therefore heard the threat calmly. Fortunately, after a while, Miss Campbell got engrossed with something else, and with a sigh of relief she let the glass drop, thus revealing her moving animated countenance all at once to two people to whom the sight of it was like something from heaven. The one was a middle-

aged woman, no more or less than Vera's mother; the other a young man. Let us keep the more interesting personage to the last. Mrs. Tremenheere has the best right to come forward. She stood at a little distance among the crowd looking at her child. She had always called Vera by this name. After years of virtual separation—though there never had been any personal objection made on either side to either parent seeing the children when he or she pleased—here was the child she had left, grown into a woman. I cannot describe the feelings with which her mother regarded her, gazing at the young absorbed countenance. Little Vera, the baby, the plaything, the amusement of the house, the little bud of life whom she had left behind, not knowing what was to come of her!

"Look, Elinor!" she said, grasping the arm of her inseparable companion, and leaning on her with a trembling which she could not command.

"I see her," said Miss Meadows, cheerfully. "Hasn't she grown up pretty? Come and speak to her, Ada. She must be looking for you."

"She is looking for her brother, nothing else," said

Mrs. Tremenheere. "Wait a little, Nelly; I feel like a divorced woman, with no right to go near my child. God help us! what those wretched beings must suffer! I never thought of it before."

"One never does think of other people's sufferings till one shares them," said Elinor, oracularly. "Thank heaven, you are not so bad as that! Come along. Shall I go first and tell her."

"Wait a little."

Mrs. Tremenheere, though she was a strong-minded woman, trembled for the meeting. What would the child think of the mother who had deserted her? If she had been only a child! but a woman with a mind and judgment—who could understand and perhaps condemn. She stood by and looked at this creature of sixteen with her heart in a flutter. The judgment of a child is a terrible tribunal. One can face the world and one's equals, knowing all that is in one's favor, and feeling the full force of one's rights. But the secret verdict of a boy or girl, whom natural respect will prevent from expressing it or even defining it to themselves—what a thing that is to encounter! Very seldom do fathers or mothers encounter this

judgment in so dramatically distinct a manner as Mrs. Tremenheere had to do; and she trembled and held back. What if she should read dislike, disapproval, the pained and wondering sentence of the innocent in Vera's eyes?

In the meantime the other individual of whom I have spoken had gone past again, gazing furtively at the carriage. "Jove! how pretty she is," he was saying to himself. "How absorbed she is, not seeing me nor any one! That's what I like in a girl; never to see you if you stare like a madman. Why should she? The ones that are thinking of themselves see you fast enough. She is not thinking of herself, bless her. I wonder who she's thinking of? one of those fellows in their flannels? Idiots! with nothing but hits to leg, and catches got, or missed, in their empty heads. I beg your pardon, Miss Meadows, I am very sorry. I hope I did not hurt a ribbon or a feather."

"You are very saucy to talk of feathers and ribbons. You have hurt *me*. Where are you going with your head over your shoulder? Who are you gazing at?"

"Look here," cried the young man, drawing her aside. "Look at that girl's face. What is she, a St. Cecilia or a rapt young Madonna intent upon the angel? No, perhaps she is not exactly beautiful. I don't care for your beautiful faces, all feature and nothing else."

"Oswald! when you do nothing but rave about form. Greek, forsooth! As if good English flesh and blood was not finer than your marbles!"

"Miss Meadows, you were always a woman of the most just ideas. Precisely what I think. Look at her! the features are not much, but the expression is divine. I should like to paint her, I should like to carry her off. I should like to——"

"Not eat her I hope, though your eyes look like it —for, hush! here is her mother," cried Elinor. Mr. Oswald Fane started, and grew red, and drew back a step. He turned to the other face behind him in which he was not so interested; and yet that, too, if painting had been all that he was thinking of! Mrs. Tremenheere had not heard what was going on between the others. She, too, was absorbed, thinking only of one thing,—how Vera would look at her,

what she should see in the child's eyes. The young man gave a glance at her, then turned back to the first object of his admiration.

"Is it only that they resemble each other," he whispered, "or what gives them both that rapt look? It is interesting.—Do you know them?—I should like to be you. I wonder if that girl is like her face."

"If you are patient and wait, perhaps I may introduce you," said Elinor. "I don't know that she is like her face. That is one side of her. Wait—I must introduce her mother to her first."

"Introduce—her mother!"

"Hush! It's a story. I'll tell it you afterwards. —Ada, come! you are wasting all the morning, and I tell you she expects you. That is what she is looking for."

"She is looking for her brother," said Mrs. Tremenheere, "and it is quite right; I don't complain. Stand by me, Nelly. I feel very silly, as if I might make a scene."

"Don't make a scene, whatever you do!" cried Elinor. "Nonsense; there is nothing so dreadful about it. Come!"

Vera's attention was aroused a moment after by the shock of finding a hand laid upon hers. She looked up quickly with a start, and saw the mother of whom she had seen so little, and whom at the first moment she scarcely recognised, standing beside her. The girl's heart gave a violent jump—sudden tears came into her eyes and a choking in her throat.

"Mamma?" she said, interrogatively. The shock brought all the blood to her heart. She looked wistfully, anxiously at this sudden claimant. Miss Campbell sat looking on, somewhat uneasy. She had never believed in the pretence about Mrs. Tremenheere's separation from her husband. Incompatibility! It was no use telling a woman of her experience this. She looked at the stranger with a mixture of disapproval and dislike, and bent forward across the carriage, as if to ask what she wanted, pretending she did not know.

"Yes," said Mrs. Tremenheere, taking her daughter's hand between her own, and holding it closely, "I have been looking for you, Vera."

What was in Vera's face? Her eyes were not so limpid, so frankly and tenderly eager as when she

gazed at her brother; a shadow was over the young countenance—but what? Mrs. Tremenheere could not tell what it was that clouded her eyes.

"Oh, mamma! you will get into the carriage, won't you?" she said, trying to open the door.

"I will stand here and talk to you a little. Stoop down and give me a kiss, Vera, my darling," cried the poor woman.

Vera put down her soft, youthful face, upon which the same doubtful, wondering, troubled expression still hung. She did not know what to think. Her brother—yes, that was right, that was nature. But her mother? Could she sit here and let her stand by her. Should not she get out, and follow her, and cease to be a stranger to her; or should she be cold and keep back and take papa's part? Vera did not know what to do. The triumphant satisfaction died out of her face. Eddy was the sunshine of this picture, but her mother was the inevitable shadow. She put her soft face down to meet Mrs. Tremenheere's kiss, but raised it again tingling with blushes, as if it had been a stranger who had kissed her. She could not look at her brother again, with this figure at her

elbow. Ought she not to give her entire attention to the new-comer? So many emotions chased each other over her face that the young man in the crowd who was still looking at her groped in his pockets instinctively for a pencil, and then laughed at himself. "Draw all that—a whole volume in two lines?" he said to himself. "What a fool I am."

"Vera, you have grown almost a woman——"

"Yes, mamma." She made a little pause, panting in her agitation and bewilderment, which poor Mrs. Tremenheere feared was reluctance to give her that title. This went to her heart, but she would not show it. She began bravely again.

"And Eddy is almost a man. You are like each other; he has grown stronger and taller than I expected. You are pleased to see him, Vera? and of course you have got his colors. Poor boy, I suppose he is very happy with all these people staring at him; and that pleases you too?"

"Pleases me! oh, more than that! I am so proud I don't know what to say—no word is strong enough. Are not you proud and happy, too, mamma?"

"I proud and happy? I don't know, my darling,

I do not use such words. I am pleased that you are all pleased——"

"Oh, mamma! What could you wish, what could you have more?" said Vera, indignant with fire in her eyes.

"Vera, I beg you will not be so vehement. It is quite out of place," said Miss Campbell with dignity, "in a well-bred girl."

The blood rushed to Mrs. Tremenheere's face. She felt herself stung to the very heart. Of all that had happened to her this reproof, addressed by another woman to her child in her presence, was, I think, the very hardest blow she had yet had to bear. She made a strenuous effort to command herself. "I must beg pardon," she said, "for forgetting Miss Campbell in the agitation of seeing Vera for the first time after a long separation; and I owe you many, many thanks for your good offices to my child." She held out her hand across Vera. Miss Campbell touched the tips of her fingers with reluctance. All very well to talk of incompatibility! She, an experienced woman, felt sure that there was more in it than that, and she did

not like to touch the erring woman, even with her finger tips.

"I wish Vera would profit more by my lessons; but it is a thankless task," she said.

"Mamma," said Vera, "it is impossible that I can sit here and see you standing there; either you must come into the carriage or I must get down; this sort of thing cannot be!"

At this moment, however, another personage came suddenly on the scene, whose appearance stilled Vera and had the strangest effect upon her mother,—Mr. Tremenheere, with Edward's colors in his buttonhole, and a glow of pleasure on his face which smoothed away all harshness from it. He came up to his wife with outstretched hands. "How do you do, Ada? I am very glad to see you looking so well," he said heartily, "though here you are, triumphing over me with your boy."

"Triumphing over you? I had no such meaning." It seemed impossible not to contradict him, do what she would. She saw this, and her voice sank a little. Then she said with a smile: "He is your boy as well as mine."

"I am taking all the credit of him, I assure you," he said. "I never thought Eddy would have turned out so well. He does you credit. The most prominent young person in England for the moment; to be sure it won't last long, but still it is always something. Look at Vera, as proud as a little peacock!"

"What an idiot the man is!" whispered Oswald Fane, behind backs, to Elinor Meadows; for they were all within hearing, and quite innocently so in consequence of the crowd, "he means like a little white dove."

"Not such a dove either," said Elinor. "Vera has a spirit—but she has a dragon by her side, and is kept down dreadfully, poor little darling."

"I wish mine might be the hand to free her."

"What do you say? Oswald, she is too young to flirt.—Promise me you will attempt no flirtation if I introduce you. She is only a child, and you are, as you know, not so——"

"Angelic as I ought to be," he answered, laughing. "No, I promise you, on my honor, there shall be no flirtation, properly so-called. But stop—If I can make her like me? I won't deceive you——"

"Then I shan't introduce you at all," said Elinor, putting back from her forehead those gray curls, like a child's, which the wind kept ruffling out.

"I want mamma to come into the carriage, please," said Vera.

"Of course, she must," Mr. Tremenheere cried, opening the door, "and you are coming home with us, the boy and you? Nobody can have so good a claim upon you. Where are you staying—with Elinor Meadows? Well, she shall come too; and you will tell me, Ada, if you approve of my work as much as I approve of yours. Come, Vera will be unhappy otherwise—and so shall I."

Mrs. Tremenheere kept asking herself all this time whether the nerves of a woman like herself, always strong and steady, as she liked to think them, were to be less under command than the nerves of a man. If he took it as a matter of course, must not she do the same? But it cost her an effort—for sentiment, perhaps, in all circumstances has more power, whether she will own it or not, over a woman than over a man. She answered, however, cheerfully, after that struggle.

"To be sure—it is the natural arrangement. Eddy will be very glad to spend an evening with his sister—and I——"

Nobody heard the end of the sentence. Her husband had given her his hand to help her into the carriage; where she sat down by the side of prim Miss Campbell, who did not budge, and who kept thinking to herself with *naïve* disregard of grammar—"Me to be sitting by the side of a woman compromised!" And there Mrs. Tremenheere sat for the first half hour in a sort of dream, Vera opposite to her, all apparently as it might have been had she never deserted her home; apparently—yet without any reality in the appearance. By and by old friends began to find her out, and one brought another to greet and congratulate her.

"All made up, I suppose?" these visitors whispered to Elinor Meadows as they passed. "Absurd business altogether?" But no one was prim except Miss Campbell, who scarcely condescended to notice the mother of her charge. As for Mr. Tremenheere, he went about among the crowd radiant. "Tremenheere must be a relative of yours," his friends said to

him. "Yes;—only my son," he said, his countenance expanding. Eddy might have attained a much more substantial success without pleasing him half so much. Pride very often puts on the very guise of love, so that one cannot tell them apart. Mr. Tremenheere had thought but little of Eddy hitherto; he took all the credit, as he said, and really felt that he had everything to do with the boy. A boy who had put himself in the front so easily, and was for the moment the observed of all observers, the very centre to which was directed the gaze of society, was indisputably a son of whom every parent was entitled to be proud.

CHAPTER VII.

A DINNER AT HYDE PARK SQUARE.

I DO not know by what charm Miss Meadows had been gained over to tell a fib, and enact a whole little drama of domestic perfidy; but she did it. When Mr. Tremenheere in his satisfaction asked her to dinner she told him unblushingly that she had just invited young Oswald Fane, a connection of Lord Fanebury's, a very clever young man, in whom she took a great interest, to dine with her, and did not see how she could put him off. "Clever young men were always Elinor's weakness," said Mr. Tremenheere, so intoxicated with his own contentment that he forget for the moment that it was not his habit to call Miss Meadows by her Christian name. "But if he is one of the Fanes of Fanebury I know his uncle. Bring him with you. That will make it all right."

And thus accidentally Oswald Fane was introduced

into Hyde Park Square. He was not so near a relation of Lord Fanebury's as Mr. Tremenheere in his moment of elation was ready to suppose As he waited till his son had changed his dress, and walked out with him to the crowded streets, feeling sure that everybody he met knew that the blushing youth was the hero of the day, that proud father was ready to receive as an heir presumptive at the least, anybody who might have been presented to him. His gratified pride threw a radiance over all the world. He was for the time being the most proud of fathers, the most kind of men. He put his arm through Eddy's who was two inches taller than himself, with that delightful mixture of the familiar friend with the father which everybody says it is so pleasant to see, and introduced him to several men they met, with overflowing satisfaction. Then when they got out of the lingering crowd, away into the more quiet streets, Mr. Tremenheere began to inquire into his son's hopes and intentions for the future, as a father should.

"Is this your last year at school," he said. "How old are you? Eighteen! Are you expected to stay another year?"

"I think, sir," said Edward, "that my mother means me to leave and go to Oxford at once. But—I don't think anything is settled. If you thought——"

"I have left all that to your mother," said Mr. Tremenheere. "That was a bargain, and I don't mean to interfere with her. Your mother is a very sensible woman. We did not get on when we were together, which was unfortunate, but she has managed admirably with you, and I approve all she does. And after Oxford, Ned, what then, my boy? What do you think of doing then?"

"Well, sir," said Eddy, "that is a thing there has been no decision about—I think my mother——"

"Yes, but in the choice of a profession one must act for one's self. What do *you* think? You will have your mother's money, of course, but it will scarcely be enough to enable you to take the position I should like to see you take. You must do something——"

"My mother's money is her own," said Edward, with a slight flush upon his face "I don't want her to give it me. I am very willing to do something.

Indeed, I am not at all sure about Oxford for my part, except that she wishes it. For you ought to know, sir," he added, looking down with another flush of color, "I am not clever; good enough as a bat and that sort of thing, but not much good in school."

"Is that so?" said Mr. Tremenheere. But he said it without anything of that half shame, half pity, both sentiments generally concealed by a caress, with which the women among whom Edward Tremenheere had been brought up regarded his want of success in school. The boy had learned to divine this though nobody ever put it into words, and the easy tone of his father cheered and eased him in the most wonderful way. Was it then perhaps not so humiliating after all to be without cleverness? Might a fellow still do something though he could not get Greek and Latin into his head, and had no hope of a scholarship? Edward felt cheered and encouraged, he could scarcely tell why.

"Yes, I am afraid it is so. I have got such a bad memory or something. I do my work, but it goes out of my head again just as fast. That is why I think it is money wasted sending me to Oxford."

"Not at all," said Mr. Tremenheere. "It is not for work alone that men go to Oxford. It always tells well in society. Not a high degree, or honors or anything of that sort; for unless you are going into a profession, the world cares very little for Senior Wranglers, &c. But you make friends who can help you in life, and widen your acquaintance, and learn a great deal that is quite as important. Yes, yes, you must go to college; but after? as I asked before——"

"I don't know, sir," said Edward, "my mother used to talk of the Bar, not knowing how stupid I was. But that would never do. I don't seem to have any particular choice; anything that pleases other people——"

"You are too good, I am afraid," said his father. "Your mother can't go on thinking for you——"

"So she says," said the boy with a laugh. At this moment they met a group of other lads with blue ribbons who stared at Eddy's appearance here; he nodded to them with a look of dejection. "The rest of the fellows are dining together," he said. "It is rather fun; but I don't suppose I shall mind."

"And you came away without telling me! That

was kind of you, Ned. But I hope you will enjoy yourself with us. You will see a great difference in Vera. She is almost grown up, and I shall soon have to think of getting her brought out and introduced into society, which is a great bore for me. So you see we all have our difficulties. I am still in that same old house which you remember. It will be pleasant to dine together this one night."

"Yes," said Edward, somewhat disconsolately. He would have liked the dinner with his comrades better, but he was too good to put his own wishes forward. And Mr. Tremenheere thought no more about it. He told him of several young potentates at Oxford whom he should introduce him to. "And I hope you will be very careful about the set you get into. Whatever you may do in the way of scholarship you must never be indifferent to the art of making friends."

"That is what my mother says," said the lad, a statement which made his father stare. "She says that if I get into a good reading set——"

Mr. Tremenheere laughed. "That is very like your mother," he said, "but not exactly what I meant. If

you are weak in scholarship don't go in for it, my boy. What I mean is a good set of men, men whom it will be of use for you to know, who may give you a helping hand in life, or at least in society. A great deal depends on that."

"Yes," said Eddy, dutifully. "A good set of men" sounded much better to him than "the reading set" of whom he had been thinking with some alarm, but he did not so well understand about the "helping hand in life" to which his father referred. He was a perfectly humble simple-minded fellow, but yet he was not without a certain pride of his own.

Thus they went home to Hyde Park Square, where Mrs. Tremenheere, agitated by many thoughts, was preparing for dinner in her old room, now empty, swept, and garnished, and asking herself various questions which she could not answer, which she did not like even to put in words. There was a little pause when they all came together in the drawing-room, a little holding of the breath, or so, she thought. It was late and beginning to be twilight, and I cannot describe with what a strange thrill of curiosity Edward looked at his two parents thus brought together.

What could they be thinking, these two people who belonged to each other, yet did not belong to each other? And—whose fault was it? The boy was instinctively respectful and dutiful, and made no reply to himself, but yet the question arose in his mind whether he would or not.

"I have been speaking to Ned about his future," said Mr. Tremenheere. "He does not seem to be very clear what he is to do after Oxford."

"No. We must let circumstances decide," said his mother. "Perhaps if he reads hard——"

"My dear Ada, I wouldn't interfere with you for the world, but why should he read if that is not the turn of his mind?" said Mr. Tremenheere.

"It is the turn his mind ought to take," she said. "It is the only use so far as I can see of a University. What were colleges instituted for but reading? And it is his duty as well as the best thing to do."

"Well, I think there are other uses for Universities," said Mr. Tremenheere. "Is that you, Vera? Come here; your mother cannot see you in this light. You would not think, would you," he added, with some pride, "that this demure little person was the

saucy Vera who used to poke her small fingers into everything?" He laid his hand upon her head caressingly—not that he was much in the habit of caressing her, but he felt a natural impulse to put forth his own production, as it were, by the side of his wife's, in an amiable rivalry which had no evil intention in it. For, indeed, though he felt proud of his son, and was pleased with him, he was not at all jealous of his son's mother, to whom the boy specially belonged, and could not have understood the sharp and keen jealousy of himself, almost bitter, which shot like an arrow through Mrs. Tremenheere's heart as he laid his hand on Vera's head.

"I had no objections to the saucy Vera," she said, hurriedly forcing herself to smile.

"Ah, that is not my ideal of a young woman," said the father, equally unaware how much of the original leaven remained in the demure little person of whose quietness he was so proud.

Mrs. Tremenheere restrained herself as by force and made no reply, though all the old lively impulses of contradiction seemed to spring up in her as she listened; and thus the divided family remained for a

moment silent, the father and son standing together, the mother and daughter seated in the shadow. Miss Campbell kept apart at the furthest window, with a book in her hand. She disapproved profoundly of Mrs. Tremenheere. What did she want in this house which she had left of her own accord? Did she mean to come back, disturbing other people in the established routine of their life, perhaps turning the carefully-trained Vera into something fast and disorderly? Such a woman was capable of anything, Miss Campbell thought, and the poor lady had an excuse for her dislike in her growing alarm and terror. She had a very comfortable position in Mr. Tremenheere's house, and was fond of Vera in her way, and if she left Hyde Park Square there was at her age little before her, except poor genteel lodgings on a small annuity, or the "Home."

When Miss Meadows came in with young Fane, followed at a moment's interval by the stray man, adapted to fill a place at an emergency, whom Mr. Tremenheere had met at Lords', the family were not sorry. Perhaps, on the whole, it was more easy to get on when there were strangers present. There was

an awkward moment, however, when they went to dinner. Mr. Tremenheere went across the room to Miss Campbell before the procession started.

"Perhaps," he said, in a slightly nervous tone, "it would be better if Vera took the head of the table to-day?"

"It must be exactly as you please, Mr. Tremenheere," she replied stiffly, giving him no assistance. And then he had to give his wife his arm, and hand her down-stairs.

"You are the greatest stranger, Ada," he cried, with a nervous laugh, and attempt at jauntiness. "The guest of the evening!"

She did not say anything, but put her hand within his arm, as if she had been in a dream. But after that, the small party round the dinner-table went on quite smoothly. Vera, her cheeks burning, sat at the head of the table, feeling wretched, ashamed and proud. She could not bear to look at her mother, who ought to have been occupying that place, and yet could look at nothing else, not even at Eddy, who kept smiling at her, shy but genial. She did not even notice, for five minutes at least, the handsome countenance of

Oswald Fane at her left hand, though it was one which few girls of Vera's age looked at with absolute indifference. He had one of those picturesque dark faces which physiognomists suspect and sentimentalists love; dark eyes, liquid and persuasive, capable of looking unutterable things; dark hair, curling crisply round a well-shaped head; a smile on the curved lips, just shaded with a soft line of moustache which no unsuspecting person could resist. And he had judgment to add to his personal attractions. He saw Vera's agitation, and neither spoke nor looked at her for these five minutes, but chattered pleasantly to Elinor Meadows, shielding her from observation. Then when Vera began to get used to her position, and to calm out of her excitement, he threw over Elinor and struck in:

"You were very much interested in the match to-day, Miss Tremenheere. Was it for the sake of cricket? Some ladies, I know, are great connoisseurs——"

"Oh, no! I don't know anything about cricket. My brother was playing."

"I know; and I knew that was the reason, if you

will let me say so. Cricketing young ladies don't look as you look."

"I? How did I look? Not very odd, I hope?" said Vera; "Miss Campbell says I am always showing my feelings."

"I must not trust myself to description," he said. "Your look raised very violent emotions in my mind. Yes, I may as well confess. I turned immediately to the men in the field, and I said to myself, 'A set of wretched schoolboys. What have they done, I wonder, with their stupid game that any idiot could play, to deserve *that?*——'"

"Mr. Fane! I hope you don't mean what you say!" cried Vera, indignantly, raising her head, "because I am Edward's sister. No one ought to speak like that, knowing that my brother is Captain of the Eleven."

"I told you, you had raised diabolical passions in my breast," said Fane unmoved. "Envy, hatred, and jealousy; because you see, I knew very well that if I were to do the greatest feat that a man could do, no one would look so at me."

"Ah!" said Vera, mollified, drawing a breath of

relief; "then you have no sister," she added softly, looking at him for the first time with interest.

Here I think it was the duty of Elinor to have interfered; but she was much amused; and she was, as she avowed boldly, half in love herself, in an elderly fashion, with Oswald Fane.

"No," he said, "I am all alone in the world. It does not matter to any one what I do or what I don't do; so you must forgive me my grudge at that happy fellow you were watching. I did not intend him any harm."

"Eddy played very well to day," said the friend of the family, who sat at Vera's right hand. "Made a good score. Saved that last innings, he did. I don't like to see my old school beaten, though I'm an old fellow. I give you leave to be proud of your brother, Vera. I never saw a neater catch. It made a man feel young again."

"I am very proud of him, thanks," said Vera, beaming. She looked at Eddy almost for the first time. His face was very serious, poor fellow. He was sitting next to Miss Campbell, who addressed instructive conversation to him, as she thought it was her

duty to do with the young. And, alas, I fear poor Eddy, though he was at home, with all the members of his family round him, was thinking ruefully of the gay dinner at which the others were drinking their toasts and making their speeches. This certainly was not so lively. He did not see Vera look at him, but he met his mother's eye, and smiled, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. Vera saw this pantomime, and was angry. Was he not glad to be at home?

Thus the dinner was not the greatest of successes; and the ordeal of the drawing-room was still more severe. Mr. Tremenheere walked up to his wife when he came up-stairs, and sat down beside her.

"I could not say anything to you at dinner," he said, "Ada; but I want now just to say a word. Don't press the scholarship business upon Ned. You can afford to send him to Oxford, and he can afford to go; that is, he is young enough not to be losing his time; but dont worry him and strain him to do something out of his line altogether. There, I don't want to interfere; but this you must let me say."

"Thank you," she said, a little stiffly; "I will think

of it, Charles. Of course your advice in respect to Eddy must always have the greatest weight."

"Well, yes, I think it ought," said the father, "especially as there has never been any quarrel, so to speak, between us. We have always been quite good friends."

"Perfectly good friends; if you will allow me in my turn to make a remark, I think poor Vera's natural vivacity is too much repressed. Miss Campbell, I have no doubt, is a very good woman, but Vera will never be really one of those meek girls whom you admire. She has a great deal of energy and spirit in her. I think you should take care not to carry the subduing process too far."

"Ah!" he said, raising his eyebrows, "do you think so? I should not have supposed that would have occurred to you. Miss Campbell's process seems to me to have answered admirably. However, I will keep my eye upon her, since you think so. Curious! I expected you to compliment me, as everybody does."

"Yes, and so I do; she has grown up very sweet and fair," she said, with some emotion.

"But only you do not approve of the way in which she has been brought up," he said, with a laugh. "Well, well, we never did agree, and it is evident we were never intended to agree, Ada; which does not, however, prevent me from giving, as you say, the greatest weight to your advice, and from our continuing the best of friends."

With this he grasped her hand heartily, and rising from his chair beside her, went off to talk to Edward, whom old Mr. Carnaby was cross-questioning. Mrs. Tremenheere sat alone for a time. Near the open window, with its long lace curtains swaying softly in the summer air, sat Vera beside Miss Meadows, looking up into the dark, handsome face of young Fane, who bent over her. I don't think it occurred to the mother to take any panic about young Fane. She had subjects enough to occupy her mind without that. But whether by inadvertence or purpose, I cannot tell which, Elinor Meadows rose up suddenly, and came and joined her, leaving the two young people together—Miss Campbell, not being able to put up with this overturn of all her habits, having left the room.

"Well," said Elinor, eagerly, "have you settled anything? Indeed you ought to have come to your senses, you two, at your age."

"Perhaps we ought," said Mrs. Tremenheere, "but nothing is changed that I can see. Age makes little difference. For Vera's sake I might risk it, but he has no such idea; he is too triumphant in his own success."

"Then nothing is to come of it; what was the good then—" cried Elinor, with tears in her eyes. "Ada! Ada! I thought you would have done anything for poor little Vera's sake."

"I suppose it is only justice," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with a slight faltering; "when he would have made it up, I wouldn't; and now when perhaps—I don't know—I might——"

"Is that all you say? when of course you would that or anything else, for Vera's sake."

"Well, put it as you please; but anyhow it would be a failure. We should begin again to contradict each other the very next day. However, it is needless to discuss the question, for he does not wish it; that is as clear as daylight."

A little while after the two halves of the divided family said goodbye to each other, and the mother and son went back to their separate lodgings with Elinor, like any other visitors.

"Well, Eddy, have you spent a happy evening?" said Miss Meadows, in the darkness of the carriage, driving home.

"Oh, happy? Well enough," said Edward. "Of course I was glad to see my father and Vera; still it was a bore not to be at the dinner with the other fellows, and this my last year."

The next step after this strange family meeting was taken in all innocence, with no thought of the complications it might lead to. Mr. Tremenheere consented that Vera should pay a visit to her mother in the country, under the charge of Elinor Meadows. It was to be for two days only, too short a time to have much effect upon the girl, one way or another,—Miss Meadows, however, did not tell any one that on her own responsibility she had offered a seat in her carriage, and an introduction into her friend's house, to Oswald Fane.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VILLA.

MRS. TREMENHEERE rather prided herself on her society; though she had given up so much she had never given up that; the people she knew were not commonplace people, such as you meet everywhere, but persons of high intelligence, of advanced opinions, people known in literature, in art, and in science. Her parties were generally in summer, daylight parties, a combination of outdoor pleasures, concluding with that good dinner which mortal men, even when they are philosophers, love. When the little party arrived from town they found preparations going on for one of these gatherings. Mrs. Tremenheere took Vera through the garden and shady grounds, which were skilfully planted to look double their size, and showed her everything with tender anxiety. "You must help me to receive my friends," she said, smiling upon her little daughter.

"What would Miss Campbell say? she is not 'out,' of course," said Elinor.

"A girl does not require to be 'out' when she is by her mother's side," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with a sigh, drawing Vera's hand within her arm. It was not for Vera she said this, but for the relief of her own mind; but Vera heard it, and ventured to clasp her mother's arm with a sudden sense of security, such as she thought she had never experienced before.

By her mother's side—very different from Miss Campbell's; everything was made natural, everything as it ought to be, by that one fact. She turned round without knowing why, and met Fane's dark eyes fixed upon her; never before had innocent Vera met such looks; and a soft suffusion, the first blush of tenderest youth, came over her white throat and delicate cheeks. She clung a little closer to her mother's arm. Yes, even this, the confused sweet guiltiness, the innocent shame where no shame was, all were without danger, without harm there—by her mother's side.

Then the strangers began to arrive, but first of all

came Edward, fresh from school, happy and radiant in the delight of "leave," and the whole day to himself, though not so happy about "the party."

"To be sure we can have some croquet," said Edward, "though that is not much; but with such a terrible set of swells what else can one do?"

"There is a swell coming who will fascinate you, Eddy," said his mother. The lad shrugged his shoulders with a laugh.

"All right, if they please you, mamma," he said, putting his arm round her with a happy ease which made Vera wonder. Fancy any one doing that to papa, she said to herself—or Miss Campbell! After a while Edward dragged her off to see the croquet-ground, where the implements of that diversion were all in order. "Between ourselves it is a bore, rather," he said; "a lot of bigwigs all talking as if to talk was the best thing in the world; but, never mind, it pleases the mother. And then a day's leave is always a day's leave," he added, with good-humored philosophy. It was Edward's disposition to make the best of everything.

"And I have a day's leave, too," said Vera, with a

little sigh; "but I can't have one whenever I please, Eddy, like you."

"Whenever I please!" he looked at her with natural contempt for her ignorance; but then what can a girl be expected to know? "Why can't you stay?" he said; "it would be much jollier if you were here. Why can't we all live together, as we used to do—as we ought to do?" the boy added, suddenly.

This conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Fane, who was never long absent from Vera's elbow, and by the gradual arrival of the visitors—among whom, as I have said, there was one celebrity of the moment whom it was a very great honor to produce here so far out of town. While the young people were in the garden Elinor Meadows came rushing towards them, her black lace billowing around her, and the rings of her gray hair blown about her forehead.

"Come!" she cried, breathless, "come, before there is a crowd, and be introduced to him, both of you. You, too, Oswald, if you like,—only make haste and come!"

"Who is it?" they all asked in a breath.

"It is the lion—and a real great roaring lion, shaking his mane—none of your make-believes, that don't know how to keep it up. It is Mr. Buckram Bass, the great African traveller. He has been everywhere where nobody ever was before. Come, you foolish boys and girls. You may never have another such opportunity. Come, Vera; and Edward especially,—you must come!"

"Presently. I shall see him soon enough," said Edward.

He would not come in. He was busy out of doors, looking after the croquet, showing the finer points of view to one wandering group after another, pointing out the pinnacles of the great school in the distance, telling the names of the distant places, and also the names of the notabilities present to his mother's guests.

"That is Dr. Jones, the great geologist, I believe—and that lady yonder, in the corner with a lot of people round her, is the lady that plays the fiddle—well, yes, violin, it's all the same, isn't it? I daresay my mother will get her to play after dinner. And

that is the Bishop of St. James's, who is an old friend of my mother's."

"Will he preach after dinner?" said some one, hoping to be witty.

"I hope not," said Edward gravely. "I don't think he is a fool, nor my mother either. There is the editor of the 'Northerly,' whom you may have heard of, and Miss Cloots, who writes novels. By the way, I believe there is somebody here who is the very last novelty in the way of travels. The great African man, that——"

"Hush!" said Elinor Meadows, by his side.

"Why should he hush? I wish he had described me as well as he described the rest," said Mr. Buckram Bass himself, stepping into the circle. "This is Mrs. Tremenheere's son, the hero of the cricket, and why has he not been introduced to me? There spoke the true spirit of youth! not feelings!—When his time comes, ladies, he will experience them; at present he does not care to have any babbling about them. Bravo! those are my sentiments exactly. Let us shake hands upon it. Yes, what is worth is doing —not to talk, not to read, but to do. Schools! yes,

schools are excellent. I do not say a word against schools. I myself was not created by any school, but what does that matter? When I was your age I rebelled against books. I felt myself a slave. To tie me down," cried the lion, roaring loudly, and grasping his red beard—he was a large man, handsome and even commanding in appearance, and when he spoke, took a large handful of the vast beard which he had grown during his travels—"to tie me down with all my energies fettered, to construe Herodotus! when I knew there were things in the world more wonderful than Herodotus—and true."

Edward had looked at him, half contemptuously, half suspiciously when he began. Gradually, however, his looks changed. His eyes began to laugh, then to glow. The big man and his beard impressed him. "More wonderful than Herodotus—and true!" He forgot his natural opposition to the lion. After all, if this was a lion, he was so because of what he had done, not of what he had said or written. He began to look eagerly at this new kind of man.

"Do you know anything about Africa?" said the traveller. "No! The great continent of the future!

—the real new world, teeming with wealth, full of wonder, from which there is everything to expect. Take a walk with me through your mother's pretty grounds. 'That moment that his face I see, I know the man that must hear me.'"

With this the adventurer thrust his great arm through Edward's and led him away, half pleased, half reluctant. The others who stood round heard his big voice discoursing as he promenaded through the shrubbery.

Nothing more was seen of Eddy that day, except at dinner, during which he was very absent and *distrait*, straining his attention to make out what Mr. Buckram Bass was saying at the other end of the table. He reappeared in the evening, but only in the train of the traveller, who was delighted by the boy's enthusiasm. Few people noticed even then that it was to Edward he was talking, for the talk was addressed to the whole gathering, as well as to that one particular boy who stood close by him, his eyes gleaming, his whole aspect changed.

"Yes, yes, you are right, and I respect you for it," said the traveller. "This is not a time for music, for

the fine arts, for poetry and feeling. What men want is to be doing. You know where I am going to—what I call the Continent of the future, that great mysterious Africa, to one corner of which the roots of our religion itself still cling. Is it not a work worthy of Christianity to carry freedom and civilization back to the warm, rich, teeming countries where so much wealth and capability lie dormant? Yes, sir, take the question at its lowest, nothing could be more admirable for trade. In that view alone it is worth doing—opening up, not a single nation, like France or Germany, but a crowd of nations, a whole continent to British enterprise. But I don't profess myself to take that point of view. My mind is burdened with the thought of so many fine, interesting races, so many tribes and peoples, as varied as Europeans, not stupid negroes only, who are living in mud-cabins, under savage laws, decimated by fever and by each other, whom we might help with a little trouble into civilization and humanity. My expedition starts in October. It is not all filled up. How thankful I should be to have volunteers, sportsmen, adventurers, whatever

you please to call them. Every new traveller is so much gain.

"For heaven's sake, Ada, do something to stop that man," cried Elinor Meadows, in Mrs. Tremenheere's ear. "Ask somebody to play; let us do something."

"Why? I find him very interesting," said Mrs. Tremenheere, smiling calmly in her friend's face, "and he always does this, you know, wherever he goes. It is tacitly understood."

"Look at Edward's face."

"Yes, he is interested, poor boy. I am so glad that he should have had his mind roused by some new subject."

Edward stood by his new apostle, his eyes fixed upon him, swallowing every word with eager interest. Already he saw himself in imagination with a wild retinue of Arabs and negroes trampling through the jungle, pressing over the sands, passing from one savage court to another. He had read all the books upon the subject eagerly, but here was a man who was a living book, who had seen and heard and done, and was about to do again, all these wonders. Edward's

mind, newly aroused within him, expanded and grew. He seemed to feel himself grow strong and daring and patient as he listened. Yes, that was the life—not a sham life at college, making good friends, as his father said, or laboring vainly after scholarship, as his mother wished.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VILLA (*continued*).

MEANWHILE the day had passed for Vera like a strange sweet dream, too rapid, too full of feeling to be understood. The novelty and the strangeness and the complication of emotions so suddenly introduced into her young life, which had been carefully trained to know no emotions at all, involved her in a secret bewilderment, so that she did not seem to know what she was saying, or on what she was treading, whether enchanted ground, or air, or clouds. When she was about to follow the rest indoors, Fane, who was with her, begged so hard that she would stay, that Vera, not unwilling, though a little doubtful as to whether she ought, softly sat down again on the rustic seat under the lime trees, which were so sweet in the dimness of the night. Fane said nothing for a few minutes; he let the silence and charm of the night steal into the girl's soul.

"I wanted to drive on for ever this morning," at last he said softly; "what a mistake it was! But now, if this night would only last for ever! I don't know what more one could wish for. Do you remember 'The Last Ride?'"

"What is 'The Last Ride?'" said Vera, wondering if it was very very ignorant of her not to know.

"It is a poem of Mr. Browning's."

"I dont think I like poetry," said Vera, shyly. "It seems dreadful to say so, but one ought to be honest. It is so stiff and so formal, not like anything natural."

"What have you read? I think I could show you some you would like."

"I have read some of Pope, and Miss Campbell is very fond of Young's 'Night Thoughts' and Kirke White—and a little Cowper. I like Cowper best, but——"

"Ah!" he said. "Shall I tell you about the 'Last Ride?' It is very different from Pope. It is a poor lover whom his lady has refused. He loves her, but she does not love him; yet, though she does not love him, she is sweet and gracious, and will not refuse the last thing he asks of her,—one last ride

with him. And so they set out; and as they go along he keeps comforting himself all the way, knowing every step is nearer the end—'Perhaps the world may end to night.'"

"And what happens?" asked Vera, eagerly.

"Nothing happens; the ride may be going on still, for all one knows."

Vera was silent. She was too young to understand how this ending of the world might have helped the hapless lover. She sat quite still, in shy wonder, feeling sad for him; wishing that the lady had relented, which would have been better than the world ending; her thoughts entirely carried away even from the present enchantment. Then her companion spoke again; his voice was very soft and naturally melodious, and there was a certain pleading in the tone:

"I wonder," he said, "if I am to be sent away to-night."

"To be sent away?"

"Miss Meadows brought me. She is not going till to-morrow. She is as good as gold, but she is apt to forget details."

"Oh, shall I run in and ask?" cried Vera. "How

disagreeable for you to be kept here. I will run and tell her."

"No, indeed, you shall not run anywhere to serve me. It is I who will run—wherever you please—to do anything you please. But don't be satirical or hard upon me. The dreadful thing will be to be sent away. I prefer to keep out of the way till it is too late."

Again Vera did not quite understand, and was silent, thinking it best not to commit herself. But she began to be a little uneasy about sitting here quite alone while everybody else had gone in. It was strangely pleasant—so warm, yet so cool, so fresh and dewy, the house so near with all its lights, yet the stillness so perfect. Would it be right, though, if not so pleasant, to go back to the house?

"Can you see, beyond the garden, the lights scattered about in the houses," he said, "and up in the sky the stars? I don't know which I like best."

"Oh, Mr. Fane, the stars!"

"Do you think so?—but see, every one of these little lights, twinkling away far down at the foot of the hill, means something. There are people there talk-

ing, living—with a story of one kind or another—and love. Is it not pleasant," he said, as she made no answer, "to sit here and watch it all—all the other people going on with their living, and we looking on?"

"But we are living, too," said Vera, startled.

"Beginning to live——"

He did not say any more. And how still it was—every little rustle in the leaves audible, though there was so much life and sound close at hand! Vera began to feel a little frightened. All these strangenesses seemed coming to a climax. She gave a little start when some watchful bird made a stir among the branches and got up. "I think mamma may want me. I think we should go in," she said.

More than half the people were gone, however, when they went in, and the last train was gone, and there was nothing for it but to offer Mr. Fane, whom Elinor Meadows confessed she had forgotten, a bed. Vera, coming in shy and dazzled by the lights, did not quite listen to all that was said; but to know that he was going to stay was pleasant. He sat down by her again, while her mother was occupied with the last of

the departing groups. Somehow she seemed to know him better than any one—better even than her mother, to whom she was so much a stranger; and here indoors, with so many people about, it was easier to talk. She confessed to him with a little blush that she had never been here before.

"Is it not strange?" she said, "it is home, as much as the Square, and yet I don't know it. People are not often like that. I suppose you used to live with your mother when you were young, as young as I am—most people do."

"Most people do, but I did not, for my mother was dead. I was very lonely—my brother a great deal older than myself, and no one else belonging to me."

"Ah! my brother is only two years older than I. But then if one never sees them it comes to just the same thing. I was very lonely, too. Never anybody to play with," said Vera, tears coming into her eyes out of pity for the forlorn little self whom she had conjured up. "Nobody to talk to—except Miss Campbell. I remember," she went on, changing involuntarily into a soft laugh; "I got the poor ser-

vants into sad trouble because I told papa they had a party and I danced. Oh! how nice that party was! I was only eight. It couldn't have done me much harm, could it?"

"Evidently it has not done you any harm," said Fane. "Nothing could do you any harm. I ran wild as I liked, and no one was shocked."

"Ah!" cried Vera again, with a sigh, "you boys are so much better off than girls. Nobody says you ought to be still, never to talk, never to be remarked. It is hard always to be obliged to remember that one is a girl. Miss Campbell always says, 'You forget yourself,' when that is just what I would like to do. Forget all about me! Why should one always be obliged to think about one's self?"

"When there are so many other people that would be too glad to do it for you!" said Fane—a speech which, like many others, was lost upon Vera. But the fountain of her confidences was opened, and she went on almost without a pause.

"It is now so many years since Miss Campbell came, and I have been obliged to be so good. I don't think I was good before. And when I go back again

I shall have to begin once more, and try not to forget myself, and to speak low, and to keep in the background, and not 'to be remarked.' Why should any one remark me?" cried Vera. "It is very hard upon us poor girls, you must allow, Mr. Fane."

"And when do you go back?"

"To-morrow!" she said, with a long-drawn breath, a sigh so pathetic, that it was all he could do, notwithstanding his profound sympathy, not to laugh.

"I wonder if I might call," he said. "I should like to bring you some books. I should like to try to amuse — Miss Campbell a little. Do you think I might come?"

"Miss Campbell!" said Vera, somewhat disappointed; then she recollected that it would still be better than nothing to be amused even at second hand. "Papa never said nobody was to call. People do call, not very amusing people, and if it is Miss Campbell you want to see——"

"Yes, of course it is Miss Campbell," he said, laughing.

Upon which Vera understood, and laughed and

blushed, and between the two this seemed the very best of jokes. They kept laughing at it at intervals as they went on talking.

"I am the victim of a romantic but hopeless passion," said Fane. "If Miss Campbell will not smile upon me, what will become of me?" and it seemed to Vera that the humor was exquisite. All at once Miss Campbell and the Square seemed to be suffused with the same rosy light which made the villa such a world of enchantment. Elinor Meadows looked back at them, somewhat uneasily, wondering if it was quite right, if Oswald was quite to be trusted, if he knew where he was leading that innocent child. She became frightened at her own handiwork. Mrs. Tremenheere, on the other side, heard the laugh, and looked gratefully at the young stranger who called forth so merry a laugh from Vera. Thus tolerated and protected, the two young creatures felt secure in their corner, and talked and smiled, and poured out their hearts to each other, they could not tell why, and were more happy than they could say.

Next day was quieter, but still more sweet. They

went out, the whole little party, and strayed about the lanes, and visited the school where Edward, still very absent, showed them everything, and saw the boys playing cricket as on that wonderful day which had made a new beginning to Vera's life.

It was late in the evening when they returned to town, their party increased by the addition of one of Mrs. Tremenheere's neighbors. It was not at all the same as the drive down. That had been merry, brilliant, a little company of three all united in one. This was different. You cannot lean across a carriage to talk in the dimness of the night, though two who are seated next each other may say much. The lady who sat by Miss Meadows had a great deal of conversation, and occupied her so, that at the end of the journey she half apologized to Vera.

"I have never been able to say a word to you," said Elinor. "That tiresome woman! You must forgive me, my dear."

Vera forgave her very freely. She leant back upon the soft cushions, quite indifferent to the fact that she had her back to the horses. She could not see him

very well in the dusk, but she could see how he looked at her, which is different. Why should he look so, as nobody else ever looked? It was strange, but it was pleasant; and he spoke so low, not to disturb the others, that she had to lean her head towards him to hear. And once by accident (he begged her pardon for it) their fingers just touched; and she heard him say to himself softly,

"Perhaps the world may end to-night."

Vera would not have acknowledged for the world that she had heard it, but she began to understand now what these words which had seemed so strangely unsatisfactory and unintelligible meant. Alas! When they came to Hyde Park Square, and the steps were let down, and the door opened, and old Jervis appeared on the threshold waiting for her, had not the world indeed suddenly come to an end? When the door shut upon that fairy chariot, and she was left standing in the half-lighted, dull, drab, too-familiar hall, the very heart seemed to die out of Vera's bosom. She shivered all over, feeling cold, and would have liked to cry.

"Is anything wrong, Miss?" said Jervis, sympathetically.

"Oh, no, no, nothing!" cried Vera, with a sob in her throat; and stole softly up-stairs, a forlorn little white ghost. Alas! the world had ended—but not in the poet's way.

CHAPTER X.

EDWARD.

EDWARD went back to his school-work next day, with the excitement of the last night buzzing through his head. He was a schoolboy according to English custom, and yet he was a man. He went back to his construing, over which at the best he always hesitated, and his composition, in which he gained much less applause, though he worked at it twice as laboriously as the little fellow next to him, who carried off all the honors; and as he worked he said to himself, fatalest of all questions for learner or worker, "What is the good of it?" When a man could be carrying civilization to a continent—when he could be opening paths for knowledge, for education, for trade, for human advancement, when he could be changing savages into Christians, teaching them those things which make all the difference between

man and brute,—in short, when he could be doing what Mr. Bass had done, what he was going once more to do, shooting huge game, encountering lions, exterminating serpents in the jungle, besides all other more elevated occupations; the thought of this sent a thrill through the lad's veins. Oxford! What should he do at Oxford? Stumble through one examination after another, each less successful than the first, take a pass degree, disappoint his mother's hopes, and, for the very best he could do, make friends according to his father's directions. Make friends! not for the sake of friendship and mutual help and brotherhood, which was a thing Eddy's honest soul comprehended thoroughly, but to help him on in life. That was all he could do. Was it worth going to Oxford on the strength of that?

The visit of his sister and the others partially freed his mind from this haunting vision, but it came on stronger than ever next day when they were gone; and in the evening he went to see his mother, whom he found somewhat despondent after the excitement of the two days past. She was sitting by herself in the evening, looking wearily over her beautiful view.

It was very delightful so long as there was some one there to point it out to, to see the sudden lights and shadows; but when one is all alone, a fine landscape is more trial than pleasure. Close the curtains, light the lamp, turn indoors to your books and to your pictures, lonely one. Do not look abroad upon that quiet serene nature which was made for the happy. The wistful lights, the gathering dimness, the falling dew, the home-going of all things—birds to the nest, laborers to the cottage—are a sight too exquisite for you.

Edward found his mother looking out on that evening scene, and commanded her peremptorily, in those terms which mothers are so easily moved to obey, to get her hat and come out with him. "I believe you have been crying all by yourself," he said indignantly.

"I shan't cry now, Eddy—when my boy is here," she said with a smile.

What a blow that gave him, though she did not know it! But then he recollected that to be absent at Oxford was as bad as to be absent in Africa, and this gave him courage to begin.

"I have something very particular to say to you mother. Come out, please. I can always talk to you better out of doors."

"What is the matter, Eddy? Are the small boys unruly? Have you got into trouble about your composition——"

"No, no. Come, mother; I have a great deal to say to you. I have not said anything to you for a long time about myself."

"You never do say very much about yourself, dear."

"Yes, I do; quite as much as other fellows—and I think a deal. Mother, what is the good of sending me to the University? I was talking to Somerville about it to-day."

"And what does the great Somerville, who knows everything, say?" asked Mrs. Tremenheere with a smile.

"You don't do him justice, mamma. If I talk too much about him, that is my fault, not his. He wants me to go, of course. He says there are other things besides scholarship, but he allows that it is not much

use so far as scholarship goes. Don't be disappointed, mother. You know I always said so."

"And do you think I am going to take Somerville's word for it, Eddy? Your tutor says you will do very well."

"So I should hope," said Edward, with a flush on his face; "I should not be a rowdy or make a beast of myself; that's what he means, I suppose; it would be a joke, if I couldn't do well in that sense. And I might get into the 'Varsity Eleven like enough, which isn't bad—but for anything else—— If you were to be satisfied with that I shouldn't mind, but even at Lord's—why you know you did not care a bit about it, mamma."

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said Mrs. Tremenheere, humbly, "I care for everything you take an interest in; but I don't deny I would rather have seen my son come out first in an examination than be the Captain of the Eleven."

"Yes, that is your way of thinking," said the boy, "I know; you don't care much for what I can do, and I cannot do what you really care for. But if scholarship is out of the question, you don't care for the

'Varsity Eleven, do you, or for the 'making friends' dodge? I can't bear that 'making friends.'"

"My dear boy, you make friends everywhere."

"Ah, that's different; friends at school that one makes because one likes them—but friends to help you on in the world! Don't send me to Oxford, mamma; of course I shall go if you wish it—if you insist upon it."

"Eddy, I wish you would tell me honestly what you are thinking of; there is something behind all this," said Mrs. Tremenheere; but still she smiled, and was not afraid.

"I will tell you what I am thinking of," he said, rather tremulously; "reading and that sort of thing will never be much in my way; it may be a pity, but it can't be helped. But, mamma, there are more things in the world than reading. I am a strong fellow; I could do heaps of things; I might be of real use all the same."

"I hope so, Eddy, but how, my dear? Out with it! You don't require to go and work for your living. Tell me what you want to do."

"Mamma," he said, his breath coming short, "I

fear you will not like it; I hope you will not be angry. It came to me all at once when Mr. Bass was speaking; I could not help telling him that of all things in the world I should like to join his expedition——"

"You are raving, Eddy," said his mother suddenly; and then she laughed: "you foolish boy, you gave me a fright for a moment. You might as well talk of going to the moon."

"I was afraid you would take it so; but I am not raving, I am quite entirely in earnest; it is the sort of thing I could do. You can't call a man like that useless can you, mother? He is not one of the fine gentlemen, good for nothing, whom you dislike so; he knows what he can do, and is doing it. That is what I have set my heart on. I want to go with him to Africa."

She looked at him, stunned with the shock; stopped short in the middle of the road as if he had shot her, and looked at him.

"Eddy! you are out of your senses," she said.

The boy made no answer; he expected this, and more than this, knowing well that if it was done at

all it could not be done without trouble. He did not say anything, but let the first force of the shock wear itself out.

"Oh!" she cried, "was it for this I brought him to my house? Eddy! you cannot be thinking what you are saying. You shall read all the books about this wretched Africa. It is mere nonsense, what he says about the new world, the Continent of the future. You should read what other travellers say. The most debased, miserable country—the people absolute savages. What am I saying? I am taking it too seriously. I know you will hear reason. This is just a boy's foolish fancy—the first wild idea that has come into your head."

"I don't think so, mother."

"But I know it. I know what ideas come into such a young brain as yours, my dear boy. No more about it to-night, Eddy. I ought to have foreseen that he would have an effect upon you, for he is eloquent after a sort. The days are getting quite short already, and before we know, summer will be over. We have not settled where we are going for the holidays," she

added, suddenly changing the subject with simple artifice. "Shall we go to Switzerland? This year I should not object if you climbed to your heart's content. You are old enough and strong enough to risk it now."

This would have made Edward's eyes sparkle a week before, but it had little effect upon him now.

"If you like, mother," he said, indifferently. "But I begin to think I have had enough play in my life."

"Your life—it is such a long one—eighteen!"

"Long enough for amusement," said Eddy, solemnly. "Now I want work."

Mrs. Tremenheere parted with her boy that evening with some dismay in her heart.

"I suppose it is just a fancy like any other," she said to herself; but it was an appalling fancy for an only son, a boy of so much importance in her life. She went back to the pretty house which had looked so cheerful and delightful to Vera, and felt it very dreary. Mrs. Tremenheere closed the shutters with her own hands to-night in a kind of suppressed passion, as if the country was her enemy. She could

not endure its quiet and tranquillity. When the lamp was brought in the poor woman went and sat by it for company, and gazed into the light as if that could counsel her. A panic took possession of her soul. "Only a fancy, like another," she repeated aloud, trying to take off the edge of her own thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DAY AFTER.

NEXT day! It was a lovely summer day, but very hot and stifling in Hyde Park Square. Miss Campbell did not permit her pupil so much as that wistful gaze from the window across the brown park and dusty trees, which is the favorite consolation of such prisoners. She allowed no indulgence on account of an unsettled mind, but rather the reverse. And what a day it was! nothing but sunshine, heat, blazing pavements outside, airless rooms, all hot and heavy with the warm carpets and curtains of English use and wont. Vera read Rollin's Ancient History all the afternoon, not even trying, as she often did, to interest herself in Xerxes, but thinking all the time of yesterday, and of all that happened. "Perhaps the world may end to-night." What did he mean? Would he have liked it to go on, and on, that pro-

gress through the darkness, without seeing anything, without saying much, but now and then half-a-dozen words quite low, under cover of the lively chatter of the two people opposite? Was it possible that *he* would have liked that? As for Vera, she did not ask herself if she liked it. It had changed the world to her; it had given her a new world of her own into which she could retire safely, almost glad of the Rollin, and think it all over again,—the few words that meant so much, the consciousness of nearness and companionship, the dreamy sweep of movement through the soft night.

"Are you sleepy, my dear?" said Miss Campbell, somewhat sharply rousing her.

"N—no," said Vera.

"I thought you must be sleepy, you mumble your words so, and shut your eyes. I suppose you were kept up very late at the villa," the old governess said. She disliked the villa with an intensity of dislike such as mingled jealousy and fear alone could produce. She was afraid that any day Mrs. Tremenheere might come back and turn her out of a comfortable home; and she was jealous of the mother's influence with

Vera, of whom in her way this hard-featured, hard-principled woman was fond, though she could not express her fondness in any ingratiating way. "Go on, my dear, and rouse yourself up," she said—and Vera went on; but when she shut her eyes she could see that scene, and feel it, as vividly as if it were still existing, and still within the possibilities that it might go on for ever; and then her voice would drop, and there would be a pause in the reading of which she was scarcely conscious; for dreaming even of that description in a hot July afternoon is akin to sleep.

"This will never do, Vera," said Miss Campbell; "I suppose your mother did not have a ball last night? Go and put on your hat; we may have our walk now, and perhaps that will rouse you up."

They went out for their walk when the afternoon was beginning to cool a little, and went to Kensington Gardens, which was the usual scene of their daily promenade. A demure little girl in a white frock, not even made quite "long" as yet, with a very precise, elderly lady by her, straight as a piece of iron, and as unbending—this sort of thing is to be seen in Kensington Gardens every day. They walked down the

broad walk and up again, going quickly, but not too quickly, not to attract attention, Miss Campbell keeping a steady look-out around her, on her guard against any possible danger, Vera very silent, scarcely raising her eyes.

"Miss Campbell!" suddenly said a voice beside her, which made Vera's heart beat. She gave such a sudden start of surprise, and grew so red with wonder and joy that Miss Campbell vaguely perceived with a corner of her eye that something was the matter. "This is a most unlooked-for pleasure. I have been waiting here wondering if I should see anybody I knew now that all the world is pouring out of town. You are still in London? Ah!" said Oswald, coldly turning round and bowing, "I beg your pardon, Miss Tremenheere."

Vera, who was not used to such transparent deceits, was wounded to her innocent heart. "So he does not care about seeing *me!* I am only an accident. He saw nobody but Miss Campbell!" the foolish little girl said to herself. And she did not trust herself to look at him lest he should see the hot tear which this mortification had forced into her eyes,

and consequently never received the glance he sent to make up for his meagre salutation. Fane had as little doubt that she understood him perfectly, and was laughing secretly at his enthusiasm for Miss Campbell, as he had of his own existence.

"You have the advantage of me," said Miss Campbell. "I beg your pardon. One meets so many people in society——"

"Oswald Fane," he said. "I had the pleasure of dining the other day in Hyde Park Square——"

Miss Campbell gave him a keen glance. "I recollect," she said. "A friend, I think, of Mrs. Tremenheere's?"

What was he to say? Offend Vera by disclaiming any particular friendship with her mother, or ruin his hopes of Miss Campbell's help by claiming this? "I have known Mr. and Mrs. Tremenheere about the same time," he said, "and I have had the pleasure of visiting both. But I think I have known some relations of yours in Scotland longer than either—the Campbells of Stormaway? I am sure I have heard them talk of you."

"Really!" said Miss Campbell, gratified, "that was

very kind. I know the family you speak of—a very good family, but I cannot claim them as near relations. There is some far cousinship, no doubt. It is gratifying to my feelings that they should know—I mean remember me; and have you seen them lately Mr.—Mr. Vane?"

"Fane. I met them in Scotland last year; indeed, I was at their house for a few days. What a pleasant place to visit is a Highland country house! Of course you remember your cousin's delightful place?"

"Yes— yes— that is, I have been there very seldom, Mr. Fane; very seldom, not since a child, I may say; and no doubt there are additions and alterations——"

"They said it was a long time since they had seen you, and I promised to let them know if I happened to meet you anywhere. A fortunate chance, was it not? The daughters have grown up charming girls, and as for Hector and Colin——"

"Yes— yes," said Miss Campbell. She was for the moment quite bamboozled; was he trying to deceive her, or was it really true that the Highland magnates, whose names alone she was acquainted with, had

found out and recognised her as their kinswoman? After the first flush of gratification she became uncertain, and did not know what to think. He had turned, and was walking along with them. But he walked by Miss Campbell's side, taking no notice of Vera, who for her part went along with downcast eyes, offended and never looking at him.

"By the way," he said, "Miss Meadows, who is out of town for a few days, gave me some books for Miss Tremenheere. May I bring them? I am going away myself shortly One day this week may I bring them, and discharge my conscience of my commission before I go?"

"Oh, pray do not take the trouble. I will send a servant," said Miss Campbell, who had seen a sudden lifting of Vera's eyes. "This is our way, I think. Do not take the trouble. I must bid you good morning, Mr. Fane."

And he took his leave of them quite calmly, though he was going away. Vera was so startled, so wounded, so suddenly thrown down out of all those sweet vague dreams in which she had been indulging, that she could not raise her eyes. Tears come so easily at

sixteen. If he had really gone and she had seen no more of him, Vera, after that first sharp shock of mortification and disappointment, which made her poor little lip quiver and her eyes fill, would no doubt have forgotten all about Oswald Fane. But in the meantime the blow of his supposed indifference and the sudden cruel end put all at once to the romance which was just beginning, crushed her for the moment, depressed as she was by other influences. She walked home by Miss Campbell's side with a piteous little face, not saying a word. Only once a little cry of impatience burst from her. "I do not believe that gentleman knew much about my cousins of Storm-away," Miss Campbell said. "I think it was very strange that he should have accosted me as he did, currying favor. If he is a friend of Miss Meadows I must request her not to send her messages by him. I am sure she has plenty of servants. I must tell her I do not approve of calls from gentlemen."

"Oh, you need not give yourself the trouble," said Vera; "he is not coming. He said it was to clear his conscience of his commission. He never wanted to come."

"So much the better," said Miss Campbell dryly, and she talked about the Aquarium in the Zoological Gardens, which was a safe subject. Vera no longer trod on air; her dreams were gone and ended, her beautiful new world broken like a bubble. She went into her own room and cried, tears innocent and bitter, such as one sheds at sixteen, when every grief seems eternal. It was all over, then. Not only should she never see him more, but she had lost that sweet refuge into which she could retire as she had done this morning when the day was dull, when Miss Campbell was hard upon her.

Next morning, however, she had to go back to her lessons as usual. When these came to a pause before luncheon, she wandered into the drawing-room, intending to breathe forth some of her melancholy upon the grand piano. Some one rose as she went in. The girl grew red all over with a flush which was partly anger, and partly shame, and partly delight.

"Oh!" she said impetuously, not knowing what she said, "I thought you were gone."

"Did you really think so?" said Fane. "No, im-

possible. I came this morning that she might not have time to warn the servants not to admit me."

"But, Mr. Fane, of whom are you speaking? You seemed to know Miss Campbell so well—to like her—and her relations."

Fane laughed. Vera could not have explained what her feelings were at that moment. Her heart bounded, and yet she did not like it. Why should he deceive even Miss Campbell? She looked at him doubtfully—and yet how happy she was!

"You think I should not tell a fib? Quite true. But then how was I to see you? That was the first thing I had to think of; and there was no harm done. It was a very innocent fib. I could not give up tamely all hope of seeing you again."

Vera's cheeks glowed and her heart beat. She did not say anything to check him—to demur to this statement. Was it not natural that he should want to see her? Had not she wanted too, though she would not say it, to see him?

"But you *are* going away?" she said softly, with a very little subdued sigh.

"Not I—not so long as there is any chance.—

Here is the book I spoke to you about, and another. Take them, please, before the dragon comes; I fear, I fear, she will be here directly. Ah, Miss Tremenheere, you cannot think how I have thought about those two days at the villa, and lived them over and over! Shall not you go there again, or to Miss Meadows? She knows me. She would not shut me out; and now that I have seen you it does not seem possible to live just as one lived before. Life is different. It is so much sweeter—better; since that day at Lord's, that first wonderful day. I had never seen you till then."

Vera stood silent, with the books in her hands, her eyes cast down, her cheeks glowing, her heart beating high, yet soft—not wildly in her ears, as it had done a little while before, but with a satisfied and quiet beating. How true it all was! Life was different, quite different, and yet it did not seem right for him to say so. But to listen to him? Civility demanded that she should listen to any one who talked to her, especially when he was a visitor, and she at home.

"You are very—kind, Mr. Fane," she said at last,

faltering. That was not at all what she meant, but what could she say?

"Kind! It is you who are kind, listening to me. Elinor Meadows would stand my friend if you were with her, and how good Mrs. Tremenheere was! But what must I do with this dragon? If I tell lies to her to please her, you will disapprove of me, and that I cannot bear; but still less can I bear not to see you. What can I do?"

"Mr. Fane: oh! please, don't speak so—and you said you were going away."

"I am going away when you go," he said, "for I shall find out where you go, and follow you—don't be angry, I can't help it,—if it is only to see the light in your window. You wouldn't like me to fall back, and be just the poor creature I was before I knew you? Yes, of course, you are angry with me for telling lies, Vera—you who are truth itself; but the more I see you the truer I shall be. Don't give me up, because I can't give you up. You are too sweet and too good to break my heart."

All this no doubt would have seemed over-bold and over-sudden to a girl of twenty; but how could Vera

discriminate, she upon whom the same spell had fallen? Did not she, too, feel how different life was, how transformed from the pale gray routine, the stagnant repression of the days before? The strangeness and excitement of it made her breathless.

"Oh! don't talk so, please don't talk so," she cried.

"It is the only way I can talk," said Fane. "The moment I saw you I knew what had happened to me. 'That is she, I said to myself, 'that is she—there is none in all the world like her.' And—ah!—Good morning, Miss Campbell. I made bold to call to discharge my commission. Miss Tremenheere has got the books——"

"Good morning," said Miss Campbell. "What books? I never permit Miss Tremenheere to read anything that I have not first looked at myself."

"I have no doubt it is a very wise rule," he said carelessly. "The books belong to Miss Meadows—it is she who sent me with them, and, of course, she is answerable.—I shall say I put them into your own hands, Miss Tremenheere. Any commands for Scotland, Miss Campbell? May I take tidings of you to

your cousins? It would be a great pleasure to them —and I may say, to me."

Miss Campbell looked at him seriously.

"Mr. Fane," she said, "I don't pretend to know what you mean by talking of my cousins, who, after all, are but distant relations upon whom I have no claim."

"What I mean is to please you, of course," said Fane with a laugh. "What else? If they were my people I should like friends to talk of them to me."

"If that was all! but I do not forget my position; and—when a gentleman sets himself to flatter a lady in my position——" said the governess.

"Flatter! Do you think it flattering to remind you of your relations? It might be so to them," said Fane with a bow and a smile. "Never mind, I shall hold my tongue another time if you don't like the Stormaway people. In the meantime I must really say goodbye. Goodbye, Miss Tremenheere. I will tell Miss Meadows I saw you. And Miss Campbell, you will surely shake hands with me, and wish me luck among the grouse."

"Now, if one could only tell what that young man meant!" said Miss Campbell, when he was gone. "He seems well-bred and agreeable, but he may have a motive of his own. Vera, it is the hour for Rollin. Get your book, my dear."

CHAPTER XII.

ROMANCE.

AFTER this there followed a very exciting interval to Véra. Fane came again with another mission (nominally) from Miss Meadows, and was tolerably received. Emboldening by this, he came a third time and a fourth, addressing most of his conversation to Miss Campbell, and describing, in elaborate detail, the long series of accidents which delayed him from the grouse. The Tremenheeres themselves generally left town in the beginning of August, but this year were later than usual. Miss Campbell found it agreeable on the whole to receive so unusual a visitor, and to hear so much about the Campbells of Stormaway, whom she really began at last to believe in as her cousins. He had always some trait to relate of one or other of them, when the conversation flagged, or she began to look suspicious. Vera did not know

whether she was happy or not during these visits. He gave her now and then a look, now and then a whispered word, in the intervals of his talk with Miss Campbell, and left her in no doubt as to his motives for cultivating with such extreme assiduity that lady's friendship; but after all, at sixteen, it is but an indifferent pleasure to see your proper slave devoting himself to another person, even if it be for your sake. Vera sat silent, and now and then felt somewhat sad. But her whole life became absorbed in these visits. She thought of them all day long. She expected him till he came, mused upon him after he was gone. Except Rollin and the lessons it was all that Vera had. Her mother wrote to her less frequently than usual, and more briefly. Mrs. Tremenheere, for her part, was involved in great anxiety and trouble. "I am rather unhappy about an idea Eddy has got into his head," she wrote, as an excuse for her short letters, "but I trust it will not come to anything." Vera scarcely asked herself what this could be. She was lost in her own excitement.

One afternoon Mr. Tremenheere came in a little earlier than usual, and met Fane, who was leaving

after a prolonged call. They stood talking together for a few minutes at the door, and Mr. Tremenheere was heard to laugh, which took a burden off the minds of both the ladies in the drawing-room; for it suddenly occurred to Miss Campbell that before she knew Mr. Fane, and was aware how well he was acquainted with the Campbells of Stormaway, she, too, had been a little suspicious of him, and thought him an undesirable visitor. However, nothing could be more friendly than Mr. Tremenheere's tone. When he came in, however, he did not look quite so genial. He gave a half-angry glance at the governess, and a doubtful one at Vera.

"Since when has young Fane become a visitor in the house?" he asked, and there was something uncomfortable in his voice.

"Since when? I think Mr. Fane dined here first on the evening of the match."

"I beg you pardon, that was not what I was asking. Since when has he been in the habit of calling here? He is not an acquaintance of mine. Elinor Meadows, who always has a *cortège* of young fellows about her, brought him; she takes him everywhere.

How often have you seen him, Vera? I don't want him here."

"How often?" Vera's foolish face began to flush as usual, though she would, she thought, have given everything she had in the world to prevent it. This made her father very angry, who liked a prompt and plain reply.

"Yes. How often? What are you frightened about? I shan't eat you; give me a straightforward answer. How often have you seen him here?"

"I—I met him—at mamma's," said Vera, under her breath.

"Ah! at your mother's? So she has taken him up, too."

"I ought to say it is my fault, not Vera's," said Miss Campbell. "He knows some cousins of mine in Argyleshire, the Campbells of Stormaway. He has come to talk to me about them. Vera has seen very little of him," the governess added, with a little complacency, for indeed it had pleased her to feel that the visitor's conversation had been so much addressed to herself.

"Oh! that is it, is it?" he said, rather carelessly,

"then perhaps you will not mind giving him a hint that I don't care for his visits. There is not much in him; and his relationship to Lord Fanebury scarcely worth counting. Perhaps you might hint to him, that if he calls again you are not likely to be at home."

"Surely, if you wish it," said Miss Campbell, though she was not pleased. As for Vera, a great blackness of darkness came over her. She had not always liked it when he came; but to lose him, to have no longer that piquant centre to her days, that something to dream of, to think of—what could she do? Vera felt that it was intolerable. At dinner she was too unhappy to preserve her usual composure. She was irritable in her suffering; so irritable as to move her father to the idea that she must be ill, and must go to the seaside, for which he issued his orders on the spot. She had never, since the days of her childhood, been so courageous before.

"I don't want change of air," she said. "It is all very well, papa, for you. You go to your friends. You do what pleases you. You enjoy yourself; but as for me I am sent off to a dreadful seaside, where I know nobody, where we live in horrible lodgings, and

practice, and read, and walk, and do exactly as we do at home."

"Vera!" cried Miss Campbell, "I am shocked, I am astonished; you forget yourself."

"I just wish I could," cried Vera. I am so sick, so sick of myself! Let me go to Aunt Elinor, or to the villa; or let me stay at home."

Mr. Tremenheere watched her with some astonishment. "I did not give your mother credit for so much discrimination," he said. "She warned me you had a temper. The seaside is far the best for you. When you are a few years older, you can visit your friends, too, and enjoy yourself."

Vera said nothing. She sat still, with flushed cheeks, excited and miserable, not trusting herself to look at any one. It seemed to her that she must strike a blow for her own deliverance, or die. For the first time in her life she waited after Miss Campbell had left the room, and going up to her father, put her hand timidly on his arm. "Papa," she said, imploringly, "when you go away don't leave me alone with Miss Campbell. Let me go to—to the villa; or to Aunt Elinor——"

"Why will you give Miss Meadows that absurd name? She is not your aunt."

"I beg you pardon, papa, I will not do it again. I should be so much happier if I were not alone. The —villa? Mamma will not mind having me, and Eddy and I could be together, if only for a little while. I should be so good—so good and obedient——"

"And why should you not go to the seaside with Miss Campbell this year, as well as every other year? Go away! go away! and don't let me hear any more of this."

Vera went away, as he told her, without another word, without a look. She passed Miss Campbell, who was waiting and wondering on the staircase, and hurried to her room. She could not cry this time, her eyes were too hot and dry. Oh, why was she so different from other girls! Why had she not a mother to care for her, some one who would see what was happening, who would judge for her if she was wrong who would not have left her to make Oswald Fane the centre of the world! He was the centre of the world, she felt it now!—the pivot upon which all that was worth having in life turned. If he was sent

away, forbidden the house, what was to become of her? Either she would kill herself, or God would be kind and do it for her—one way or other, she must die.

Her heart beat so wildly that it made her sick and faint. But all at once, as she sat down, it gave one big jump, and then was still. Why was this? Before her lay a letter carefully placed upon her little prayer-book, where she could not miss seeing it. Vera knew at once what it was. Not from her mother, Eddy, any ordinary correspondent; from *him*. She did not know his handwriting. Why should it be from him? Perhaps it was some childish invitation, somebody's letter whom she did not care for. Saying this over to herself with trembling lips, and knowing it was not true, she opened the note, and with another big jump of her heart read as follows:—

"I met your father to-day as I left the house. He was not rude to me, but I read my doom in his eye. I am not to be allowed to come any more. I shall come—I shall leave no chance untried; I will try to

see him, and plead my cause with him; but I know how it will end, unless you, you alone, you who are my better life, will stand by me. Is it too much? Ah, I know it is too much. I have no right to disturb your young life, to bring painful questions into it; but I am in despair: and you, you too—sweet Vera, you, for whom I would give my life, you are not happy either. But for this I would go away; I would trust to time and Providence to bring me back to your feet, where alone I can be happy. But to know that you are lonely and in trouble, too—that is what I cannot bear. Vera, darling, forgive me, write me one word, only one word, and do not let them separate us. Have pity upon me! Since the first day I saw you, that white day, I have had no thought but you.

O. F."

Vera read this with feelings I cannot describe. There had never been a word of love-making between them, so to speak; nothing but those vague suggestions which make the early paths of love so exquisite; but after this letter there could be no further disguise. She read it over and over again with a

mixture of heartrending pain and delight, one as delicious and as heartrending as the other. Stand by him? what else could she do?—for he was her life if she was his; but write to him! How could she do that? How she trembled, how sore her heart was, how happy! Out of the despair and blank hopelessness with which she had left the dining-room, what a change to this sea of emotion, so sweet, so terrible, so alarming, yet consolatory! Neither father nor mother had any sympathy for Vera, any feeling for her feelings; but he felt for her, with her, everything she felt—yet but for her would be as much alone as she was; they were two against the world. But write to him! The thought trembled all through her, made her hand shake, and her heart beat. Could she do it? How could she do it? When she heard a sound at her door she thrust the letter away, not into her bosom, which would have been romantic, but into her pocket, which was natural; and, conscious in every look and breath and movement turned round to see who it was; fortunately it was only Mary, the daughter of her old nurse, who had lately been promoted to be Vera's maid. Mary was over twenty, an experienced

young person, who had "kept company" for many years with a tall Guardsman to whom she was faithful through many flirtations on both sides. She knew what it was to have had parents and a troublesome cook to interfere with the course of her true love; but even cook was not so bad as Miss Campbell. And to have Miss Vera's little heart broken and her young man driven to despair was not a thing which could be allowed to be, if sympathetic Mary could prevent it. She came into the room, smiling with a consciousness equal to Vera's own, but with more comfortable sensations.

Mary was cautious, however, in her advances. She said nothing until she was well into her pretty work of brushing Vera's long beautiful hair, standing behind her, unseen and unseeing, a position which gave both maid and mistress ease. When this period had arrived, Mary said softly, "Miss Vera, I hope you had your letter?"

"Yes, Mary," said Vera with a start, and seized a book on the table under pretence of reading. But Mary was not so dull as not to see the warm color that came flushing over the girl's neck, or the tremu-

lous instinct of self-defence which made her seize upon the book which she did not read. Mary had the matter in her own hands. She resumed——

"How long your hair do grow, to be sure, Miss Vera. Mother was always proud of your hair; and now here's somebody come as thinks more of it than coined gold. You'll write him just a little word, won't you, Miss Vera, dear, to keep up his heart, poor gentleman? just a little word——"

"Mary, you ought not to speak to me so. What have you to do with gentlemen, or me either? How did you get it? Was it you that put it there? Oh Mary, you shouldn't have done it—you must never, never do it again."

"Miss Vera, you don't know nothing about it," said Mary. "Me—I've kept company with my young man since I was just your age, and nobody shan't come between him and me. We've got to wait, but I don't mind waiting, and I've told mother so, when she's been at me about it. But look you here, Miss Vera, your papa is the only one you've got to look to, and if you hold out he'll give in. They always does. I never see a young gentleman more deep

in love, and to give him up would be a burning shame."

"Oh, Mary, how can you, how dare you talk so?" said poor Vera, with her face burning. "What would become of us both if papa or Miss Campbell knew?"

"They couldn't do much harm to me, Miss," said Mary. "A servant as knows her work is always sure of a good place. Don't you be afraid for me. And they can't harm you neither, not if you holds out. Whoever holds out wins; them as gives in is the only one as is beaten. Miss Vera, you've got a spirit of your own, for all they think they have broken it. If I were you, I'd write him a word just to keep up his heart, poor gentleman; and I'd up and tell my papa that he might be a bluebeard or a raging Turk, as much as he likes—it wouldn't make no effect upon me."

"Oh, Mary, Mary, hush! You don't know what you are saying!"

"Don't I just? It's you as don't understand, Miss, not me. I know all about it, and a deal more than you do, and this I'll say, that no father nor tyrant would ever make me false to my young man. I

wouldn't do it, not for the world; and Miss Vera, I can't believe as you're a traitor in your heart."

This was such a totally new view of the question that it took away Vera's breath. A traitor! She had never once thought of treachery in the question. How long Mary's arguments went on I need not say. She came back, stealing into Vera's room in the dark after Miss Campbell had been there and declared the girl to be feverish, and had given her some white homœopathic globules, to calm her down again. "It is the hot weather," Miss Campbell said to herself, never suspecting Mary. And the maid stole back in the dark, and the little mistress cried and let her talk, happy yet ashamed of the company and the confidences, and the familiarity and sympathy. Mary pleaded so well that Vera was persuaded to write half a dozen words, in great trouble and agitation, to the effect that Mr. Fane must not be unhappy, that he must not think of her; but that she should always think of him, and pray for him, and hoped he would be very happy all the same. Was it wrong? was it very wrong? Should not a girl answer a letter from a gentleman as well as from another girl? Vera

knew, alas, that this was not at all the question. But she read over Fane's letter again, and put it under her pillow when she went to sleep. He was the only one who felt for her. They two stood against the world!

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ANXIOUS MOTHER.

MRS. TREMENHEERE had spent a very uneasy month no less than her daughter, but in a way which had no gildings of romance and happiness like Vera's trouble. The holidays had come, but had brought no pleasant wanderings, no genial ease to her. She had not gone to Switzerland, as she had proposed. Edward, disturbed and excited as he was, had declared himself quite indifferent to Switzerland. "If there is to be nothing but play in my life, I may as well play here as anywhere else," he had said, with a gloomy ill-temper quite unusual to him; and he spent the sunny weeks of August in trudging about from one cricket match to another, an occupation which his mother sighed over, without enjoying that kind of honor and glory which consists in the report of "scores" in the "*Field*." These, it is to be sup-

posed, gave some consolation to him, but they did not cheer her, especially as they were diversified by long and painful debates with her son on the subject which he had never put aside or relinquished for a moment. Edward had changed his nature altogether. From a docile amiable lad, ready to accept her guidance and to be kind to everybody around him, without standing upon his own will, he had changed into a dogged monomaniac, a being of one idea, thinking of nothing but the project which had taken possession of his generally dull imagination, and set it all aflame. When a slow and tranquil mind gets roused into fanaticism the result is much more serious than with an inflammable nature; the fire takes deeper hold, and burns with a more concentrated and obstinate force. Edward could think of nothing but this idea of his. He too began a correspondence essentially as clandestine as Vera's, though his letters came openly by the post. The boy was free from surveillance, and therefore had no temptation towards communications absolutely secret; but Edward wrote letters to his new friend, the traveller, which he would not for worlds have shown to his mother, and which were full of

plans and engagements which she neither knew nor sanctioned. The expedition was to set out in October, and the mind of Mr. Buckram Bass was not disturbed by the fact that his young convert, his eager disciple, was forming plans and pledging himself to acts of which his friends disapproved. Men look leniently upon such kinds of family treachery. Poor Mrs. Tremenheere felt that the world would be against her when she set herself in opposition to an enterprise which would leave her desolate, and throw away as she thought her son's better life. "Did she expect to keep him always at her apron strings?" she already heard people say, and Edward himself, all the more that he was not very bright, took up with fervor that common notion. "You know, mamma," he said, "if I were a girl it would be quite different; but I can't stay by you always, can I? You would not like to see me stick fast at home, a poor creature like Tom Crabbe, always thinking of the danger of wet feet!"

"You know I do not wish for anything of the sort," said Mrs. Tremenheere.

"No, you are not foolish like that; but is it not something of the same kind in a more sensible way?

You don't mind my cricket, and that sort of thing. You would let me go up Mont Blanc—all for my amusement. You wouldn't have me laughed at for your anxieties. I know, mother dear, you are a great deal too wise and good for that. But when I want to throw myself into real work, into something that will be of use in the world, then you turn round upon me—you who have always been so good, and refuse, because it is so far away, because it is such hard work——"

"Eddy," said Mrs. Tremenheere, "it is always a bad thing to attribute low motives to other people—even people much less near to you than I am. Can you not conceive it possible that I have some better reason than even regret to lose you and anxiety about the hardships involved? I don't say all the same that these would not be reason enough——"

"What reason?" said Edward. "I don't know what other objection there could be."

"To me it would seem like throwing away all your chances," said his mother. "I don't mean only of success in the world; that is important enough, Eddy, though you shake your head. If any misfortune was

to happen, if our investments were to go wrong, for instance, like so many people's, you might have the strongest of inducements to think of success in the world. Money never comes amiss, as everybody will tell you—nor friends."

"You, too, mamma!" cried Eddy, "is self-interest then the only rule?—make friends to help one on in life, as my father said."

"Your father knows more of the world than either you or me—yes, to help you on, and to be helped on in turn—all true assistance is mutual; but I did not think of that," said Mrs. Tremenheere. "What I was thinking was this—that you will throw yourself out of all the reasonable chances of life if you go on with this mad notion, and separate yourself from all your friends, and give up everything — prospects, occupations, suitable companions—all for what? for what, Eddy?"

The lad's face flushed. "For the good of mankind," he cried. "Oh yes, I know what you will say, mother! you will say that is too vague, too general, and means nothing. I can't help that, I can't bring it down to details. Africa is swarming with millions of

poor creatures who know nothing; it is to bring civilization to them, and education and trade, to raise them above the possibility of slavery; why are they slaves except because they are too ignorant and debased to know better? Think, mother—is not that of greater use than anything a fellow like me could do at home? I am not clever, you know I am not clever—but that will not matter in Africa; so long as one is strong and honest and honorable."

"Oh, Eddy, Eddy!" cried his mother in despair, "what am I to say to you to dispel this illusion, my generous, good boy!"

"I will tell you what you can do, mother dear," he said, coming up to her, putting his arms round her, "let me go! My heart is set on it; why should you not let me go, mamma? you never refused me anything before. I know very well I have often disappointed you; you would have liked me to be clever, to take a high place in school, to gain prizes and things—but you have never blamed me when I failed, never! You have given in to me in many a thing you did not care for, because you saw I cared for it. Oh, don't think I haven't seen it! I knew it well

enough. You have never reproached me, nor refused me anything. Mother, don't turn round for the first time in my life, and refuse me now; don't fail me now, the first time when it has been really important, when I have wanted it most!"

"You ought to see the difference," said poor Mrs. Tremenheere; "I have been ready to give in to you even when I did not approve, when it was of no great importance; but now, when it is of the last importance, when all your more serious interests are involved, how can I go against my own judgment for the mere sake of pleasing your fancy, Eddy? You ought not to ask me, and I—I ought not to listen."

"I cannot see that," he cried. "I don't see why you should depart from the way you have always treated me. As for me, don't suppose this is a mere fancy," he added, growing red; "it is a fancy I will never depart from; you may oblige me to put it off, but I will give it up never."

Some one fortunately came in then, and stopped the further discussion; but such conversations took place daily between the mother and son, and the reader may judge how painful they were, and confusing to the

mind of Mrs. Tremenheere, who had gone all these years on the principle that to yield all legitimate gratification to her son was the best mode of education, and to place in him unlimited confidence. It had answered very well up to this moment. Edward, who knew that he would not be opposed in any innocent and natural wish, had been less, not more, exacting, than many others more strictly governed; but now, what was she to do now? to preserve the tradition of her theory without its spirit, to yield to him for his own destruction, as she had yielded to him for his innocent pleasures. To refuse and cross him—how hard it was! but to consent to what she thought his ruin, that was harder still.

It was while Mrs. Tremenheere was involved in this painful controversy, not knowing what was to be the end of it, that she received suddenly a letter from Elinor Meadows, telling her about the love of Oswald Fane for Vera. The letter was long and full of details, recounting the efforts which the young man had made to see Mr. Tremenheere, and gain his consent; and how, failing in this, he had appealed to her to intercede for him with Vera's father, and how this, too, had

failed; proceedings which had been taking place in the meanwhile. I scarcely know by what rule it is that a youthful love-story bulks so much more largely in the eyes of an unmarried woman, who may be supposed to have had no such experiences of her own, than in those of a married woman, who must of necessity, one would imagine, have herself passed through some such passages; but so it is generally, and Mrs. Tremenheere was no exception to the rule. Her own trouble seemed to her much more serious than any folly about love, which no doubt Elinor had put into the children's heads. But though she was impatient she wrote to Vera, telling her she was too young, much too young, to think of any such thing, and that her first duty was to please her father, and give up anything that he thought improper for her. When, however, Mrs. Tremenheere had written this letter, it occurred to her, with a kind of whimsical vexation, that it was exactly the kind of letter which her husband would probably write to Eddy when he knew of the controversy in which they were engaged, and this idea made her think again, pre-occupied as she was, of her poor little woman-child, left to Miss

Campbell's sole society, in all the tremors and distresses of that fanciful moment, when Love and all involved in it had been first suggested to her mind. Poor Vera! Would her father be gentle, as he ought? Would not she now feel deeply and doubly what it was to be without a mother? Mrs. Tremenheere's mind, withdrawn from Vera by the immediate vexations which were more near to her, awoke to this all at once with that sudden, painful sense how much she was herself to blame for depriving Vera of a mother, which gives double force to every pang. After a day or two, during which, amid all her own troubles, this painful question kept returning perpetually to her mind, she decided at last to write to her husband. She must not interfere, but yet perhaps he would be glad to have his wife's assistance at such a moment, as she would be glad to have his. Accordingly, in the beginning of September, when all her own anxieties were growing greater, day by day, she took the final resolution, and wrote to him as follows, wording her letter as carefully as if she had been writing to the Queen :——

"DEAR CHARLES,—I don't know whether you begin to find out, as I do, how very much more difficult it is to manage children when they are grown up, and begin to have fancies and opinions of their own, than when they are small and can be commanded without explanation. I am sorry to say I have made this discovery in a disagreeable way. Eddy, all at once, without rhyme or reason, has fallen in love with a life of adventure, and gives me no peace, trying to wring from me a consent to let him go off to Africa with Mr. Buckram Bass's expedition. Perhaps a few words from you would help to make him more reasonable, if you would take the trouble to write to him. He is so good a boy in every other respect that it is very pain ful for me to be obliged to cross him; and yet I am sure you will agree with me that on this point it would be weakness and almost wickedness to yield to his wishes.

"Elinor Meadows has written me some rigmarole about Vera and a lover. A lover at her age! I hope it is only one of Elinor's many delusions in respect to this favorite subject, and that our dear little girl's mind has not yet been disturbed by any such ideas

I know this is the time you appropriate to relaxation, and it has occurred to me that if Vera has known of this proposal, and has been at all upset by it, you may dislike leaving her in the sole companionship of Miss Campbell, who, though I don't doubt a most admirable person, does not look very sympathetic. If this should be the case would you trust her to me? I should, I need not say, take the greatest care of her, and preserve her from every suggestion of premature love-making; her company would be very good for Eddy, who is in an extremely unsettled state of mind, and it would be very sweet and delightful for me. I hope, too, you might find it a relief to your anxiety to dispose of Vera comfortably with me while you are absent. Pray give me your advice on the other subject. With love to Vera,

"I am, ever affectionately yours,

"ADA TREMENHEERE."

Mr. Tremenheere received this letter just as he was arranging his plans to send his daughter to the sea-side. It was an unfortunate moment. More difficult to manage! No, he would not acknowledge anything

of the kind. For a girl at least it was always the best way to command without explanation. He thought but little of what his wife said about Eddy, which no doubt was so much dust thrown in his eyes to blind him to the real meaning of the proposed interference —as if he was to be taken in so easily! He answered this letter by return of post. He was angry with Elinor Meadows for her interference, and angry that his wife should know anything about it. They should all find that he was quite able to manage Vera and Vera's lover without any help from them. The answer he returned was as follows. It was not by any means so carefully written as the epistle to which it was a reply :—

"My Dear Ada,—I am very sorry that you find any difficulty with Eddy after all the indulgence you have shown him. Of course I shall be quite ready to write and point out his duty to him if you think there is really any necessity for such a step; but I should hope he has not been spoiled to such an extent that he has not sense to see what a fatal piece of absurdity this would be. It is really too ridiculous and too

entirely out of the question, I feel sure, to warrant any serious alarm.

"As for Vera, I am very much obliged to you for volunteering to take her off my hands, but up to the present moment I have seen nothing in her to make such a transference necessary. I have no doubt the system upon which she has been trained will continue to answer perfectly, as it has done hitherto, and neither Vera nor I have found anything wanting in Miss Campbell as a companion, though I am aware you don't like her. That perhaps was to be expected. Vera is quite well, and goes to Worthing with her admirable friend and governess the day after to-morrow. Thanking you all the same for your kind offer, and with love to Eddy, who I trust by this time has come to his senses, I am, my dear Ada,

"Affectionately yours,

"C. TREMENHEERE."

This letter was very irritating to Mrs. Tremenheere. Her services were not only rejected, but rejected with something like contumely, and the suggestion that it was to be expected she should dislike Miss Campbell

made her furious. Why should she dislike Miss Campbell? It was all she could do to refrain from falling upon Elinor Meadows, who had come to her the night before it arrived, while she was still entertaining the hope of being permitted to have her child with her. "She is not coming, she is going to Worthing with Miss Campbell," she said; and magnanimously swallowed the other words which were fain to come.

"Ah!" cried Miss Meadows, with a start of interest. She was on Oswald's side, and delighted to feel that she should be able at once to give him news as to where his little lady had been taken; for to be sure she was ignorant of Mary, and all that went on through Mary's means.

And thus poor Vera's affairs drew to a climax. Oswald Fane, I need not say, followed Miss Campbell and her charge to Worthing, where twice over, by Mary's help, he saw Vera in the early morning before Miss Campbell was out of bed, when the girl went out for a walk—as it was so natural she should do—with her maid. But on the last of these two interviews Fane had lost all idea of prudence or patience. It

was not only that he was hotly in love, and kept from all legitimate intercourse with the object of his impetuous young affection; but Mary, with whom he was now in constant communication, and whose head was turned by the delight and excitement of the whole transaction, drew such a touching picture to him of Vera's solitude and semi-imprisonment, that Fane's blood boiled, and it seemed the first of duties to deliver her.

"She ain't found out as Miss Vera is up early of a morning, not yet," said Mary, "which it is my young lady's only breath of freedom; but you'll see she will afore long, for there's spies all about. Mercifully she's fond of her bed in the morning, is Miss Campbell; but as soon as she finds it out, don't you think for to see Miss Vera any more—not to say as it's as much as my place is worth now."

"Never mind about your place," said the lover. "You shall have your place all right, don't you fear."

"Well, sir," said Mary, curtseying, "I've done my best for you; but if you'll take my advice you won't let that poor dear linger on here, a prisoner, and nothing better. Daren't take up her own letters she

daren't, her letters from her poor mamma, nor lift her head from her book, nor go a step without the old one after her. But for me, I know she'd die," Mary added emphatically. And indeed it was true that among them they had brought poor Vera into a state of excitement in which the child's mind could find no rest. Her temper and her spirit rose against the tyranny exercised over her. Miss Campbell, and only Miss Campbell, all day; her intercourse with the external world, except through Miss Campbell, stopped short; no one near to give the poor child any counsel—and Mary's insidious whispering in her ears, and the daily love letters, with all their wonderful flattery and worship. What wonder that poor Vera by and by found herself ready for anything? A panic seized her indeed when Fane unfolded his plan, and showed her exactly how everything was to be done, and how they were to be married in a church in London, where already, without consulting her, he had put up the banns. Married! the words froze Vera's blood in her veins, and then sent it tingling and burning all over her in fright and wonder and shame. Married!

"Well, Miss, it's a thing that happens to most

folks," said Mary, "and all the young ladies as I've ever known is pleased to be asked young. I've known a many as has been married at sixteen. It's early, but still when a lady has set her heart on a gentleman as ain't allowed to come and see her nor keep her company, what is to be expected? It ain't your blame, Miss, but them that drove you to it——"

Vera, in her confused and frightened ponderings, felt that there was some truth in this. They were driving her to it. Shut up here, never free to do anything, seeing nobody except by stealth—and lo, if she liked to-morrow she might be free to go where she pleased, to see whom she pleased, to be perpetually by his side who had made the world such a different place to her. To be sure the idea of being married was very appalling; but she only trembled and shrank back at the word; she no longer made any serious opposition now.

The arrangements were all concluded while Mr. Tremenheere was in Scotland, among a circle of friends, very much satisfied with himself; and while Mrs. Tremenheere, worried and unhappy, was arguing with Edward, forgetting for the moment all about

Vera; and while Miss Campbell was listening to Rollin with that routine attention which the unfortunate educators of humanity somehow attain by long practice. Not without excitement, not without a passing doubt, did Fane arrange all the details. It was a risk, for he was not rich, and what might happen to them was very uncertain. But it was only by moments that this cold shadow came over him—to deliver Vera and make her life ever after a dream of happiness, to be happy himself, beyond words in having her, these were the motives that were uppermost in his mind, and he waited with impatience, for the decisive moment. The last step was precipitated by the discovery on Miss Campbell's part of one of the morning walks which the girl had taken, and which a slip on Vera's part had betrayed to her.

"Do you mean to say you go out in the morning before I am up?" said Miss Campbell. Mary, who was present, made signs of every possible kind to her mistress, and even stole behind her, suggesting a fib.

"Yes," said Vera, whose moral failure had not gone so far. She trembled, but she told the truth. "I have

been out twice in the morning when it was very fine —but Mary was with me," she added, falteringly.

Miss Campbell sent a suspicious glance at Mary, but could do no more, as there was no evidence against her. "I think perhaps, on the whole, Vera, it will be better for you to have your bed brought into my room," she said. This roused all Vera's spirit.

"Into your room, Miss Campbell? Why?" she said, with a quivering lip. "I have always had a room of my own."

"Yes, but then there were no reasons against it. I wish you to be in my room now. Don't say anything. I know what I am doing, and I am responsible to your papa. Mary, give the orders to-morrow. It is too late, I suppose to-night?"

"Yes, Miss Campbell, they've all gone to bed, or going," said Mary. "I'll see to it first thing to-morrow."

Vera went to her little room, stunned by this last blow. No more privacy to think, no more possibility of getting her letters, and feeding her heart upon them, of talking about him to her attendant. Mary followed her up-stairs, a little frightened in her turn,

feeling that the crisis had come, which was too exciting to be comfortable. As long as things could go on without coming to a crisis it was better fun. But even Mary felt a certain trembling now.

"What am I to do? I will not bear it. I cannot bear it," said Vera. "It has all come to an end now."

"Oh! Miss Vera," said the maid, dead frightened. It was Vera now, after being tempted and led on so long, who took the lead. She settled everything in a few quiet words. "Stay here and sleep on the sofa," she said—which was a wise precaution; for otherwise, Mary, struck with a sudden panic, was capable in pure fright of betraying everything to Miss Campbell, already excited and full of alarm.

That morning, when it was scarcely daylight, Vera, with her maid after her, stole out of the house, while still Miss Campbell and everybody else in the big lodging-house was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BOY'S APPEAL.

"MOTHER, now you must come to a decision. You cannot keep me longer in suspense. Mr. Bass writes to me that there is only one vacant place in the expedition, and that he cannot leave it longer unfilled up. It must be Yes or No."

"I have said No, Eddy, a hundred times."

"But without due consideration," he cried eagerly. "Think mother! How often have you said that it was easier for every one when a fellow had a bent one way or another, when he knew what he wanted to be. I never did till now; one thing was the same to me as another; I was ready to do whatever you said, and then you regretted that I had no bent! But now that I have a wish, a strong desire, you deny me, you will not give me a plain answer. The responsibility will be on you," cried Edward, with excitement, "if you baulk me. I feel I can do this, and I don't know

what else I can do, and I don't care for anything else in life."

He was hot and flushed with eagerness. She was pale, and her face drawn with anxiety and distress. The boy assailed with all the eagerness of his young strength and self-will, the mother, torn by conflicting emotions, resisted. All was unity in his mind, all contention and complication in hers. She would have done anything in the world to please him. She would have made any sacrifice to secure him his wish —except the sacrifice he demanded, the sacrifice of his own prospects, and comfort, and use in life. Even, feeling this deeply, and feeling that it was her duty to resist him, the effort of doing so wrung her heart.

"I know I have the responsibility," she said gravely. "You are too young to judge for yourself, and if you were older you are excited, Eddy, and your mind is warped. I cannot consent to it. If I must speak decisively let me do it at once. I cannot give you up to this vagabondism, this mere wild course of adventure. All that man says is but words—fine words, brave words, but nothing, nothing more, Eddy. I know what I am speaking of. I cannot consent."

"Then, mother—" he sprang up furiously to his feet, his whole aspect changed. He looked as if about to pour upon her some violent outburst of rage or reproach. Then he stopped suddenly. "If it is to be so," he said with a sombre countenance, "if you refuse me this only thing I have ever cared for, then all is over with me. I don't care what becomes of me. Do what you like, it doesn't matter any more."

"This is folly—it is madness, Edward!"

"You may call it what you please," said the lad, with a sullen shrug of the shoulders. "One word or another, what does it matter? It is all one. Mamma, I know you mean well, you think it is for the best; but you have crushed all the life out of me, and I don't care now what I do."

"You will feel differently, Eddy, when you have considered—when you have thought of it more."

"Considered! Thought! As if I had done anything else for weeks," he said, with something like scorn; and there ensued a heavy pause, a pause which neither broke—until at last after a while he rose dully, and went away, thrusting his hands down to the depths of his pockets. Poor Mrs. Tremenheere was left

victorious, but miserable. She had broken her boy's heart—for his good. She knew it was for his good, but still, as he said, she had crushed him, she who would rather have been crushed herself a hundred times. She had all the feebleness of a mother, though she thought herself a strong-minded woman; the moment she had refused him absolutely she began to think, would it have been possible to let him go? Perhaps—if he had been allowed to try it, to go a certain distance, to make the discovery for himself what it really was—*perhaps* that might have cured him; whereas, now it would be his dream and ideal all his life. I can scarcely tell how she managed to live through the afternoon without conceding to Eddy's downcast looks what her better judgment had refused to his entreaties, but she did hold out for the next day, and the next again. She saw him wandering about listlessly, not caring to go out, not caring for his cricket, not even waking up when the *Field* came with all its news. When a boy like Edward Tremenheere can resist the *Field*, he must be bad indeed. Poor Eddy looked entirely broken down. He thrust his shoulders up to his ears and his hands down

into his pockets. He left off whistling, he left off smiling, and if indeed his mother had broken his heart, as he said, he paid her back in her own coin, and broke hers. Never had there been a more melancholy house than the villa for these two days. At last Mrs. Tremenheere could bear it no longer.

"Edward," she said, the third morning, throwing aside the diminutive, half consciously in the solemnity of the circumstances, "this is more than I can bear. You look as if you had lost all your friends, all you care for——"

"So I have," he said sullenly; and then with a look that wrung her heart he added, "Have patience a little, mother. I have lost a great deal more than you think—the first thing I ever really cared for. I daresay I shall be better after a while, but I can't look cheerful all at once. Leave me alone till I come to myself—if I ever do."

"You break my heart," she said, "Oh, Eddy, if I could give in to you I would—but how can I, feeling as I do? And you would be the first to blame me when you are older, and see things in their true light."

"I shall never do that," said Edward doggedly. "The true light is what I have been seeing so long. Now I have fallen back into no light at all, and that is what I must put up with for the rest of my life."

Then there was another interval of gloom and silence—another day with still the same heavy languor upon him. Mrs. Tremenheere was altogether overwhelmed. In the afternoon she went up-stairs, and put on her bonnet, tying the strings resolutely before the glass, and looking almost fiercely at her own pale face.

"I am going to town," she said, meeting Edward on her way to the door. "I cannot bear the responsibility you have thrown on me. I am going to consult your father. If he thinks anything can be done to satisfy you I will put aside my own feelings. I will not put myself in your way."

A sudden light of joy flushed over Edward's face.

"How good you are, mother, how good you are to me!" he cried; but then he paused and shook his head. There was not much faith to be put in his father. Still, a glimmering of hope sprang up in him the moment he found that the question was not en-

tirely concluded. He walked to the railway station with her, his face already lightened, his head more erect, his shoulders in their usual place. He was more tender to her than ever he had been, compunctious, sorry for having troubled her, now that he saw a revival of possibility that he might yet have his own way.

It was a desperate resolution which Mrs. Tremenheere had taken; all her pride, both as wife and woman, would have to be sacrificed. She would be obliged as good as to confess, she who in her heart thought her experiment so much more successful than her husband's, that she had failed, that the mother was not enough, that she required his aid to influence and guide her boy. Only a few weeks before her husband had rejected her proffered aid with scorn; and now she had to go humbly to seek his, to lay her problem before him. She walked to the little station with a sense of humiliation and downfall in her mind which her very anxiety could scarcely keep in balance. Never, after thus giving in, could she hold up her head as of old before either father or son. If she had done wrong she felt that she was punished.

She could scarcely respond to Edward's rising cheerfulness as she went along that dreary bit of way. What an end it was to all her pride, to all her theories! A train had just arrived from town as she approached the platform of the country station to wait for her train going up to town. The people streaming out kept her back till she began to fear she would be too late. Going on in advance, anxiously, leaving Edward behind her, she almost ran against a gentleman who was coming with equal haste and eagerness in the other direction, but whom in her pre-occupation she did not notice except to get out of his way. Then she stopped short suddenly, stopped by the cry he gave at seeing her—"Ada!" She raised her head quickly, thunderstruck. It was Mr. Tremenheere.

"You are coming to me?" he said, holding out his hand, and stranger still, drawing hers within his arm, and leading her with him as if they had been the most confidential of friends. His manner was anxious and excited. "You were coming to me, Ada. I can see it in your face.—She is here!"

"She?" said Mrs. Tremenheere, excited too. "I

don't understand you. Yes, I was coming to you, Charles."

"God bless you, my dear!" he cried earnestly, "if she is safe with you all is well."

"Of whom are you speaking?" she said. "There is nobody with me but Eddy;" then with a cry, "Vera! Something has happened to my child!"

Mr. Tremenheere was quite tremulous and shaken, his eyes bloodshot, his countenance haggard, like an old man.

"Hush!" he said, "don't let us publish it to everybody. She is not here, then? God help us! I thought she must certainly have gone to you."

She grasped his arm with both hands:

"Charles," she said, "tell me what has happened? Tell me everything. It is right I should know."

"Yes, yes! it is right you should know. I came to you at once; it was the first thought in my mind. We are both to blame, both to blame, if anything beyond remedy has happened to her. Ada, she went away two days ago, where we cannot tell. I have come down from Scotland, travelling all night in answer to that woman's telegram. Then I came on

to you. I thought, God help me! she was sure to be here; and when I saw you——But pride must be at an end and everything else. I have failed with Vera. I have driven her to despair; and where are we to find her, and how?"

"I was coming to you with the same confession in my mouth," said Mrs. Tremenheere, with tears in her eyes. "I have failed as well. I was coming to ask your help."

"Has he gone away, too?"

"No; but something else," she said. "Oh! forgive me, Charles, that is not so urgent. Tell me about Vera, and we must plan what is best to be done without delay."

She forgot Edward and everything else. She turned down a quiet byway, holding her husband's arm, clinging to it. He told her his story, and she listened, their two heads close together, their minds in absolute union, in one interest, in one feeling. He told her how it had been found out that Fane had followed Vera to Worthing, and how it was proved at last that Mary, her maid, the daughter of her old nurse, was in Fane's pay, and working for him with all her

might. He confessed that Miss Campbell had been hard upon the girl, keeping her in a kind of imprisonment.

"Carrying out my orders," said the penitent father, "to the letter, without thinking of the spirit; for, of course, that was never what I intended. What I intended was by means of society and occupation to wean her from any foolish fancy that might have crept into her mind; and, indeed, I did not even know that she cared for the young fellow. I only knew that he supposed himself to be fond of her."

"She is such a child. It was not to be expected that you could think of any strong sentiment on her part," said Mrs. Tremenheere, soothingly, "but tell me more—Was he with her? Was any one with her? and how, if she was so watched, did she get away?"

"She went away in the morning, before any one was up, by the early train to town. Mary was with her; no one else, so far as we can find out. It appears," said Mr. Tremenheere, with a look of shame, "that Miss Campbell, hearing of some early walks she had taken, had threatened to take her into her own room henceforward, to sleep there."

"Vera would not put up with that. You never knew how impetuous she was; but if Mary was with her, and Mary only——Charles, had you reason to think badly of this Mr. Fane?"

"Badly? No," he said, with some impatience. "No. He is a mere nobody, that is all. Younger brother of a commonplace squire in one of the Midland counties—*quite* distantly related to Lord Fanebury, with next to nothing, and no prospects that I know of; a sort of half-artist, as has been the fashion lately with idle young men—a man who could give her nothing, neither money nor position, nor——"

"But that meant no harm—could not mean any harm? Oh! Charles, they are both so young! and if you say she was harshly treated, my poor darling! He had a good face——"

"Ada, you are always ridiculous," he cried, giving her arm in sheer impatience a hasty pressure with his. "What has the goodness of his face to do with it? He was well-looking enough—the question is, What is to be done? How are we to find her? I have set a detective on his track, of course. Why do you cry out? Such things are done every day, and the world

need not be any the wiser. But tell me, if you have any suggestion to make."

"I am thinking," she said. "But, in the first place you must come home and rest, and take some food; you are worn out. Eddy and I, who are fresh and untired, must work now."

"Ah!" he said, drawing a long breath. "Yes, I am very tired; but I did not expect you would think of me when Vera was in danger."

"Oh! hush! hush!" she said, "are we not all one family, though we have been fools and divided ourselves? We shall find Vera. She is a good child, though she is hasty and young. She will not do anything there is shame in. God bless her!" cried the mother, with tears in her eyes, "wherever she is! She may be foolish and unhappy, but she will not go wrong. Charles, come home and take some rest, or you will be ill. Leave it for the moment to Eddy and me."

It would be useless to say what Mr. Tremenheere's feelings were when he found himself in his wife's house, which she called "home"—the villa he had heard so often spoken of, but had never seen. His

anxiety and fatigue blunted the sharpness of his personal feelings. He took the food that was served to him without even feeling it strange that she should fill his glass with wine, and sit by him while he ate; and went to lie down after his long vigil while she went to London with Edward, now fully roused up, and for the moment delivered from all thought of Africa. Mr. Tremenheere was no longer a young man, and he was very tired; and somehow putting the whole troublesome business into other hands seemed to relieve him, and gave him a degree of immediate ease which a few hours ago would scarcely have seemed possible. No doubt her mother would find her. A woman would know what another woman was likely to do in such an emergency; and she was fresh, as she said, and untired, whereas his head was aching with weariness. He had not slept for two nights, and scarcely had taken any food. After his wife and his son had left him, he wandered over the house in a curious languor of fatigue which blunted even his anxieties. The pretty house, all still and vacant, the broad rich landscape beneath, the sunny air and warmth and sweetness worked upon him like

a spell. How strange it was that he should be here reposing himself, putting his burden upon other shoulders! Yes, "we are all one family, though we have been fools and divided ourselves." How true that was! Mr. Tremenheere thought he had said it himself, and in the strength of that virtuous and reasonable sentiment went and lay down and slept. This new comer, who went to bed in broad daylight, and who was thus left alone in possession of the house, was a great wonder and excitement to the servants at the villa. He was "Missis's husband," but he was not "Master." "Something was up," everybody felt, from Jane, who was Mrs. Tremenheere's feminine butler, to Sam, the boy in the garden. Had he come and taken possession, and ousted her altogether? The popular mind has great ideas as to what a husband can do. They thought Mrs. Tremenheere's independence must have come to an end, and that the stranger had turned her out.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GIRL'S ESCAPE.

MISS VERA, oh, where will you wait till I run and let him know? Stop a moment, oh Miss Vera, please. Let me run and let him know! However is he to come, Miss, if you won't let me tell him! Oh Miss Vera, please!"

"Come along, come along! the train is going," said Vera. She had taken the lead at last. She did not know what she was going to do, and had no thought of separating herself from her lover, whose suggestion had put this flight into her mind, and whose presence seemed a necessary part of it. But for the moment she was desperate, and to her excited mind it seemed that Fane must know of it by instinct. She kept hold of her maid, holding her fast. She had never gone anywhere by herself, nor been left alone in any public place. Mary was taller than

she,—older,—used to moving about the world. Vera held her with a clutch on her arm,—holding her by moral force rather than physical. "I shall die if you leave me," she said. "Come,—come; the chief thing is to get away."

"But, Miss Vera, Mr. Fane!"

Vera made no answer, but clutched her closer, drawing her into a carriage. It was a train chiefly used by workmen and people given to very early hours. Vera thought nothing of the tickets, but Mary did; whose code of respectability was dreadfully wounded by this unauthorized intrusion into a public conveyance. And they had no luggage, either,—nothing except a small black bag, into which the maid had thrust her young mistress's little trinkets,—many of them the useless and valueless ornaments of a child.

It was the quaintest half-comic version of the flight of the traditional princess, with her devoted attendant and her jewels. The beads and the little lockets in Mary's bag were as unlike the casket of diamonds which the heorine of old romance was bound to take with her, as little sixteen-year-old Vera was unlike that impassioned and poetical personage. When

they were fairly off, and beyond the reach of any immediate stoppage, in the carriage by themselves, it was Mary's brain that worked the most anxiously. As for Vera, she dropped back in her corner with a sensation of rest and relief for the moment. She had escaped. Nobody more alarming than a railway guard could climb the step and look in at the window—no Miss Campbell could come and dictate to her with suspicion in her eyes,—no lover, too urgent, too impassioned, could frighten her youth with terrific suggestions of marriage. Marriage! The idea frightened her almost as much as Miss Campbell did. But for the moment both of these terrors were at a distance. No one could say "Vera, it is time for Rollin;" or "Vera, in three days we shall be married." She was safe; and for two hours she leaned back and rested, for it was a slow train.

Mary, however, had her hands full. An elopement which did not end in a marriage was a horror to think of; and the fact that Vera's flight was premature, that the marriage could not be for two days yet, and that Fane knew nothing of their sudden start,—this was a complication of difficulties which it required all

her skill to meet. When she had extricated herself from the first of her troubles by paying the fare to the guard,—and indeed it almost emptied both their purses to do this,—she set herself to the consideration of her after-proceedings. And in her thoughts there arose a very neat little plan. She had at first intended taking her little mistress to the house of her mother, who lived near Hampstead, and who, as I have already said, had been Vera's nurse. This had been settled when she had arranged the flight with Fane for the eve of the intended marriage day. But as two days must elapse, and there would, no doubt, be immediate pursuit, Mary evolved a more astute arrangement out of her busy brain. She resolved to take Vera,—not to her own mother, whom the pursurers would immediately think of—but to the sister of her young man,—the gallant Guardsman with whom Mary "kept company"—of whom nobody at Hyde Park Square knew anything. When she had settled this to her perfect satisfaction, Mary had leisure to rest, and indeed to dose,—a refreshment which, what with anxiety and what with early rising, she required much. She woke up only as the train ar-

rived in London, and get her young mistress instantly into a cab.

"I've settled all where we're going, Miss Vera; leave it all to me," said Mary. Upon which Vera put back her veil, and faced her conductor with the appalling statement, "I am going to Hyde Park Square."

"Oh, goodness gracious me! she has gone out of her senses!" cried the maid. "Oh, Miss Vera! stop a moment! think a moment! For all we know there is a telegraph after us, describing us like two thieves! Yes, Miss, William street, Stanhope street, Pentonville,—that is the address——"

"I am going," said Vera, drawing herself up, "home to Hyde Park Square. Be quiet, if you please,—I shall do what I think right, not what you tell me," and with that she put her head out of the window—"as if she had been a hundred," Mary said afterwards—and gave the address to the coachman. Here was a business! Mary wept, and scolded, and remonstrated; she tried every argument she could think of; she poured out reproaches and adjurations. But Vera sat in the corner with her mouth shut tight, her face pale, her small hands clasped together. She

made no answer, but she did not yield one iota, whatever her attendant might say.

"What is to become of Mr. Fane?" said Mary; "he can't come to you there, Miss, after he's been forbid the house. Jervis 'd do a deal for me, or for you either, Miss Vera; but to do that is as much as his place is worth; and what's to become of the poor young gentleman as thinks you the light of his eyes? And what's to become of me, Miss Vera?" she continued with an outburst of tears. "I'm ruined for ever and ever if that's what you're agoing to do. Your papa will turn me off without a character; and I can't blame him either, for all as I've been doing it's been for you. I've been a-thinking of your happiness, and master will say as it's 'is orders I ought to 'a been thinking of. And oh, goodness gracious! what am I to do?"

"Do not be frightened, Mary," said Vera, like a little princess. "I shall write to papa—he is not at home, and there will be time to explain everything, and to show him that it was Miss Campbell who did it all. I have done wrong too," said Vera, faltering; "but I will tell him everything, and I hope

he will forgive us all. We must try and do right now."

"That is all very well, Miss, after you're married,—they always does, after they're married, go down on their knees, and say as they're sorry. But how are you ever to be married, Miss Vera, going like this, as bold as brass, and quite open, to the Square?"

"I don't want to be married, Mary," said Vera, growing very red, and speaking very low.

Upon which Mary uttered a scream of disgust and horror. "Oh, how could you go deceiving him—how could you take him in like this!—to break his heart, poor young gentleman!" she said. "If he goes to the bad after, you mark my words, Miss Vera, it'll be all along of you!"

This blanched Vera's cheeks once more, though it did not change her resolution. She did not wish to break Fane's heart,—very, very far from that. What she would have liked would have been to see him every evening,—to get those letters,—to be always the one woman in the world,—his princess,—his better life. None of these privileges was she willing to part with; and perhaps after a long time it might

be possible to reconcile herself to the appalling idea of being married, only not at present;—but indeed the very last thing in the world that would have occurred to her was to break his heart.

She had her way, however; and went in spite of all opposition, to Hyde Park Square, where her appearance startled very much the small household, consisting of Jervis and a charwoman, who were left in charge. Mary, however, making the best of a bad business, explained very glibly that she had come with her young mistress on a variety of businesses; deputed by Miss Campbell to take her place,—to go to the dentist's, to go to the dressmaker's, and various other missions beside; and Jervis was willing to be deceived, while the charwoman was strong in the happy conviction that it was none of her business. Fane, whom the clever young woman contrived to summon by telegram just as Miss Campbell summoned Mr. Tremenheere, arrived that afternoon, and had an interview with Vera in the deserted shades of Kensington Gardens. He was in a great frght to find that she had gone home; but afterwards was brought to approve by the plea brought forth by Mary—that it

was the last place in which they were likely to look for the fugitives.

When she got home after this interview, during which, in terror of her lover's remonstrances, the poor child had dissembled, and said nothing about her newly-formed resolution, Vera wrote to her father a long account of how it all was,—how she could not bear Miss Campbell any longer; how Oswald Fane wished her to marry him, but she would rather wait if papa would only come at once and stand by her. To this, however, she added an energetic postscript, announcing her intention not to give up Oswald Fane. And then she wrote to that personage himself, begging him to pardon her,—calling him for the first time her "dear Oswald," assuring him that she should always love him,—always think of him; and perhaps, some time after, when she was older—if he still wished it—But how could she—how could she be married now?—Mary carried this last letter to him and comforted him in his terror, declaring that all girls felt just like that at the last moment, but that there was nothing really to be apprehended.

"It can't be said but what she's dreadful young, if

you come to think of it," said Mary—"six years younger than me."

"But girls are often married at sixteen," said Fane, —he had not his wits sufficiently about him to pay Mary a compliment, as she expected. He too felt it to be very serious. Poor little tender darling! Was his love cruel to her? Ought he to have waited without being bidden? Ought he to have taken advantage of her helplessness and loneliness? This thought made Oswald's pillow very uneasy that night. He was a better man than he himself knew. Though it was hard, it seemed to him almost as if he could sacrifice himself for Vera's good. But then, who would take care of her as he would? To give her back into the hands of her father and Miss Campbell would be barbarous. He could not do so,—certainly, he said to himself, that could not be for Vera's good.

Thus Tuesday passed; Mr. Tremenheere, posting through London on the Wednesday morning, had not time to go to his deserted house, nor did he think it necessary; and again the long day crept on while he went to the villa, and her mother resumed the search in London, hurrying from one place to another,—to

the house of Miss Meadows, to Fane's lodgings—who was denied to her, although he watched her with great trepidation from an upper window—and to the house of the nurse at Hampstead. Vera passed the day in the gloomy house at Hyde Park Square, scarcely venturing to look out,—wondering what was going to happen to her,—if her father would arrive in time, or if she should have to be married, or what was to be done. Jervis, too, had many thoughts in his mind. There was "something up," he felt sure, as the servants did at the villa; and Jervis, an old family servant, began to consider whether he ought not to take some active part in it. He would have made up his mind, probably, and written to somebody —he could not tell whom—after all the mischief was done.

Mrs. Tremenheere and her son drove about the town all the afternoon. Miss Meadows was gone, and Vera had not been heard of there. Asking after Fane at his club, they were told he was in Scotland —and at his lodgings—that he was not at home. Then they went to the detective who had traced him, and had seen him in close conversation with two

young women in Kensington Gardens, but being directed to look after the gentleman, had paid little attention to the women, and had let them steal away, he could not tell where. "That must have been Vera and her maid," said Mrs. Tremenheere, and immediately drove to Hampstead, where, after some trouble, she found Mary's mother, who declared she knew nothing; but did it with so guilty an air that the pursuers went back to get another detective, and sent him to keep up a vain watch on the old woman's house. In reality, she was as innocent and ignorant as either of them; but she had received an intimation from her daughter that it was possible Vera might come to her house, and therefore looked guilty when the question was put to her. By the time this was done, it was growing late, and the more unsuccessful Mrs. Tremenheere was, the more anxious she grew. "Another night! and my child somewhere about, with no one to take care of her!" she said, wringing her hands. "I cannot leave London to-night, Eddy; she must be here!"

"But my father,—how anxious he will be! You cannot do anything during the night."

"I can be on the spot," she said, with an unconscious emphasis, poor soul. "Go down to him, my dear boy, and comfort him, and tell him I will stay. You can come back with him to-morrow, for she is evidently in London. No, better not do anything till I telegraph; he looked dreadfully worn and shaken. He is not so young as he used to be. Be kind to him, Eddy, and let him know I don't blame him,—at least not at this moment. I daresay he never thought what harm he might do."

"I shall say nothing about harm or blame either," said Edward; "he looked very miserable. If you don't telegraph, I shall bring him up to town by the eleven o'clock train. And, mother, where shall you go?"

Then Mrs. Tremenheere repeated that strange return to common sense of which Vera had been the originator. She looked at her son, and said gently, "I am going to Hyde Park Square."

"Mother!"

"Yes, it is the fittest place,—I never ought to have left it. If your father pleases, I will go back again for good. We have done harm enough by our divi-

sions. My pride shall not stand in the way any longer. If only my poor Vera, my innocent little darling, may be found!"

Edward went away confounded, home to his father, in the house which was not his father's. The boy did not know how he should like it. He felt half ashamed, and wholly startled and taken aback,—something as a boy might feel whose mother had told him she was about to marry again.

And Mrs. Tremenheere, with a heavy heart, drove to Hyde Park Square. It was the fittest place for her to go,—the fittest place to take her lost child to, should she find her. She smiled sadly at Jervis's astonished face when he saw her.

"Yes, Jervis, you may be surprised; it is trouble that has brought me, but I hope not trouble that will last. Mr. Tremenheere knows that I have come, and I dare say you can manage to give me a bed. What is that I hear up-stairs? Jervis! Has the man gone crazy! Are you having visitors in the house while the family is away?"

She stood in the hall, looking up the big dingy London staircase, wondering at the sound of voices,

—crying and exclamations, and a kind of struggle. Then a light young step came rushing down the stairs, —a little white figure, like a ghost, with floods of hair about its shoulders, flashed round the windings, —appeared,—disappeared,—threw itself with a shriek of joy into Mrs. Tremenheere's arms.

"Vera!" she said, with a great cry. Where, but at home, and by her mother, should the child have been found?

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION—THE FATHER'S SHARE.

"YOU have heard nothing, I suppose?" said Mr. Tremenheere, huskily. He grasped his son's arm with a hand that trembled as they met in the middle of the road.

"Nothing, sir, but my mother has stayed behind to be on the spot. She seems to be full of hope," said Eddy; and then he entered into the details of all they had done. "I should have stayed too, but mamma likes to do things herself;" said the lad. "I dare say she is quite right, for she does them best; and she sent me down to make your mind easy."

"Uneasy, you mean," said his father with a forced smile; "till she is found, there is no peace of mind for me."

"At least you know that she is on the spot," said Edward, unconsciously copying his mother's emphasis; and then they walked down the dark road

together,—scarcely seeing each other, still less knowing each other. Mr. Tremenheere kept hold of his son's arm.

"I did not think I had any nerves left," he said; "I never could have supposed twenty hours' journey and two days' anxiety would have taken so much out of me. I got Miss Campbell's telegram at ten o'clock on Monday, and since then—but I have had a sleep this afternoon,—I must not count this afternoon. Your mother has a great deal of energy, Ned; she is a very clever woman. What a pity we did not get on! It would have been better for us all,—better for Vera, poor child, and even for you,—though nothing has happened to you,—if we had all been, as we ought to have been, in our own home."

Edward's heart trembled at this address. His mother might have been got to yield about Africa; but this father, this man of the world,—would he yield? The young fellow had a moment of sharp conflict with himself; and then he resolved to make a plunge into it, and know his fate.

"My mother was just going to consult you about me, when you came, sir. There is a thing I have set

my heart upon which she does not approve of. My mother is very kind. Though she does not approve of it she could not bear to see me cast down; and as a last chance for me she said she would consult you. I wonder if you will be on my side! Oh, sir!" said Edward throwing all the expression which the darkness denied to his countenance into his voice, "you can't think of what importance it is to me. I told you before I should never be a great scholar. I am an out-of-door fellow,—good at walking, and that sort of thing, not at book-work. I never knew what I could do with myself that would be any good till I heard of this!"

"Well, what is it? Let me hear," said his father, "I am very much afraid it must be something nonsensical, as you are so much in earnest about it; and my advice is of little good just now,—my mind is all taken up about the other affair. Nevertheless, let me hear what you have got to say."

There was a pause. It was strange how much more difficult Edward felt it to state his case to his father than to his mother. Immediately, all that might appear absurd in his fanaticism,—his own igno-

rance of the subject, and his very faith in the traveller,—appeared to him as Mr. Tremenheere might see them. He had been angry when his mother took this view of the case; but the moment he saw it with his father's eyes, everything seemed to change. The meaning stole out of his own wishes, the force out of his reasons. He faltered and hesitated in spite of himself.

"Well, sir," he said, with a dogged determination to have it out, "Mr. Bass was down here one day talking about his African Mission. Nobody ever had such an effect upon me. I made up my mind at once that to go with him was the thing I could do best; and I had a letter from him the other day, saying there was one place still open for me. A woman, though the best mother in the world, sees these things in a different light," said poor Eddy, encouraged by his father's silence. "She thinks of the distance, and the hardships; and my last chance is that perhaps you might see it as I see it." Here Eddy came to a breathless pause, and waited for his answer, with a beating heart.

Had Mr. Tremenheere been in better spirits he

would have laughed; but, fortunately for Eddy, he was not in good spirits. He was worn out and depressed, and amiable as perhaps he had never been before in his life. "My dear Ned," he said gently, in the darkness, rousing all the lad's hopes by the softness of his tone, "whether I might have agreed or disagreed with your mother, scarcely matters in this instance. I am afraid it will be a disappointment to you if you have so set your heart upon it; but the fact is, there is to be no expedition to Africa under the charge of Mr. Buckram Bass. That very clever man is supposed by some people to be too clever. The Geographical Society will not give him a groat, neither will Government; and his expedition has melted into thin air. No one will go with him to Africa for many a day."

"But I heard from him on Monday, about the vacancy," cried Edward with a gasp.

"Then he must have had some plan in his head for equipment, by which he could make something," said Mr. Tremenheere. "I cannot be mistaken, you know, in my position; and so you may make it up with your mother, and relieve her mind as soon as

you choose." Then moved by an amiable impulse,—for the boy pleased him—he added, "I am very sorry for your disappointment, Ned."

Oh, it does not matter," cried the lad, with a great gulp of self-control. Dark waters of bitterness surged up into Edward's eyes, but fortunately the darkness concealed them. And acting on an English boy's savage code of honor, he made a brave effort at once to talk of other things, and covered the stab he had got. No word should any one hear more on the subject from his lips with his will. The pain stung him like that Spartan fox; but, like the boy whom it devoured, he would rather die than complain.

And here Mr. Tremenheere was of more use to his son than the boy's mother would have been. She would have felt the sting for Edward as sharply as he felt it for himself. She would have lavished a thousand sympathetic tendernesses upon him to make up for his suffering. His father did nothing of the sort. For one thing he did not truly realize how great the blow was; but he was sorry for the disappointment—said so once, and was done with it; and talked about other things, forcing Eddy to answer him, and helping

him to keep down the pain. But, poor fellow, he had a bad night of it when it was too late to sit up any longer. It obliterated Vera from his mind, and all his anxiety about her. Vera was but a stranger to him after all; and this was so close a misery, and so near!

The father and son made but a miserable breakfast next morning. "I must get off to town, I cannot delay longer," said Mr. Tremenheere. "When you consider where that unhappy child may be—what may be happening to her,—perhaps at that fellow's mercy, confound him! No, no, I can't stay,—don't ask me. Your mother must have no news, or she would have telegraphed before now."

"I am quite ready, sir," said Edward. They were both of them pale and miserable; and Mr. Tremenheere, forgetting already Edward's own share of trouble, was touched by this supposed sympathy. "You don't know much of your sister," he said. "I will not forget, my boy, how you've thrown yourself into it. Please God, when we find her we'll be a more united family. Ned, she and you will have to help me with your mother. She is a proud woman,

but for my part I am not proud; and I don't mind making a sacrifice if only—God help us!—we could find the child."

"We shall find her!" cried Edward, this time with a rush of real sympathy which came to his eyes, and made them shine; and though Mr. Tremenheere knew that Edward's confidence was without foundation, it cheered him as the foolishest consolation sometimes does. He grasped his son's hand with a tremulous yet strenuous grasp.

"Come along," he said; "I know it is too early for the train, but somehow it is easier to endure one's self when one is in motion. It feels like doing something. Your mother has the best of it staying in town. What a pretty place she has made of this! What a fool I was—good heavens! what an ass! when she asked it, not to let her have the child here!"

"Don't think of that now, sir," said Eddy, with feeling. "Come out into the garden in the meantime,—the air will do you good." He was very sorry for his father. He led him through the little space which had been planted so cleverly, and showed him the points of view, upon which they both looked with

pre-occupied eyes. It wanted half an hour yet to the time for the train, and the station was not ten minutes' walk. Then Mr. Tremenheere remembered a note he had to write, and they went back into the house that he might do it. He sat down at his wife's writing-table, and used the paper with her monogram. How strange that the recollection should dart on him then of another time when he had done this,—when he had taken a pretty sheet with "Ada" emblazoned on it, to write to his sister of the engagement between Ada Langdale and himself! Curious moment for such a reminiscence; but the man was weakened with much unusual feeling, and he stopped to recollect it. "I think it must be a good sign," he said half to himself; "once I took her paper before——"

He was interrupted by a touch on his shoulder, and jumped up, nearly upsetting the paraphernalia of the writing-table. "Charles," said his wife, taking him by both hands, "I went to our house last night, where you took me when we were married; and there, at home, where she ought to be, and where I ought to have been all the time taking care of her—I found the child!"

"God bless you, Ada!" he cried, with a sudden

great sob, forced from him by the surprise and the joy. And then he made a blind clutch at her, his eyes being full, and got her into his arms. "You have found her,—and I have found you!"

And it was thus that these foolish people ended their matrimonial quarrel. They had had ten years of it, which was certainly enough, and it had not answered. But the reader must not imagine that all the consequences dispersed into thin air when the principals took each other's hands, as Mr. Bass's African Expedition had done. Edward's heart mended after a while, though it was very sore; but it would not have mended so easily had Government and the Geographical Society encouraged instead of making an end of the expedition of Mr. Buckram Bass. And Providence, though it interfered on one side in this way, did not interfere on the other to make an end of Oswald Fane. He stood in solid flesh and blood in the path of the united family, refusing to let all be as it ought to have been. Poor Oswald! it was wholesome punishment for him to find his bird flown on the very day when he intended to fly with her,—carrying her beyond pursuit or power of any one to touch her.

But a thing which has been carried so far can rarely stop there. As soon as she was parted from him, and the terrible spectre of marriage removed out of her way, Vera began to pine for her lover; and her lover began to besiege the heart, soft with penitence and reconciliation, of Mrs. Tremenheere. Between the two they worked so effectually that Mr. Tremenheere, no longer absolute sovereign in Hyde Park Square, but reduced to the safer limits of a constitutional monarchy and a joint throne, had to give in at last; and much less alarmed by the word than she had been a year before, Vera Tremenheere, at seventeen, with all the pomp befitting a lawful ceremonial, permitted by all the authorities, married Oswald Fane. I wish it was permitted me to kill the uninteresting elder brother and his little son, and make the young pair master and mistress of the paternal halls at Weathernook; but, partly by her father's influence, partly by that of Lord Fanebury, who came to the marriage and good-humoredly declared the bridegroom to be his very cousin, Oswald got a valuable appointment, and the young pair went to Italy after all; and coming home, settled down very comfortably, and were much

happier than the improper and reprehensible beginning of their story deserved; which is a bad moral, but to change it is beyond my power.

Edward Tremenheere went into his father's office, and became private secretary to his father's chief—an admirable appointment. In the meantime, however, he was left free for a great deal of travel, and took to climbing mountains, by special grace of Providence, and became a member of the Alpine Club, atoning to himself in his holidays for the responsibility and regularity of his everyday life. Miss Campbell, I am glad to say, had saved enough money to retire upon an annuity, and tortures young girls no more; but she still thinks Mr. Tremenheere's family monsters of ingratitude for not requiting her exertions in saving their child. Mary was dismissed, as she deserved; but I fear surreptitious means were used whereby she was enabled to marry her Guardsman. Everybody had done wrong all round, and which was the one that was to throw a stone? The only person who had a right to do so was Elinor Meadows, who made a speech to the re-united family on the evening of the day on which Oswald was first received among them,

and Vera's happiness sanctioned by her parents. Miss Meadows pushed back the vigorous rings of gray hair from her broad forehead and held out her oratorical right hand. "You two old fools," she said, "and you two young ones, I don't know which of you have made yourselves the most ridiculous. I protest against this absurd happiness, which you have no right to. All of you, in your turn, have come to me in the depths of despair, and employed me to intercede for you. I never did the least good by my attempts. How dare you, without either rhyme or reason, and every law of justice against it, be so happy now?"

THE END.